

The heritage values of
RAAF Base Amberley

Laraine Nelson
Joanne McAuley

FROM HORNET MOTH TO SUPER HORNET

Cover photo – From Hornet Moth to Super Hornet. The heritage values of RAAF Base Amberley.

Source: Defence Images.

Title: A No 1 Squadron F/A-18F Super Hornet conducting an aerial display in the skies over RAAF Base Amberley.
(Australian Government Department of Defence)

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Laraine Nelson and Joanne McAuley

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Foreword

THE Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) has since its very beginning been a dynamic and evolving force. From a small training cadre of a mere 149 personnel and 153 aircraft on 31 March 1921, the RAAF has expanded in terms of personnel, equipment, force structure and capability. The changes in the aircraft the Air Force operates, the qualifications of the personnel it recruits and the training they are given once in uniform all reflect the evolution that has occurred within the RAAF since 1921. This constant evolution of the force is a healthy expression of a modern adaptable air force designed around Australia's security requirements.

RAAF Base Amberley is perhaps one of the exemplars of our changing air force. In February 1939, the Air Board decided to establish an air base west of Ipswich, to serve the needs of the expanding RAAF. Although unappreciated at the time, it was a decision of great foresight and enduring influence.

The construction of an air base in the vicinity of Brisbane was just part of the expansion of Australia's air power during this tense period before World War II started in September 1939. RAAF Base Amberley was to play a key role in supporting RAAF operations in World War II. Intended as a base on which training and aircraft maintenance could be conducted, the base's role became far more pivotal in the defence of Australia when the war came to the Pacific region in December 1941.

Since the dark days of the war RAAF Base Amberley's importance to the Air Force has only increased. During the Cold War, Korean War and the Vietnam War, the men and women from Amberley based units were deployed in operations of great importance and of no small risk to themselves.

I had the great privilege to be the Officer Commanding RAAF Base Amberley from 1975–77. On taking command of the base, I realised the responsibility I had now accepted. At that time, Nos 1 and 6 Squadron were flying the F-111 aircraft and No 2 Squadron was operating the Canberra bomber, a unit I had commanded during the Vietnam War. Also calling Amberley home was No 9 Squadron with its Iroquois helicopters, another veteran unit of the Vietnam War, and No 12 Squadron flying the Chinook helicopter. To this list of units must be added the non-flying but never-the-less essential units needed to keep a base operational. I speak of course of RAAF Amberley Base Squadron, No 3 Aircraft Depot and No 482 Maintenance Squadron, No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit and my own Headquarters Unit. In all some 3000 Air Force members were working on what I was proud to consider the RAAF's premier base.

The RAAF Base Amberley I commanded in 1975 was a very different base to that of 1939. Today, the base is very different to the base I knew in the 1970s. A book that considers the heritage values of Amberley, which chronicles its many changes and importantly, the contribution that the men and women of the base have made to Australia, is itself an important contribution to the history of the base as it continues its constant evolution as part of a dynamic and effective Air Force.

Air Marshal David Evans, AC, DSO, AFC
Chief of the Air Staff, 1982–85



An F-111 from No. 6 Squadron, RAAF Amberley, departs on a mission as part of Ex Aces North 06 at RAAF Tindal.

(Australian Government Department of Defence).

Preamble

THE aim of this preamble is to explain why this book has been produced; set out its scope and consequently limitations; and to outline the process followed in its preparation.

The preparation of a book that “captures the heritage values of RAAF Base Amberley” is a requirement in a condition attached to an approval for redevelopment works at the Base under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act). This EPBC Act approval (EPBC 2014/7123) also requires the preparation of a Heritage Interpretation Plan (HIP) which amongst other matters outlines the contents of the book and its specifications. The HIP was given Ministerial Approval on 13th May 2016 and as such, is a statutory document.

As per the approved HIP, this book provides information on the heritage values evident at RAAF Base Amberley including but not limited to the aesthetic and rarity values of the building stock and the social significance attached to the place. This information is interwoven into a chronological discussion of the base’s development from first establishment to the present day (2015). The agreed brief for the book also limits its length or page number. As such, this book does not provide an exhaustive history of RAAF Base Amberley, it is an outline of its history and the focus of the text is the heritage significance of the place.

In preparing the manuscript, the authors have worked closely with RAAF historians (at a Base level and at the Federal level), retired RAAF personnel and others with a close association with RAAF Base Amberley. Meticulous research has been carried out to verify the content and provide a comprehensive set of references. It has been subject to several rounds of review by Defence stakeholders.

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The authors are especially grateful to the team of reviewers: WGCDR Bill Sanders; Chris Sankey; WGCDR Clive Wells; David Gardner; GPCAPT David Richardson; Deepak Vangani; Emily Constantine; George Hatchman (WOFF retd.); John Ward (GPCAPT retd.); Kate Leane; Martin James; LAC Nigel Raddie; Paul Lineham; GPCAPT Ron Tilley; David Tranthem; Virginia Glyde; and Tim McKay.

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Modern research has greatly benefitted through the digitization of data. In addition to documentary sources and interviews, information was obtained online from the RAAF Air Power Development Centre's digital book collection; the National Library of Australia's newspaper database – Trove; the Australian War Memorial's photographic collection; State Library of Queensland; Picture Ipswich; US National Archives; and the National Archives of Australia.

Abbreviations

1st Army Aviation	1st Divisional Army Aviation Regiment	MAETU	Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit
9 FSB	9th Force Support Battalion	MRTT	Multi-Role Tanker Transport
No 3AD	No 3 Aircraft Depot	MTF	Mobile Task Force
No 3SFTS	No 3 Service Flying Training Schools	OAM	Order of Australia Medal
16 ALA	16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron	RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
AAF	Australian Air Force	RAF	Royal Air Force
AAAvn	Australian Army Aviation	SGT	Sergeant
ASH	Australian Super Hornet	SQNLDR	Squadron Leader
CAC	Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation	SSQ	Station Sick Quarters
CCC	Civil Constructional Corps	TAE	Tasman Aviation Enterprises
CWA	Country Women's Association	USAAF	United States Army Air Force
DS/RS	deseal and reseal	USAF	United States Air Force
FLGOFF	Flying Officer	WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
FLTLT	Flight Lieutenant	WRAAF	Women's Royal Australian Air Force
GAF	Government Aircraft Factory	WG	Wing
GPCAPT	Group Captain	WGCDR	Wing Commander
LAC	Leading Aircraftman		

Chapter

1



Early Amberley and the RAAF

The Aboriginal people of Jeebropilly

AMBERLEY is located 8km south-west of the city of Ipswich in southeast Queensland. Before Europeans arrived, the area of present-day Ipswich that incorporates the Bremer River, Warrill Creek and Purga Creek was known as Jeebropilly by the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul clans in the local Yuggera language. The word 'Jeebropilly' denoted the flood plain formed by the river and its tributaries and the colonies of sugar gliders that inhabited the area. Linking the three clans to Jeebropilly were the Dreaming stories attached to the plains and mountains, the traditional Aboriginal landscapes. The land was home to a vibrant Aboriginal community, with small permanent waterholes and channels supporting a range of food resources, and access, in the nearby Grampian Hills and Deebing Creek, to deposits of siliceous pebbles, valuable in making stone artefacts.

The arrival of settlers in the nineteenth century resulted in dispossession for the Yuggera-speaking clans. The loss of access to their traditional lands, the depletion of the resources they relied on, and a high mortality rate meant the Aboriginal population rapidly diminished. With their social structure lost, the people moved into camps on the fringe of settlements. Despite this a number of people retained their family links and remained connected to their traditional country. Mission stations at Deebing Creek and later Purga Creek were home for many members of the community from the late nineteenth century through to 1948 when Purga Creek Mission was finally closed.¹

Early settlers

In 1827 the commandant of the Brisbane convict settlement, Captain Patrick Logan, conducted an extensive exploration of the area now known as Ipswich. He described the area between the Bremer and Logan Rivers as containing 'a beautiful vale', excellently watered, with numerous kangaroos, emus and parrots. The presence of limestone outcrops, an important construction material for an expanding colony, was another advantage to the area. Limestone extraction followed soon after: in 1828 an early explorer, Alan Cunningham, reported seeing a lime kiln on Limestone Hill attended by an overseer and five men. Limestone Hill was later renamed Ipswich after the thriving manufacturing centre and river port in England.²

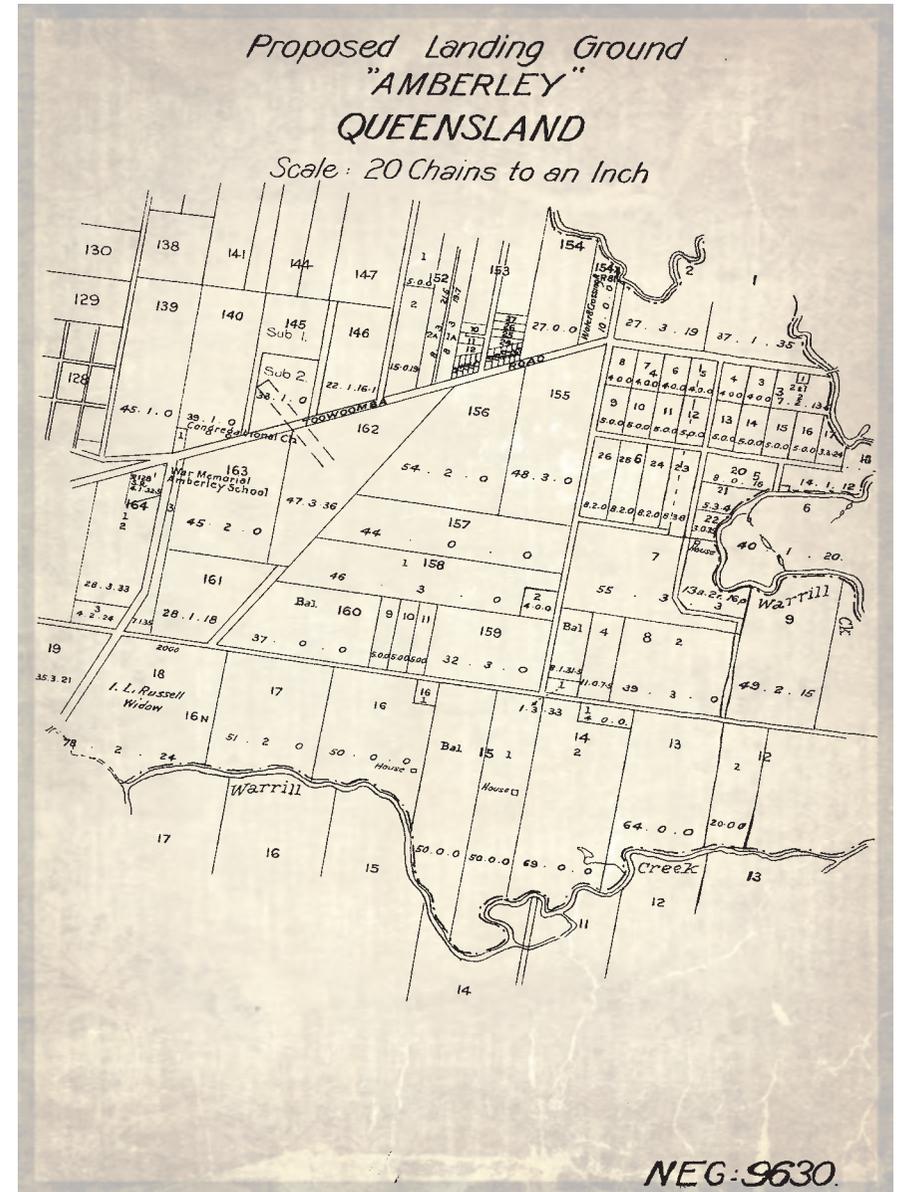
While limestone extraction continued, the emphasis in the surrounding countryside was on pastoral industries. In 1842, two properties were established near the Bremer River and Warrill Creek. To the north was 'Amberley' owned by the Collett family and to the south 'Willow Bank' owned by Darby McGrath.³ The subdivision of large landholdings from the late 1850s resulted in closer settlement, a corresponding increase in population and the establishment of a small rural community. Willow Bank was one of these large landholdings subdivided, with allotments offered for sale in 1890. Archaeological investigations in 2010, supported by research revealed Willow Bank was home to a busy community, with a blacksmith, general store, abattoir, quarry and ventures such as grape growing and wine production, timber getting and brick making. Wine production was a significant local industry. In the 1870s one winery, Toongarra, employed 40 men during harvest and kept 20,000 imperial gallons (approximately 91,000 litres) of wine in storage. The wine industry did not survive the nineteenth century: prolonged droughts, floods and ultimately the economic depression of the 1890s led to its demise.⁴



Amberley State School – Headmaster’s residence 1940s.
 (Eric Douglas Collection, Picture Ipswich, Ipswich City Council).

By the mid nineteenth century the Willow Bank area was large enough to support two schools. A private school – one of the first in Queensland – built by Darby McGrath for the children of local workers, opened in 1861. In 1862 Warrill Creek State School together with a teacher’s residence, opened. However, the location was deemed too swampy and in 1888, the school was relocated to nearby Sandridge. In 1903 it was renamed Amberley State School and by 1920 its school population averaged 79 students.⁵

The area retained its rural nature, with small communities supported by the larger hub of nearby Ipswich, until 1938. In that year the federal member for Moreton, Josiah (‘Jos’) Francis, buoyed by the promise of an influx of jobs and revenue, announced that Amberley had been chosen as the location of the new Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) aerodrome. The official announcement in the Government Gazette of 22 December 1938 reported that 882 acres had been purchased at Amberley, near Ipswich, south west of Brisbane.⁶



Proposed landing ground Amberley, Queensland.
 (National Archives of Australia BP374/1, NEG9630).

The early Royal Australian Air Force

In 1912, Australia's earliest armed air wing, the Central Flying School was established and while initially planned for a base in Canberra by 1913, the chosen location was Point Cook, Victoria. It became known as the Australian Flying Corps and shortly after the outbreak of World War I it was included in the capabilities of the Australian Imperial Force and saw action in the Middle East and Europe. The Australian Air Corps, formed in 1920 to replace the Australian Flying Corps, was disbanded at the end of WWI. The Commonwealth Government however, recognised a need for an operational air defence capability and established an Air Council, headed by the Australian Minister for Defence to provide advice on its formation. The Air Council reached agreement on a process for developing and managing an air defence system and on 31 March 1921, the Australian Air Force (AAF) was established. The addition of the word 'Royal' and the nomenclature Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) became official following the approval of King George V and was gazetted on 13 August 1921.⁷

The new RAAF

The new RAAF had 151 members incorporating 21 officers and 130 other ranks. There is some conjecture over the number of aircraft held, however the AAF had no more than 153 aircraft at its formation.⁸ The aircraft included 20 standard training aircraft (Avro 504-K), ten scouting aircraft (Sopwith Pups bought during WWI), six Fairey seaplanes bought in 1921 and later, six Australian built Avro 504-K.⁹

RAAF headquarters were in Melbourne and the No 1 Flying Training School and No 1 Aircraft Depot were located at Point Cook (near Melbourne), with a liaison office established in London. By 1926 the RAAF had grown to include No 1 Aircraft Depot and No 1 (Composite) Squadron, both at Laverton, Victoria; No 3 (Composite) Squadron and No 101 (Fleet Cooperation) Flight, both at Richmond, New South Wales; and an Experimental Section No 3 at Randwick, New South Wales.¹⁰

Expansion in the 1930s

In 1928 the Marshal of the British Royal Air Force, Sir John Salmond, formally reviewed the RAAF and recommended the expansion of Australia's air defence over nine years. The impetus to expand was tempered by the economic depression of the 1930s, but by 1934 amid growing political unrest in Europe, the Australian government began implementing Salmond's recommendations. By 1936 the number of RAAF personnel had increased to 1,365 including 138 officers, 61 cadets and 1,166 airmen, while the need for aircraft led to the establishment of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) to manufacture the RAAF's aircraft. The first aircraft produced for the RAAF, the Wirraway, made its maiden flight in March 1939. At the same time, the CAC planned construction of the Beaufort bomber and D H Tiger Moth biplane. In addition, the RAAF ordered Lockheed Hudson bombers from the United States and purchased Sunderland flying boats from the United Kingdom.¹¹



Commonwealth Aircraft Factory, Fishermans Bend, Victoria with Wirraway nearing completion, c.1941.

(Australian War Memorial. P007278/17).

In 1937, against a backdrop of increasing world tension, representatives from the United Kingdom and Commonwealth countries at the Imperial Defence Conference in London resolved to strengthen the Empire's defences. For Australia, the result was increased defence expenditure, with the RAAF receiving a significant proportion of the funds. Those funds provided for a three-year expansion: the addition of nine extra squadrons, an extra flying training school, an equipment depot, two armament training camps, two group headquarters, four station headquarters, plus the extension of existing establishments.¹²

An Air Force base at Amberley

The commitment to an expanded RAAF included plans to construct bases in northern Australia. In 1938, Amberley was chosen for one of those bases because it had several advantages including its natural features as a flat, well-drained area with good visibility and its proximity to engineering works and the Brisbane railway line.¹³

Mr Francis MP (later Sir Josiah Francis) had been a keen advocate for the Amberley site as it would provide an important boost to the local economy. This was confirmed with an estimated £300,000 set aside for the purchase and clearing of land and the construction of an aerodrome, hangars, barracks, workshops, a wireless station, instructional rooms, armouries and other buildings. The new base would have a combination of permanent and citizen personnel comprising approximately 33 officers and 265 airmen. Designated the 24 General Purpose Squadron, they would be assigned 12 aircraft, both single and twin engine, and would be responsible for reconnaissance of the sea approaches to Brisbane, cooperation with fixed and air defences of Brisbane and possible coast watching duties.¹⁴

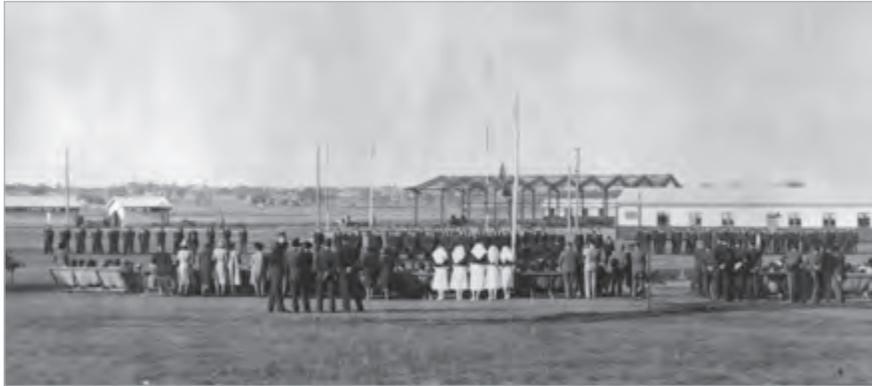
Building Amberley aerodrome and station headquarters

The transformation of open paddocks and farmland to an operational air base required a significant commitment in money, labour and materials. In 1939, the construction of RAAF Base Amberley was described as one of the largest projects undertaken in Queensland.¹⁵

The construction works were to provide a huge boost to Ipswich. Mr Francis MP argued successfully for the use of local day labour, in particular World War I returned servicemen for the clearing, levelling, filling, compacting and grassing of the area.¹⁶ The civil works were conducted by Chesterfield and Jenkins (Qld) Pty Ltd – a company that was to have a close relationship with the development of the base over the next five years – this included the laying of tar and bitumen for the first roads and hardstands for aircraft. The first aircraft to land at the field, a DH87A Hornet Moth, was piloted by the contractor, Mr Chesterfield.¹⁷



Aerial view of RAAF Base Amberley c.1940.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).



Amberley Parade 1940s with Hangar 76 under construction in the background.
(23SQN Historian).

At the centre of the new base was a diamond-shaped parade ground flanked by the headquarters building, hangars and other administrative and operational buildings. Clearing and construction work commenced in 1939. It was anticipated that within twelve months there would be a hangar, accommodation and workshops all of first class construction in brick, steel and timber.¹⁸

In his memoirs, RAAF pilot Keith Virtue describes one of the early aircraft landings at Amberley. At the time he was flying a Douglas DC-3 for No 8 Squadron and had landed at Archerfield in Brisbane. Wing Commander Waters, in charge of the Archerfield base, asked Virtue to fly him in a base Tiger Moth over to Amberley to inspect the works. Virtue recounts the difficulty of this first landing at Amberley – navigating the rollers, graders, scrapers and site workers – and considered it lucky he was able to take off again.¹⁹

The tender for the first hangar (Hangar 76) was won by Marbarete Co Pty Ltd, a Brisbane firm.²⁰ Hangar 76 was modelled on the RAF 'C' style post-World War I hangar, constructed in fairface brick with a steel frame and saw-tooth roof to a high standard. The impressive entrance fronting the runway and the western side were in stretcher

bond brickwork with ornate glass features. The interior accommodated workshops, an officers' mess, a parachute room and storerooms.²¹

The two-storey brick guardhouse that marked the entrance to the base was similar in style to Hangar 76 and also built by Marbete.²² It had a simple layout of a ground floor incorporating two cells and offices located on the first floor.²³

A similarly impressive building, though on a more modest scale, was the station headquarters, a single-storey building with a two-storey rear tower. The weatherboard clad building is similar to structures at RAAF Base Townsville and RAAF Darwin, indicating that this was a standard design for temperate or tropical climates. The location of station headquarters at the southern end of the parade ground reflects the traditional layout of a pre-World War II base.²⁴

The base hospital, constructed in fairface brick, was another notable building but it must have been considered inadequate in size very soon after its construction. In late 1940 it was announced that the hospital facilities would be increased with construction of a separate thirty-two bed ward.²⁵



Station Headquarters in 1940s with roof painted in camouflage colours.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

In 1940 the base was described in the Brisbane newspaper *The Telegraph* as a dazzling 'white city' bisected by a 'first-class thoroughfare'. The fifty buildings in place at this time included 'symmetrically grouped' mess rooms and outbuildings, with adjacent recreation and rest rooms for trainees. The opposite side of the thoroughfare was guarded by the two-storey guardhouse, described as 'massive', while a 'commodious' cookhouse was nearby. The instruction building for trainees was located adjacent the hangar. Buildings still under construction included an additional hangar, the officers' quarters and a gymnasium.²⁶ Just under a year later, an article in the Ipswich newspaper *The Queensland Times* describes 'acres of lawn', garden plots 'blossoming' and ornamental

trees where once 'dust patches' could be found. The article reports that 200 guests attended a graduation parade for which chairs been set on a 'broad and grassy area fronting the spacious parade ground'. The officers' mess and other buildings were set in 'emerald lawns' and gardens of 'ornamental trees'.²⁷

The pace and standard of construction changed when the war in Europe, whose onset had paralleled the base's development, began impacting more directly on the RAAF. Constructed buildings in stylish fairface brick made way for prefabricated buildings and materials of steel, timber and fibrous cement.



RAAF Base Amberley Parade Ground with hospital ward visible in the background.
(23SQN Historian).

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Chapter



The impact of World War II, 1939–1947

A new base at war

In June 1940, Amberley Station Headquarters formed with the establishment of No 24 Squadron (General Purpose) and Squadron Leader SAC Campbell was appointed Temporary Station Commander and Commanding Officer, No 24 Squadron. The first RAAF aircraft at the headquarters was No 24 Squadron's Moth Minor No A21-26 followed shortly by four CAC Wirraway aircraft. No 24 Squadron's term at the base was short-lived. By October 1940, the squadron had been relocated to Townsville, with the role of Station Headquarters at the base assumed by No 3 Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) later that month.¹

On 1st July 1940, No 3 Recruit Depot under the command of Flight Lieutenant JA Adams was assigned to the base to recruit airmen and conduct recruit drill courses. That same month, the first draft of Royal Australian Air Force recruits destined for Amberley marched through the streets of Ipswich to the delight of a crowd that cheered, threw confetti and streamers.²

No 3 Recruit Depot was joined shortly after by No 3 SFTS, under the command of Wing Commander RH Simms. No 3 SFTS was one of eight such schools established under the Empire Training Scheme in Australia – the RAAF's commitment to supporting Great Britain in the war. The scheme was responsible for training aircrew – predominately pilots, air observers and wireless air gunners – for deployment overseas under the command of the British RAF.³

No 3 SFTS commenced operations at Amberley with 12 officers and 228 aircrew. The first intake of 36 trainees arrived in October 1940. Shortly after, the trainer aircraft arrived, comprising Avro Anson bombers and CAC Wirraway fighters. The complement of aircraft increased rapidly

and by the end of 1940, 54 aircraft were in operation. The Avro Anson remained as the trainer aircraft for the base, but by 1941, all CAC Wirraways were transferred elsewhere.

Flight training began in November 1940. Leading Aircraftsman Poulton was the first trainee to fly solo. Once training was completed graduates were posted to advanced flying or operational units both in Australia and overseas.⁴ The dangers trainee flight crews faced were realised in 1941, when a series of air crashes claimed the lives of several trainees. In the worst accident, four men were killed in a collision between two aircraft.⁵ These sobering events were a prelude to the losses that would occur as the graduates moved to posting overseas. A photograph from 1941 shows 41 aircrew trainees of whom 14 would be killed before the war ended.⁶



Group portrait of aircrew trainees from No 3 SFTS, RAAF Amberley, 1941. Fourteen of the group would later lose their lives in the conflict. (Australian War Memorial. P09647_002).

As training intensified, the condition of the runway became a major issue. Torrential rains in the summer of 1940/41 had rendered the runway inoperable and the need for 'all weather' runways was immediate. Construction of new runways began early in 1941, with shifts worked from 0530 to 1830 and aircraft maintenance conducted on night shifts.⁷ Tonnes of soil were also removed from nearby Willowbank to raise the level of the existing runway.⁸ By 1941, the runways and overruns were completed. However, one of the original roads, the Old Toowoomba Road that crossed the new main runway remained a hazard to both air operations and the local community.⁹

By March 1941, the 'swamp' described in the early years had been dramatically improved to become not only a serviceable and efficient air base but also a well-ordered town. The base's newsletter, *Amberley Amberlings*, describes a thriving community:

Since then hundreds of men have come to Amberley, completed their courses and received their postings. The place gradually assumed the appearance of a busy township. The site has been drained and concrete kerbs are being constructed. Living conditions have improved as the station has grown. Airmen's quarters are comfortably furnished and kitchens equipped with modern appliances.

Now the station has its own cinema, bank, post office and canteen service. A strenuous flying schedule is being maintained and constant efficiency aimed at. And the only growls I've heard during the whole period of Amberley's mushroom growth have been because some men cannot get into action as soon as they would like. But they cannot be trained as air crews that quickly.¹⁰



RAAF Base Amberley, 1942.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1 School of Instruction – Station Headquarters | 8 Airmen's Mess |
| 2 Hangar 76 | 9 Sergeant's Mess |
| 3 Hangar 71 | 10 Guard House |
| 4 Parade Ground | 11 Officers Mess |
| 5 Station Sick Quarters (Hospital) | 12 ■ Bellman Hangars |
| 6 Hospital ward | 13 ■ P1 type huts |
| 7 Astra Cinema | |

The Pacific War and American airmen at Amberley

With the bombing of Pearl Harbour and the declaration of war between Japan and the United States, the role of RAAF Base Amberley changed rapidly. The first of a series of Allied Staff Conferences was held at Amberley in December 1941. This was to prove the beginning of a long period of collaboration between the RAAF and the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). To conduct a war in the western Pacific, the United States needed a regional support structure and importantly a base for aircraft assembly and deployment.¹¹ As an operational air base within close proximity of the port of Brisbane, RAAF Base Amberley was a logical choice.

By late December 1941, the first US troops arrived in Brisbane: the Pensacola Convoy with 4,600 National Guard including two USAAF squadrons, the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron and the 7th Bombardment Squadron. The convoy also carried a considerable shipment of armaments, including crates containing 18 Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk and 52 Douglas A-24 Dauntless aircraft. The 88th Reconnaissance Squadron, the 7th Bombardment Squadron together with the aircraft soon left Brisbane for Amberley.¹² The agreement was for the USAAF to assume responsibility for the assembly of all aircraft, which required 27 men working in three teams and taking two to three days to assemble each aircraft. The RAAF would assume general responsibility for the transfer of aircraft to Darwin prior to their deployment to the front. In addition, RAAF Amberley personnel were responsible for training the Kittyhawk aircrews in night flying, dive bombing and air gunnery.¹³

Private Donald Miller from Salt Lake City arrived at Amberley on 24 December 1941 (he was later assigned to 8th Materiel Squadron, 5th Air Base Group). In his diary he described daily life at the Amberley base, working ten hours a day, seven days a week assembling the Kittyhawk and Dauntless aircraft, a task he admitted he and his comrades



A Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk with Bellman Hangar in background.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

knew nothing about at the start. However, their skills rapidly improved and within a month they were assembling ten Kittyhawks a day. Private Miller described his barracks as exceptionally good and the food 'good with plenty of milk every meal and fruit all the time'. At first, he declined passes to leave the base, being too tired, but once he adjusted to the gruelling schedule he ventured to 'Slipstitch' (Ipswich) and Brisbane, marvelling at the welcome he was afforded by the locals. Private Miller also described the thrill of taking test flights with pilots and the reality of war when Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft, riddled with bullet holes from action in the Pacific, arrived at the base for repair. His reflections were more sombre after he witnessed the death of a pilot in a crash. On 22 February 1942, Private Miller left Amberley for good, driving a truck with a 150-gallon (560 litres) water tanker in tow to Archerfield. Despite not having a licence and never having driven a truck before, he arrived safely at his destination.¹⁴



Private Donald Miller, USAAF at RAAF Base Amberley, 1942.
(State Library of Queensland).

By 1942, the USAAF 22nd Service and the US Airways Communication Service were based at RAAF Base Amberley.¹⁵ Initially the US personnel were housed with No 3 SFTS and later with No 3 Recruit Depot, however, the numbers rapidly outgrew the available accommodation. Eventually the US personnel were housed in tents erected on the base by the US Army. By the beginning of 1943 Amberley was home to 2290 Australian and US personnel.¹⁶

A local school newspaper report noted that for the duration of the war, the US officers' clubhouse was the old 'Willow-Bank Station', low set and built on log foundations. The station house, located on the south-west corner of the aerodrome, was later demolished.¹⁷

As Private Miller had discovered, the US forces found a grateful community in nearby Ipswich and were made welcome in houses, shops and hotels and often invited home for meals. They were treated as heroes, despite a few unfortunate incidents. A convoy once travelled the entire distance from Brisbane to Ipswich on the wrong side of the road, thankfully without mishap. On another occasion, a 500lb bomb dropped from the back of a US truck and rolled down an Ipswich street to the fright of watching locals. Luckily, however, the bomb was unarmed at the time.¹⁸

Allied Forces at Amberley

GROUP Captain Eric Douglas's official schedule between 1942 and 1948 provides a snapshot of the role RAAF Base Amberley played in advancing collaboration among the Allied Forces in World War II.¹

August 1942 – General George C Kenney, Commander of the Allied Air Forces in the Southwest Pacific Area, arrived at Amberley.

September 1942 – Official visit of American Senators to Amberley.



US Senators visiting the USAAF and communication hut at Amberley, 1943.
(US National Archives. Image no 111-SC-181420).

October 1942 – General Hap Arnold, Major General Street and Colonel Bill Ritchie landed at Amberley Field.

September 1943 – Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt landed at Amberley to be greeted by Mrs Douglas MacArthur.

February 1944 – General Kenney 'received a message to meet General MacArthur at Amberley Field in an hour.'

July 1944 – VIP Consolidated Liberator C-87, the aircraft of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Commander of the British Fleet, arrived at Amberley.

August 1944 – Charles Lindbergh, the famous aviator, visited Amberley.

November 1944 – 'G for George' arrived at Amberley. This Lancaster Bomber was flown from the UK by RAAF Flight Lieutenant KA Hudson, a DFC and Bar winner from Rockhampton, together with a RAAF crew.

August 1945 – The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester arrived. They lunched at the Amberley Mess as guests of the commanding officer, Group Captain Eric Douglas, after which the Duke carried out an inspection of No 3AD.

January 1946 – 600 US airmen making a mass goodwill tour of Australia were due to land at Amberley in 42 aircraft.

April 1946 – Group Captain Douglas was invited to an Official Reception in Brisbane for Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten.

June 1947 – Avro Lincoln B2 Captain E E Vielle of 'Aries II', Royal New Zealand Air Force, landed.

July 1947 – Field Marshal Montgomery arrived at Eagle Farm and met by Group Captain Douglas.

December 1947 – Group Captain Douglas represented the RAAF at the memorial service of the 'Unknown US Soldier' in Brisbane.

March 1948 – a RAF Lincoln bomber landed at Amberley: 'the crew will lecture RAAF [personnel on] air mustering'.

April 1948 – The Pathfinder Vickers Viking, carrying the insignia of the King's Flight, landed at Amberley under the command of Air Commodore E Fielden.¹

1. Group Captain Eric Douglas. RAAF, Gilbert Eric Douglas 1902–1970 *Trove* viewed 14 June 2016 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/list?id=17911>.

A new centre of excellence: No 3 Aircraft Depot

By April 1942, air crew training had been moved to other bases. No 3 SFTS was disbanded and No 3 Recruit Depot moved to Maryborough, Queensland, marking the end of Amberley's role in training and recruitment for the war effort. Instead, Amberley's focus was shifted to managing aircraft. Under the newly established No 3 Aircraft Depot (No 3AD), station headquarters was reinstated at Amberley. No 3AD was formed with one officer and 106 airmen, mainly from the disbanded No 3 SFTS. Over the long term, this shift transformed the base into a centre of excellence for the assembly, maintenance and salvage of aircraft.¹⁹

This high standard in the early years was largely a result of the leadership of Wing Commander GE (Eric) Douglas. Wing Commander Douglas, the unit's first permanent commanding officer managed No 3AD from 1942 to 1946.²⁰ An important part of his team was RAAF Flight Sergeant Ned Allen, in charge of Test and Ferry Operations for the duration of the war.²¹

Wing Commander Douglas and his family were initially assigned to the Amberley Schoolmaster's House for their living quarters. The school had closed in 1941, as wartime activity at the base provided legitimate cause for concern for the children's welfare.²² The Douglas family later moved to living quarters on the base, in an L-shaped house constructed from two P1 huts. It contained a ballroom for entertaining, which to Douglas's daughter, Sally looked as big as an aircraft hangar. The house was so close to the runway that part of the tarmac was in the front yard.²³

No 3AD worked alongside US personnel, on 12-hour shifts around the clock they assembled aircraft to ensure the fighters aircraft were in service as quickly as possible. In the first two months of operation, No 3AD assembled 123 Bell P-39 Airacobra. By 1942 No 3AD had maintenance facilities for the major servicing of Wirraway, Hudson, Kittyhawk, Lancer, Vultee Vengeance, Boston and Airacobra aircraft.

No 3AD was also responsible for the delivery to No 36 Squadron of the first Douglas DC-3 Dakota allotted to the RAAF.²⁴ By 1943, No 3AD had 1,856 personnel, whose competency was demonstrated by their work on aircraft that included five Spitfires, two Taylor Craft, six Douglas C-47 Dakotas, two Avro Ansons, one Bristol Beaufighter, 25 Kittyhawks, two Lockheed P-38 Lightnings, two B-24 Liberators and one Beaufort (made in New South Wales).²⁵



A Bell P-39 Airacobra is being removed from a crate prior to assembly. Hangar 76 visible in background to the left and the Station Headquarters to the right. (US National Archives. Image no 111-SC-165929).

Once assembled, Kittyhawks were dispatched from Amberley to USAAF Pursuit Squadrons at other RAAF bases. The crash rate of the aeroplanes during training was staggering, with 140 of the 330 delivered lost in accidents by 1942. Many Kittyhawks were flown to Darwin for deployment in the western Pacific and pilots were told to follow the route to Darwin via the trail of crashed aircraft.²⁶



Officer Staff of No 3AD with Commanding Officer, Group Captain Eric Douglas (front centre). A Consolidated B24 Liberator in the background, 18 June 1945.
(Australian War Memorial. NEA0690).

No 3AD included a salvage section that sourced and stripped unserviceable aircraft from the surrounding area. Parts salvaged were forwarded to No 5 Aircraft Depot at Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. No 3AD was also responsible during this period for conducting major inspections on Wirraway and Hudson aircraft and for manufacturing the mounting and fittings for forward guns for the Wirraway.²⁷

This role – assembly, maintenance and salvage of aircraft – was to remain the primary focus of RAAF Amberley for the remainder of the war. However, the earlier division of duties between the US and Australian forces at the base – USAAF personnel assembling aircraft and RAAF personnel delivering aircraft and training pilots – also continued.²⁸

RAAF Amberley was also utilised by operational lodger units for refitting and as a staging area before moving onto to other bases. The term operational lodger unit described units temporarily located at a base before redeployment elsewhere. For the duration of the war, the units located at Amberley for a significant time were the United States Air Force Squadrons, including a large transport detachment and a squadron equipped with Airacobra fighters.²⁹ In addition to the US personnel, up to 2,000 Australian and British forces were stationed at the base.³⁰

Until 1943, RAAF Base Amberley also served as a staging post for the trans-Pacific air ferry service. This intensive airfreight and ferry service linked the US forces with the war in the Pacific. At the height of the war, 600 US troops were flown from the United States every 24 hours. Their first touchdown was at RAAF Amberley, where they were given a health check before being lodged in nearby Ipswich and then sent to the frontline in New Guinea.³¹

Construction works continue

While the base operated its gruelling schedule of assembling, maintaining and salvaging aircraft, construction works continued to meet the demand. From 1942, construction was under the control of the Civil Constructional Corps (CCC), formed under the auspices of the Allied Works Council to coordinate essential infrastructure works for the defence of Australia.³²

Fourteen Bellman hangars – galvanised steel transportable sheds – were installed to cater for the base’s rapidly expanding role in assembling aircraft for the USAAF. The CCC constructed other portable or prefabricated buildings for the USAAF, including four Igloo hangars, a combined mess and recreation hut, a bathhouse, latrines and storage for flammable materials.³³ Other works included shelter trenches for personnel, roads for the dispersal of aircraft, splinter proof walls around operations buildings, and a boiler room.³⁴



A USAF Douglas A-24 Dauntless at Amberley with Bellman Hangar in the background. (RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

Across the base, numerous P1 huts were springing up, these huts were used extensively as barracks accommodation by defence throughout Australia during the war. P1 huts proved incredibly versatile and were used singly or in groups for a whole range of building requirements, not just accommodation.³⁵

Until the USAAF equipped the runways with electric lights, flares were used for night time operations. One runway still intersected the Old Toowoomba Road, with boom gates erected to stop traffic during takeoff and landings.³⁶ Satellite runways, such as the Forks (A-7) Emergency Landing Ground, were constructed to provide an option if a take-off failed (which they often did). These were also used for training.³⁷

As the threat of air attack was always a possibility, a series of camouflage bomber hideouts was constructed for storing aircraft. A new operations building was also constructed in a quarry outside the base perimeter and covered with camouflage netting.³⁸



RAAF Base Amberley barracks in the 1940s.
(Howard Kennedy, Picture Ipswich, Ipswich City Council).



Erection of camouflaged hideouts at the base, 1942.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

Women at war

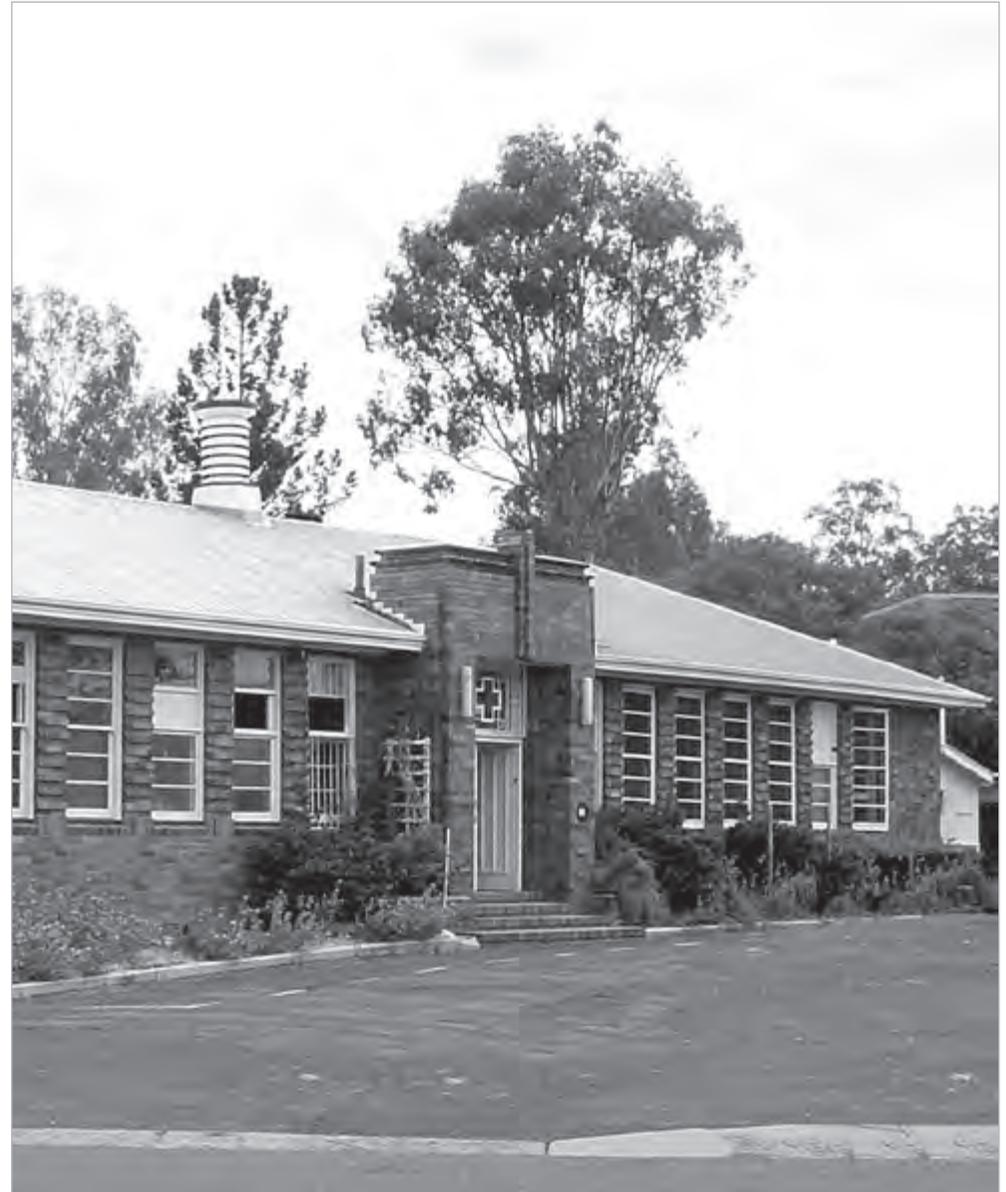
While Amberley operated around the clock churning out aircraft for the south-western Pacific operations, it was also part of a quiet revolution. The RAAF had been a strictly male preserve prior to World War II, but the onset of war created a demand for both skilled and non-skilled recruits. As a result, the role women could play in assisting the war effort was recognised with the RAAF leading the way in introducing women to the defence workforce.³⁹

RAAF Nursing Service

As the RAAF rapidly increased its recruitment intake to meet the growing demand for air crew, the large numbers of personnel housed in close quarters resulted in numerous outbreaks of infectious diseases such as mumps and influenza. The health care of RAAF personnel had been largely met by male orderlies and civilian nurses, but in 1940 this was deemed no longer adequate and the RAAF Nursing Service was established in response.⁴⁰

The RAAF nursing sisters arrived at Amberley in late 1941, with Senior Sister Throsby the first sister in charge of the Station Sick Quarters (SSQ). The SSQ buildings (hospital and ward) had been constructed in 1940. Given the number of crashes at the base, the hospital would have played an important role in base life. In late 1943, the SSQ assumed an additional role through the establishment of the No 1 Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit (MAETU). The unit, using selected and specially trained RAAF registered nurses and medical orderlies, was responsible for the air evacuation of patients from war zones. Once the specialised training was complete a number of nurses were posted to work at Amberley SSQ while awaiting assignment. In 1944, 45 beds at Amberley were made available for air evacuation patients, with a peak of 145 arrivals in January 1945. At SSQ they were fed, given a bed and medically assessed for transfer either onward by air, or to Brisbane for treatment.⁴¹

In 1945 when the war ended, the Station became the first Australian stop for many ex-prisoners of war returning home. 'Medicine', for those well enough, took the form of bacon, eggs, toast and coffee, with the men playing two up on the lawn in front of the Station as they waited for their flights home.⁴²



RAAF Base Amberley Station Sick Quarters (later Hospital).
(RAAF Base Amberley, 2016).

Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force

Meanwhile, in 1941 the formation of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was approved by the War Cabinet.⁴³ The WAAAF played an important role at Amberley. By 1943, 118 women were engaged in mustering activities that covered administration, aircraft maintenance, domestic, signals and intelligence.⁴⁴



WAAAF fabric workers refolding parachutes at RAAF Station, Amberley, Qld, c.1943.
(Australian War Memorial. VIC1491).

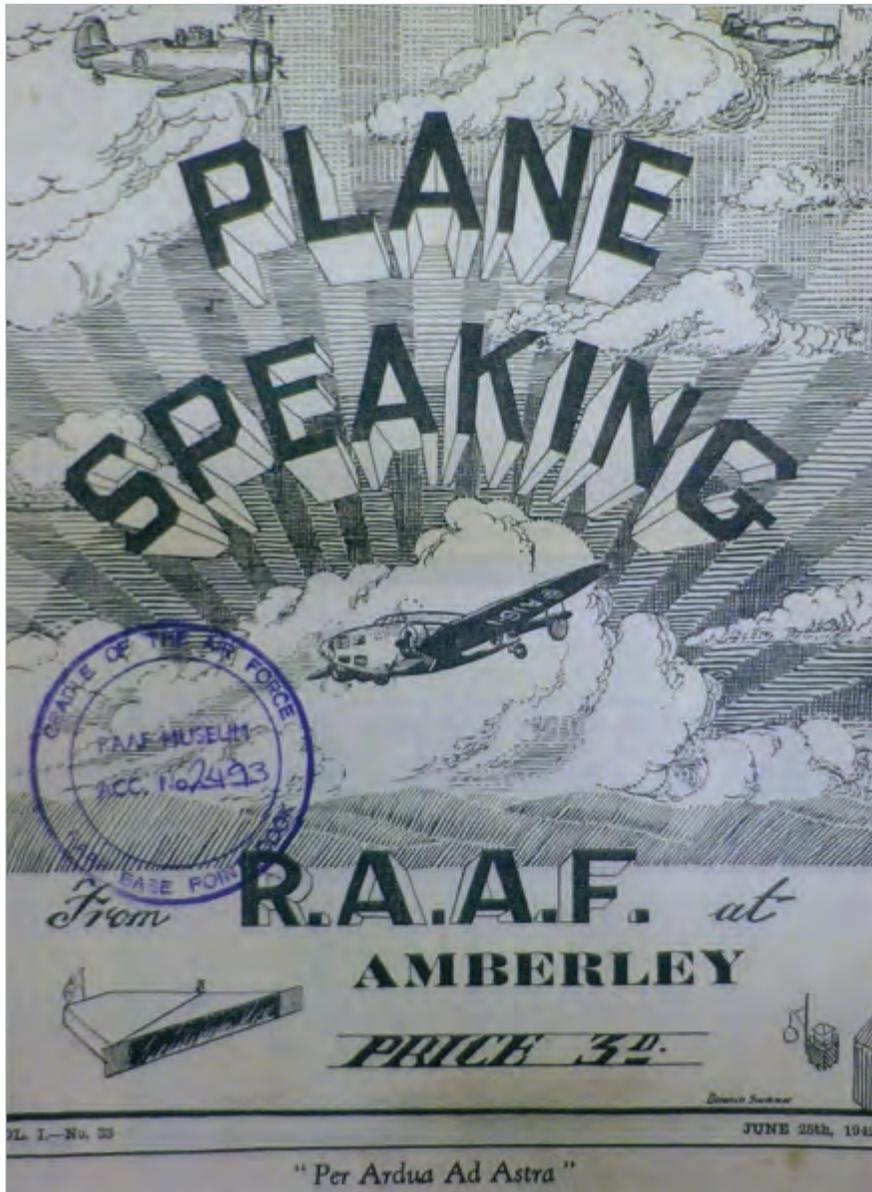
It wasn't all hard work: recreation during wartime

Life at the base wasn't all hard work with a glimpse of the base's social and recreational life found in the newsletters *Amberley Amberlings* and later *Plane Speaking*.

Produced during 1941 by base chaplains ('padres'), *Amberley Amberlings* was intended to promote morale and ensure that base personnel were well informed of what was expected of them. Sporting events included athletics meets, golf, soccer and rugby union. A chess club and an Airmen's Library in Hut 220 indicated a range of leisure pursuits were available. Social life included the Airmen's Dance, which was packed despite petrol rationing preventing the bus from Brisbane from running. Humour was not forgotten, with the 'Roos Medal' awarded to an airman who was still recovering after leaping from an aircraft to save his life. Support from the people of Ipswich was evident. For example, the local Country Women's Association (CWA) attended the base each week to mend and darn clothes for those who required their services.⁴⁵

The later *Plane Speaking* appears to be a production by base personnel and with the arrival of the USAAF and the WAAAF becomes a lot more entertaining.⁴⁶ The US personnel were invited to submit items for 'Our Star Spangled Section' while the WAAAF provided content for 'News from the Waaafery'. The arrival of women at the base changed the focus of social life with much print space devoted to assignations and gossip. This included an article devoted to the revelation that the aircraft spotters, with the benefit of binoculars, could see the women in the WAAAF quarters.

The range of sports had increased, with tennis and cricket now available. Talented base personnel included the interstate rugby league player Danny O'Connor, the State and Australian heavyweight boxing champion Terry Burns and Fred Bailey, an Australian representative soccer player. The US troops provided an international flavour forming their own baseball league. The fiction library was now in Hut 218 along with the CWA women, who still offered to mend clothes.



June 1942 edition of Plane Speaking, the base newsletter. (RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

Musical talent led to a group of airmen forming a band, accompanied by a tap dancer, they provided entertainment for the patients at the Ipswich Military Hospital. The WAAAF and the Nursing Service extended the talent pool and together with the RAAF, they produced revues on base for sell-out crowds. Weekly dance nights were run by the WAAAF with sandwiches provided by the Airmen's Mess and cakes by the Sergeants' Mess. The formation of the Amberley Band was an important and long-lasting development. The first public performance of the newly formed RAAF Base Amberley Band was in 1943 at the Ipswich Anzac Day march. In August 1944, the band purchased new instruments and from that time the band has been an important musical accompaniment to functions and events not only for the base but also the wider Ipswich community. The dances held in the Airmen's Mess (later the gymnasium) were a regular venue for the band.

The Astra Cinema, described as Amberley's main off-duty attraction functioned six nights a week. It operated through the efforts of a number of volunteers who carried out tasks such as ordering the movies, collecting admission, operating the projectors and ensuring the theatre was clean.⁴⁷



Astra Cinema in the 1940s. (Eric Douglas Collection, Picture Ipswich, Ipswich City Council).

Base Commander – GE (Eric) Douglas (1902–1970)

GILBERT Eric Douglas, drawn to aviation as a boy, enlisted in the (Royal) Australian Air Force in 1921 as an aircraftman class 2, fitter aero. In 1927, he graduated as a pilot with the rank of sergeant.

In April 1929 he joined the search team for the ill-fated Kookaburra flight and its crew of Keith Anderson and Bob Hitchcock. One of the ground party to first reach the Kookaburra's forced-landing site in the Tanami Desert, he assisted in the burial of the Anderson and Hitchcock. He was recommended for the Air Force Medal for his part in the mission.

In the summer of 1929/30 the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition was equipped with a Gypsy Moth seaplane and two pilots, Flying Officers Eric Douglas and Stuart Campbell, to accompany the explorers on their polar voyage. In addition to flight duties, Douglas was responsible for aircraft maintenance. Sir Douglas Mawson thought highly of the pilots and chose them to accompany him on the next expedition in 1930/31. In 1934, the Polar Medal 'Antarctic 1929-31' was awarded to Douglas. In December 1935, Douglas again visited Antarctica, this time in command of the RAAF contingent that assisted the American explorer Lincoln Ellsworth and his pilot Herbert Hollick-Kenyon.¹

In 1940, Douglas was appointed command of the No 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton Base. In June 1942, he assumed command of the RAAF Base Amberley and charged with servicing aircraft of the Australian and US air forces. On 1 December 1943, he was promoted to temporary group captain and in August 1947 became commanding officer of RAAF Station, Amberley. Douglas's prime duty at Amberley was the formation of No 3 Aircraft Depot and its build up of workshops and ancillary sections to a self-contained unit of 1,600 RAAF personnel.² Douglas had his favourite aircraft, the Wapiti the 'second' aircraft on Discovery II on the trip to Antarctica assigned to No 3AD, Amberley where it was used as a parachute test aircraft and by Douglas to inspect ancillary air fields.³

Douglas was a dedicated family man and his children, Ian and Sally, often appeared in official photos. *The Cairns Post* reported on 14 July 1947 that Group Captain Douglas was the RAAF senior officer who met Field Marshal Montgomery at Eagle Farm, Brisbane. On this important occasion, Douglas was accompanied by his young son Ian Ellsworth Douglas.



Group Captain Eric Douglas with son, Ian Douglas meeting Field Marshall Montgomery, Eagle Farm, Brisbane, 1947.

(Eric Douglas Collection – courtesy of Sally Douglas).

In November 1946, at the Ipswich Branch of the Air Force Association meeting, Mr RG Andrew representing Ipswich Commerce paid Eric Douglas a tribute by saying 'Group Captain Douglas has more time for the "underdog" than any other man I have seen in a CO's position anywhere in Australia'.⁴ Eric Douglas retired on 1 July 1948 with the rank of Group Captain.⁵

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2. Sally Douglas email to Laraine Nelson 14 July 2016.
3. Ian Douglas.
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5. D Wilson.

The war is over

On 5 July 1945, the USAAF Air Transport Command departed from the base. The Japanese surrender was announced at 1030 hours on 15 August 1945 by the Base Commander and all units were stood down from 15 August to the 17 August to celebrate.

The jubilation on 16 August was tempered by grief when a No 99 Squadron RAAF B-24J Liberator crashed on take-off from Amberley with the loss of four lives. On 14 September 1945 another Liberator, the crew also from No 99 Squadron, crashed resulting in a further five deaths. These were not the first crashes: accidents and loss of life had been part of the base since the first recorded crash in January 1942. Between that



Abandoned World War II aircraft following the cessation of the war.
(John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland Negative No 168430).

date and 14 September 1945 there had been 18 aircraft crashes, many resulting in loss of life.⁴⁸

On June 10 1946, Ipswich held a Victory March in which No 3AD and No 82 Wing participated.⁴⁹

By the end of World War II, the RAAF was the fourth largest air force in the world.⁵⁰ During the course of the war, RAAF Base Amberley had been home to a range of aircraft including the CAC Wirraway, Lockheed Hudson, Martin B-26 Marauder, Curtiss P-40 Kittyhawk, Vultee A-31 Vengeance, Bell P-39 Airacobra, Republic P-43 Lancer, Boston Bombers as well as Spitfires and B-24J Liberators.⁵¹

With the signing of the peace treaty, RAAF Amberley rapidly transitioned from its wartime role to its future as a permanent RAAF Station. Demobilisation saw a dramatic reduction in base personnel. In August 1945 the RAAF order of battle, the official number of personnel serving, was 173,622, by 31 October 1946 the number had plummeted to 13,238.⁵² Nationally there was little motivation to reinvent and invest in the Air Force, as the country focused on repatriating service personnel and addressing economic issues. A decision had already been taken that the post-war RAAF would have 12,000 men, organised into 16 squadrons and 144 aircraft.⁵³

The role of No 3AD changed in 1946 when it assumed responsibility for the care and maintenance of aircraft stored at the base.⁵⁴ Group Captain Douglas recorded the following 372 aircraft on base as at 30 September 1946: 95 Mosquitos, 62 Mustang fighters, 63 Liberator bombers, 49 Spitfires, 41 Vengeance bombers, 33 Mitchell bombers, ten Avro Ansons, ten Dakota transporters, two Beaufighters, four Beaufort bombers, one Ventura, one Wirraway and one Boomerang fighter.⁵⁵

Ultimately, the Department of Defence decided that the majority of aircraft no longer needed would be sold to other government departments, commercial operators and private individuals. The Department of Civil Aviation understandably would not issue certificates of airworthiness for aircraft that had seen active service, consequently, most of the aeroplanes once stripped of valuable items were broken down and sold for scrap metal or dumped.⁵⁶

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25. 'History of RAAF Base Amberley', p. 25.
26. Oz at War.
27. RAAF Historical Section, *Maintenance*, p.10.
28. Gillison, p. 297.
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Chapter



The arrival of the jet age, 1948–1965

RAAF Base Amberley – bomber command

THE post-war formation and reorganisation of RAAF units located at Amberley came into effect on 15 August 1947, when Headquarters RAAF Station Amberley formed under the command of Headquarters Eastern Area, with responsibility for providing facilities for the RAAF units based at Amberley. The base's permanent post-war role began on 23 February 1948 when Amberley became the RAAF's major base for bomber aircraft operations in addition to maintaining its capability for aircraft maintenance.

During this period operational units were renamed: No 12, No 21 and No 23 Heavy Bomber Squadrons became, respectively No 1, No 2 and No 6 Bomber Squadrons and No 82 Heavy Bomber Wing became No 82 Bomber Wing. The newly renamed No 6 Squadron was equipped with Australian-built Lincoln Mk 30s, the largest aircraft manufactured in Australia and a development of the well-known Lancaster heavy bomber.

Nos 1, 2 and 6 Squadrons formed part of 82 Bomber Wing, part of the RAAF's Mobile Task Force (MTF) of bomber, fighter and transport wings, plus a tactical reconnaissance squadron. The MTF was to be the RAAF's rapid response to emergencies at home and overseas. The reality, however, was that the squadrons had relatively few personnel and fewer aircraft, with little flying undertaken while the government decided on the permanent form of the post-war RAAF. For instance when No 6 Squadron, was formed it had 21 personnel and two aircraft (as did Nos 1 and 2 Squadrons).¹

19 February 1948 – the Lincoln tragedy

One of the worst air crashes in Australian history and the largest crash in RAAF history to that date, occurred at Amberley on 19 February 1948 when a Lincoln A73-11 on return from Laverton crashed in the north-east corner of the airfield. All 16 service personnel on board were killed instantly when the aircraft, carrying a cargo of explosives, burst into flames upon impact.²

Ian Douglas (son of Group Captain Eric Douglas) had been playing tennis and watched the aircraft fail an attempted landing and slide off the runway into Warrill Creek. Ian's model Liberator used previously for aircraft recognition training by RAAF personnel during the War, was used to demonstrate the crash at the Board of Inquiry.³

A Requiem Mass was held at St Stephen's Cathedral, Brisbane, by Rev Father AJ Hogan, the Amberley chaplain at the time who narrowly missed being a passenger on the ill-fated aircraft. Indeed, services were held at the three main churches in Brisbane city before the bodies were brought to the Commonwealth War Graves at Lutwyche for mass burial with full Air Force honours. Thousands lined the streets for the funeral procession, during the service a Lincoln bomber circled overhead while over 2,000 people watched the mass burial.⁴

A court of inquiry into the crash found that its cause was a poor distribution of freight and passengers for the landing, such that the centre of gravity was placed outside the aft limits of the aircraft. This caused the aeroplane to become uncontrollable and it stalled at a height of approximately 152 metres.⁵

Air Crash

Full Honours For Victims At Mass Burial

BECAUSE the majority of the bodies of the 16 airmen killed in the Lincoln bomber crash at Amberley on Thursday cannot be identified, the R.A.A.F. has ordered a mass burial on Monday.



F/Lt. N. H. Kobelke, D.F.C.
Cpl. A. D. Bernard
F/Lt. E. E. Williams, D.F.C.
F/Lt. W. G. Gardner, D.F.C.

The funeral at Lutwyche cemetery will be accompanied by full Air Force honours.

Shortly before 2 p.m. the caskets containing the bodies of the airmen will draw up before St. John's Cathedral on two gun carriages.

One of the caskets will be taken inside for the service, which will be conducted by R.A.A.F. Chaplain J. R. Hall.

At 2.30 p.m. the funeral will leave for Lutwyche Cemetery for a service at the graveside, conducted by Chaplain Hall, Chaplain A. J. Hogan (Roman Catholic), the Rev. L. G. Crisp (United Churches), Rev. A. Crowe (Presbyterian), and the Rev. Lex Robinson (Methodists).

'Air Crash', The Courier-Mail, 21 February 1948.
(National Library of Australia. 49649513).

The Canberra – a jet bomber

In 1950, the Australian Government approved the local manufacture of 48 English Electric jet Canberra bombers to replace the RAAF's ageing fleet of Lincoln bombers. This was the start of a new era in military aviation. Known as the GAF Canberra Mk 20, this high-speed, high-altitude jet bomber was highly manoeuvrable and the first bomber in RAAF service to be fitted with ejection seats. The Canberra did have shortcomings in other capabilities, such as the lack of radar bombing and navigational aids, however the aircraft were a considerable improvement on the Lincoln.⁶

The first Canberra bomber arrived in Australia in 1951 and was the star of the Air Force Week Pageant at Amberley. The second aircraft arrived in 1952. At this time preparations began at Amberley for the introduction of the Canberra, including the formation of Canberra Flight within No 82 Wing. No 2 Squadron was the first operational unit to receive the Canberra in 1954.⁷ By 1955 both No 2 Squadron and No 6 Squadron were equipped as Canberra squadrons.⁸

The replacement of the Lincoln by the Canberra was gradual, with No 6 Squadron re-equipped in July 1955 and No 1 Squadron in 1958.⁹ The same year, No 2 Squadron, equipped with the Canberra bomber, was redeployed to Butterworth, Malaya.¹⁰ Following the conversion of several squadrons to the Canberra, the remaining Lincolns came under the control of the new squadron, the Lincoln Conversion Flight. Formed at Amberley in 1955 as part of No 82 Wing, this was the training unit for the Lincoln's operational role. The squadron carried out various reconnaissance and training exercises as well as search and rescue and aid missions.¹¹



Canberra Bomber and ground crew on runway RAAF Base Amberley, 1964.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

The Cold War era

The emergence of the 'Cold War' saw the RAAF playing a significant role in international affairs. The Australian Government's close allegiances to the United States and the United Kingdom led it to commit military support in several conflicts from the late 1940s onwards.

The Malayan Emergency, 1948–1958

The Malayan Emergency was declared on 18 June 1948 after three estate managers were murdered by guerrillas of the Malayan Communist Party. The situation deteriorated when the British High Commissioner was assassinated and consequently Britain decided to take on the threat posed by the Communists. The insurgency was led by the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army of approximately 5,000 members who had fought alongside Commonwealth forces



No 1 Squadron CO and crew, Malaya, 1957.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

during the war. When Britain intervened, this group became the Malayan People's Anti-British Army. Australia became involved upon Britain's formal request for armed forces in April 1950 and the Malayan Emergency became the one of the longest continuous military commitments in Australia's history.¹²

On 16 July 1950, six Lincoln bombers of No 1 Squadron, Amberley, commanded by Squadron Leader H Williamson, returned to the Malayan Peninsula and operated from the Tengah airfield on Singapore Island. The Lincolns carried out day and night bombing raids year after year until July 1958, when the squadron was withdrawn to Amberley and the Malayan Government officially declared the emergency at an end. The Australian Lincolns dropped 85 per cent of the bomb tonnage expended in the Malayan Emergency operations – five times more than all other squadrons in Malaya together.¹³ In recognition of their achievements during the emergency, the Commander in Chief Far East Air Force, Air Marshal the Earl of Brand, presented No 1 Squadron with its standard.

The return of No 1 Squadron and the six Lincolns to Amberley also saw the end of the aircraft's use by the squadron. The squadron was re-equipped with the new Canberra jet bombers, which it used until 1970 when the Canberra were replaced by McDonnell Douglas F-4E Phantom aircraft.¹⁴

British atomic testing program, 1952–1958

In the 1950s and 60s, there were fears about the escalation of nuclear armament following on from the USA's development of the atomic bomb, as dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, and the USSR having caught up by August 1949 with its own nuclear tests.

Australia assisted the British Government in a series of atomic tests in the 1950s. Both of No 82 Wing's Lincoln squadrons (No 2 and No 6) were involved in the British atomic trials carried out in western and central

Australia during the early 1950s. The first tests, 'Operation Hurricane', were carried out at Monte Bello Island in October 1952. The second series was 'Operation Totem' at Emu Field, South Australia (west of Coober Pedy) in October 1953.



Lincoln A73-54 flown by No 82 Wing during the Atomic Testing Program.
(Gordon Birkett Collection).

The Amberley Lincolns were supported in the testing by the newly formed general reconnaissance unit, No 10 Squadron, at Townsville. In the first Operation Hurricane test, the bomb was exploded in a British frigate moored in the bay. Eight Lincolns from No 6 Squadron and five from No 10 Squadron (two of which were flown by No 2 Squadron crews) provided air communications, meteorological reports and atomic cloud sampling. No 6 Squadron operated from Broome and the other Lincolns flew from Townsville. Five of the aircraft tracked the atomic cloud following the detonation and three entered the cloud to collect radioactive dust in underwing canisters and take Geiger counter readings. No special precautions were taken to protect RAAF personnel

from radiation. The Lincolns were not decontaminated and returned to normal duties.¹⁵

Operation Totem involved No 6 Squadron operating out of Woomera and a detachment from No 2 Squadron flying a Lincoln contingent out of Richmond, New South Wales. The atomic weapons for Operation Totem were placed on towers for detonation.

For the first Totem test on 15 October (*Totem 1*), crews in the Lincoln bombers sent out to monitor the cloud from the explosion flew through the radioactive clouds. Eight of the nine RAAF Lincoln bombers used on air sampling and cloud tracking tasks were contaminated during *Totem 1*. The level of radioactive exposure was far greater than anticipated and many changes were made for the second Totem test conducted on 27 October (*Totem 2*). In particular, crew members were provided with protective clothing, radiation film badges and oxygen and their exposure to the radioactive cloud reduced to 10 minutes. Ground crew were also provided with protective clothing and equipment. Four aircraft were so contaminated after the Totem series that they never flew again and lay abandoned at RAAF Amberley for several years before they were scrapped and buried.¹⁶

As well as providing personnel and aircraft, RAAF Base Amberley was required to clean the aircraft used in Operation Totem and to maintain a 'continuing commitment' to later tests. A separate taxiway and a special decontamination centre were constructed in 1954 for this purpose. The centre operational in November 1954, was visible in aerial photography and included a large dish-shaped concrete structure.¹⁷ Atomic testing ended in 1958 and Amberley was no longer required to carry out the laborious and difficult task of decontaminating the aircraft. Almost thirty years later, in 1984, safety tests were carried out at Amberley using Geiger counters. The base commanding officer, Air Commodore Thompson, said the result was negative.¹⁸

Royal Commission into British nuclear tests in Australia: the McClelland Royal Commission, 1984–1985

THE terms of reference of the Royal Commission into British nuclear tests were, in brief, to: examine the safety measures; determine if they were adequate; and determine whether any persons were adversely affected by the program. The commission was informed by British and Australian witnesses involved with the testing program, ranging from civilians to scientists to RAAF personnel. A number of RAAF Base Amberley personnel appeared before the commission, including Colin Bird, whose testimony shows the inadequacy of training and protection and the significant health problems that resulted.



RAAF Base Amberley showing location of Decontamination Centre.

(The report of the Royal Commission into British nuclear tests in Australia, AGPS, Canberra, 1985. National Archives of Australia: A6460).

Testimony of Colin Irvine Bird, RAAF Aircraft Fitter

Mr Bird was deployed from RAAF Amberley to the Broome Base for five weeks during 1952 to assist in the Monte Bello nuclear test program. His main duty was to fasten and remove the 'filter canisters' to and from the wings of the Lincoln Bombers that flew through the cloud from the bomb blast, collecting samples to measure the intensity of the radioactivity. He did not wear any safety clothing and indeed, was dressed only in shorts and a hat.

Upon returning to Amberley, the Lincoln Bombers were found to be radioactive. They were classified as 'contaminated' and within two days, 'highly contaminated'. Mr Bird, along with other ground staff, was ordered to wash the aircraft with high pressure steam hoses. He would stand underneath the aeroplanes, spraying the hot steam hose upwards and would become completely saturated with the contaminated runoff water. He wore overalls that were discarded following three showers taken throughout the day. Three weeks after commencing this work he was issued with a film badge to wear which measured radioactivity. The Lincoln bombers went on to be reclassified as 'dangerous' and they were towed away to a restricted area of the aerodrome.

Mr Bird's health was poor and he had cancerous growths behind his ear, on his neck and on his upper torso, which were partially removed; he was undergoing radium treatment at the time of the inquiry.¹

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National Service in the 1950s

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, along with the Malayan Emergency and the Viet Minh uprising against the French in Vietnam, was considered to threaten Australia directly. The Menzies Government reintroduced conscription in 1951 following its cessation in 1945 because recruiting for the regular armed services was inadequate. In the first National Service scheme between 1951 and 1959, young men aged 18 were selected through a ballot system for training. A total of 227,000 youths served in 52 intakes. Around 23,500 National Servicemen undertook their training in National Service Training Units in the RAAF and were allocated to Flights, corresponding to platoons, at the major bases and depots throughout Australia.¹⁹



National Service presentations at Parade Ground, May 1955.
(George Hatchman Collection).

The first batch of 200 trainees arrived at Amberley RAAF Station on 30 July 1951, of which 36 were to be given ground combat training and the rest were split between other units at the station. Only six trainees from the intake of 200 would be chosen for air crew after the initial

training period of 178 days. An article in *The Queensland Times* described the living conditions provided for trainees as 'de luxe': each room in newly erected huts housed four trainees and the ablution huts had hot and cold running water, porcelain wash basins and shower cubicles.²⁰ The value of the scheme to the RAAF was debatable. Air Commodore John Jacobs, describes the era at Amberley, when as a pilot he observed the difficulty of trainees gaining proficiency in Air Force Technical Trades in such a short training period. As a result, they were often employed as labourers or carried out menial tasks, with the resulting boredom causing disciplinary issues.²¹ Gay Halstead however, a RAAF Nursing Sister on base at the time, described the positive impact that six months of training had on the personalities and physiques of the National Servicemen and how, when asked, most said that they would not have missed the experience.²²

The National Servicemen took part in various parades for special events, including the earliest open days held at the base known as aerial pageants.²³ During the Queen's first visit to Australia in March 1954, 200 National Servicemen from units based at Amberley and Archerfield formed part of the guard lining the streets in central Brisbane. There were 19 intakes at Amberley before the unit disbanded in July 1957, when the National Service program ceased.²⁴

Army aviation at Amberley in the 1960s

In December 1960, the 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron (16 ALA) was formed at RAAF Base Amberley to support the Australian Army's activities and also train Army pilots and technical ground crew. The valuable contribution that an aviation wing could make to the Army was well recognised, although Australian Army Aviation (AAAvn) was not officially formed until 1968. In 1965, the 161 Reconnaissance Flight was raised from the 16 ALA at Amberley for deployment to Vietnam. The 161 Flight was reviewed in a farewell parade before departing on the HMAS Sydney. Equipped with two Cessna 180s and two Bell 47G-3B-1, the Flight was

based at Bien Hoa Airbase, Vietnam. The pilots were advised, prior to flying to Bien Hoa, that they were required to select a call sign beginning with the letter P. Captain Bevan Smith, the senior pilot, chose 'POSSUM' and this word has become part of AAVn history.²⁵ In 1966, the 16 ALA was renamed the 1st Divisional Army Aviation Regiment.²⁶



16ALA Bell 47G-3B-1 helicopter with Bellman hangar in the background.
(RAAF Base Amberley).

Base development

Australia's involvement in conflicts during the 1950s, the introduction of Canberra bombers in 1953 and the arrival of No 23 Squadron (Citizen Air Force) with the Vampire aircraft led to considerable development at the base during this period. Airfield changes included extensions and realignments of the main runway and parallel taxiway and a new air traffic control tower constructed around 1950 to replace the original timber control tower fixed to Hangar 76.²⁷

Additional residential accommodation was also desperately needed during this time to provide for the large intakes of National Servicemen. The solution was provided mainly in the form of demountable huts. There was also a push to construct more permanent buildings in the 1950s and 60s as part of a building program across many major Australian Defence sites. Under this program, the timber and corrugated iron buildings of wartime were replaced with brick multi-storey blocks for accommodation. New buildings at Amberley included sleeping quarters for airmen and an Airmen's Recreation Centre constructed between 1957 and 1958. It was also around this time that the former Airmen's mess was converted to a gymnasium.²⁸



Newly constructed Airmen's accommodation, 1957.
(National Archives of Australia, J2669/ NEG 681).

The former Air Safety Equipment building, completed in October 1956, was subsequently relocated within the base in the 1970s.²⁹ The building still remains, the last of its type in use within the RAAF estate to retain its original form with modified gable end to enable the drying, packing and storage of parachutes and the servicing of life rafts. Otherwise the layout, design features and technology employed are that of the standard P1 type hut used by Defence after World War II.³⁰



Air Safety Equipment Building in the background together with Lincoln and Canberra aircraft, c. 1956.

(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

Other post-war, prefabricated buildings constructed at Amberley during this period included a collection of around 30 'Riley Newsum' houses of which only two remain. Riley Newsum houses were constructed on numerous military bases in the 1950s in response to a shortage of building materials following World War II. In 1951 the Commonwealth Government arranged for 336 prefabricated homes to be brought to Queensland for use as married quarters for Army, Air Force and government department personnel.³¹ There were two types, the Hawksley (aluminium, 1,000 sq/ft [300 m²] in size) and the Riley Newsum (timber, 1,150 sq/ft [350 m²]).³² Semi-circular Nissen huts were also erected on base around this time to increase the available storage area, but none remain.



Air Force personnel outside a Nissen workshop hangar, RAAF Base Amberley, 1940s.

(Eric Douglas Collection, Picture Ipswich, Ipswich City Council).

Post-war innovation – prefab housing

PREFABRICATED housing was an important innovation in response to urgent and extensive housing needs in Australia in the post-war period. While buildings needing to be erected quickly, building materials were in short supply and prefab houses were the solution. This followed on from a RAAF tradition of using such structures during the World War II period when the P1 type hut and the Bellman hangar were commonplace.

The Riley-Newsum house with component parts supplied from overseas was an exemplar. The house was designed in Australia by Melbourne architect Mr AB Armstrong and manufactured by the British firm of H Newsum Sons and Co in Lincoln (under the direction of Mr James Riley) using Swedish and Finnish timber. The houses were shipped to Australia in sets of eight crates with one complete house per crate. All items for the construction were provided, including electrical fittings and all items in the crate were used, including the crate itself which was used for flooring. The only Australian-provided materials were the concrete or timber stumps. A Riley-Newsum house could be erected in one week by 12 men. They were designed to provide generously

sized family homes including an entrance hall, three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and bathroom.¹

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P1 Hut, RAAF Amberley, 1940s.
(Frozen in Time Gallery).

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Chapter



The era of the F-111, 1966–2010

RAAF Base Amberley and the new RAAF

THE arrival of the F-111 and its assignment to RAAF Amberley confirmed the base's role as the No 82 Bomber Wing base incorporating the Nos 1, 2 and 6 Squadrons.¹ Other Amberley units at the time included the No 1 (Bomber) Operational Conversion Unit, No 482 (Maintenance) Squadron, No 3 Aircraft Depot, No 23 (City of Brisbane) (Auxiliary) Squadron and No 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron (16 ALA).



A Vampire as Gate Guardian with RAAF Base Amberley Guardhouse in the background, 1967. (23SQN Historian).

The presence of the MTF, a rapid deployment group capable of meeting defence emergencies, provided advantages to the base. These included improved base facilities and a substantial growth in base population. In 1965, there were 1,295 personnel stationed at the base, in 1968, 1,875, and by 1970, 2,747 personnel called RAAF Base Amberley home.²

The F-111

As the base for No 82 Bomber Wing since World War II, Amberley had hosted the B-24 Liberator, the Lincoln and later the GAF Canberra aircraft. By 1962, the Canberra – considered to have many shortcomings – was nearing the end of its operating life. The ongoing Cold War and changing strategic circumstances in South East Asia resulted in a decision to replace the existing bomber fleet.³ A number of options were considered, but the final choice was the General Dynamics TFX (F-111A), a revolutionary aircraft that was still under development. The RAAF requested modifications with the new model designated as the F-111C. The F-111C, the RAAF argued provided the best value in terms of price and delivery and in 1963 the order was placed for 24 bombers at a cost of £56 million (equivalent of \$1,524,888,888 today).⁴

The F-111A's radical design included an advanced wing sweep mechanism and terrain-following radar. This allowed automatic blind low-level flight, which together with long range and weapons carrying capability, provided a huge technological leap from the existing Canberra fleet.⁵

The decision proved controversial, with disquiet around the aircraft and the decision to purchase. As the cost increased with no firm date in sight for delivery, calls to cancel the order increased. Despite this, the RAAF's plans progressed, including the announcement that RAAF Base Amberley would be the base for the F-111.⁶

The pressure was on to ensure that not only the base, but also the personnel, were prepared for the arrival of an aircraft described as providing a 'quantum leap in technology'.⁷ A 'Master Plan' was developed to guide the building program. Stage One was the construction of 25 new technical and administrative buildings estimated to cost around \$10.53 million. The new buildings planned for No 482 Maintenance Squadron and No 3AD modified a United States Air Force (USAF) design for RAAF requirements. The new Hangar 363 would be the largest building on base (it was nicknamed the Taj Mahal), while Hangar 76, a stalwart of the base since World War II, would be modified to accommodate the future overhaul of the F-111 Pratt and Whitney T30 engines. In addition, No 3AD's existing hangars and workshops were extensively modified to accommodate the anticipated major upgrades and complex maintenance requirements of the new aircraft.⁸



Building No 363, known as the Taj Mahal, constructed for the F-111.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

New administrative buildings included the Strike Headquarters Building (Building 343), the officers' mess (Building 504) (which won a bronze medal for architectural design)⁹, a Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) barracks and an airmen's mess. Other buildings were converted to new uses, including the consolidation of a number of huts within a brick shell to provide accommodation for No 23 Squadron. An air transportable hangar built in 1970, the 'Rag Hangar' (Building 661), so-called because of its canvas covering, was intended to be temporary but remained on the base until 1997 when it was dismantled and relocated to Townsville.¹⁰ The main runway was to be extended to 3,047 metres with additional taxiways and hardstands. The upgrades also incorporated facilities for another anticipated arrival, the Chinook Heavy Lift helicopters.¹¹

While Stage One of the base upgrades was under way, the up-skilling of personnel commenced. In 1968, the first of 24 air and ground crews departed for four months training in the United States. In addition, four RAAF instructors already in the United States would later return to Amberley to train personnel.¹² The training of ground as well as flight crews was considered imperative as all maintenance works would be conducted in-house to ensure 'technical excellence and operational independence'.¹³

Amberley's role during the Vietnam War

One of the triggers for the purchase of the F-111 was the increasing tensions in south-east Asia, particularly Vietnam. In 1964, as debate around the F-111 flared, Australia joined its allies in South Vietnam to counter the incursions of communist North Vietnam. In 1965, the 161 Reconnaissance Flight, raised at Amberley from the 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron (16 ALA), was deployed to Vietnam under the command of Major Paul Lipscombe in support of the 1st Australian Task Force. The initial deployment was modest and tactical. 16 ALA was renamed the 1st Divisional Army Aviation Regiment (1st Army Aviation) and remained in

Vietnam for seven years. The regiment's significant commitment included the loss of three pilots killed in action – Major George Constable, Captain Barry Donald and 2nd Lieutenant Alan Jellie.¹⁴



16ALA Winjeel with 'Silver City' in the background.
(Mick Corkery Collection).

In April 1967, No 2 Squadron at that time based in Butterworth Malaysia, was posted to Vietnam equipped with eight Canberra aircraft, now a veteran bomber. Over the following four years the squadron flew 12,000 operational sorties for the loss of only two aircraft. The Canberra, now reaching a critical stage in airworthiness, required a dedicated maintenance crew who worked round the clock to ensure the eight aircraft remained airworthy.¹⁵ A testament to the skill, dedication and lack of serviceable aircraft of the squadron was their retrieval of a Canberra that had crash-landed. The USAF was keen to bulldoze the aircraft off the runway, however No 2 Squadron's timely intervention saw the aircraft rescued, patched up and then carefully flown back to Amberley for final repair. In June 1971, No 2 Squadron aircrew flew their Canberra's back to Australia and RAAF Base Amberley. By war's end, No 2 Squadron



Captain James Douglas Campbell, 1st Aviation Regiment, Amberley. Served in South Vietnam in 1967 and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Capt. Campbell piloted the Bell 47 Sioux helicopter, part of the Australian Museum Collection.
(Australian War Memorial. FOD/68/0145/NC).

had earned the distinction of being the most highly decorated unit in the RAAF. These awards included the United States Presidential Unit Citation (World War II) and from the Vietnam conflict, the Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and a United States Air Force Outstanding Unit Commendation.

Following the Vietnam War No 2 Squadron, equipped with the Canberra aircraft was tasked with conducting aerial photography and air defence training, which incorporated target towing and high level radar targeting. In 1973, a Canberra was converted to a dedicated cartographic survey photograph aircraft, this was followed by the conversion of three more aircraft. No 2 Squadron then carried out the important task of conducting detailed aerial mapping of Papua New Guinea and later Indonesia.¹⁶

In 1968, the No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit, based at Butterworth, Malaysia from 1958 to 1966, was reactivated at RAAF Base Amberley. The unit, re-formed under Wing Commander W Waldock and equipped with the Hubcap automated air defence system, was replaced in 1979 by the Westinghouse AN/TJ'S 43 radar. The new system improved the Unit's capacity for developing deployment techniques and battlefield operating procedures.¹⁷

As the Vietnam squadrons finished their tours and returned to the base, other Vietnam veterans including No 9 Squadron joined them. No 9 Squadron, equipped with sixteen Iroquois helicopters, arrived at RAAF Base Amberley in 1971. The squadron, deployed to Vietnam to support ground troops, was renowned for developing a navigational and tactical procedure for the insertion or extraction of troops. The procedure involved flying at tree-top level under the direction of a second aircraft flying 500 metres above and behind.¹⁸ At the finish of its tour of duty, the squadron had suffered the loss of six members.¹⁹

The 1st Army Aviation at Amberley supported Army activities and provided training for Army pilots and ground staff. In addition to a Bellman hangar, they occupied the Lysaght Huts, a well-known fixture on the base since their construction in the 1960s. Nicknamed 'Silver City', the huts accommodated the Army Helicopter and Fixed Wing Training Area to support Vietnam War operations.²⁰ The regiment's aircraft included the Bell Sioux helicopter, the Cessna 180 and from 1968, the Swiss-designed and built Pilatus PC-6 Porter. Mick Corkery, Warrant Officer (retired) 2nd Combat Engineers Regiment and Nev Comerford, Flight Sergeant (retired), Avionics/ Instrument Technician 16 ALA, recall the first arrival of the Pilatus, which was flown from Europe by Swiss pilots. The aircraft were sporting Australian colours, though with Swiss marking and registration, as Switzerland was a neutral country and it was necessary to fly over potential hot spots. The regiment considered the Pilatus Porter the first 'decent' aircraft the unit had, renowned as a short take-off and landing aircraft it was valuable in operating to and from challenging locations.²¹



A Lysaght hut, one of a group of ten, known as 'Silver City', constructed for the 16ALA. (RPS 2016).



Legend

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Base Squadron | 13 P-1 Huts |
| 2 Hangar 76 | 14 Airmen's Accommodation |
| 3 Hangar 71 | 15 Lysaght Huts (16ALA) |
| 4 Parade Ground | 16 Igloo Hangars |
| 5 Station Sick Quarters (Hospital) | 17 Building 363 'Taj Mahal' |
| 6 Hospital Ward | 18 12SQN HQ |
| 7 Astra Cinema | 19 482SQN Maintenance Buildings |
| 8 Airmen's mess | 20 F-111 Field Training and Simulator |
| 9 Sergeant's Mess | 21 82 WING HQ; 1SQN and 6SQN HQ |
| 10 Guard House | 22 23SQN HQ |
| 11 Officer's Mess | 23 Married Quarters |
| 12 Bellman Hangars | 24 3AD Aircraft Repair Section |
| | 25 Decontamination Centre |

RAAF Base Amberley, 1975.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

The interim Phantom and the arrival of the F-111

Continued problems with the F-111 saw repeated delays in the delivery date. With the Canberra aircraft close to the end of their service life, as an interim measure the McDonnell Douglas F-4E Phantom were leased from the United States. The first of 24 Phantoms arrived in September 1970, and remained in service until their return to the United States in 1973, when the F-111 was delivered. In fact, only 23 Phantoms were returned, as one had been lost at sea following an exercise at the Evans Head Bombing Range, sadly with the loss of both crew members.²²

On 1 June 1973, ten years after the initial order, the first F-111 landed at RAAF Base Amberley. The flight was greeted by a welcoming party that included: the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Lance Barnard; the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Charles Read; Air Officer Commanding Operation Command, Air Vice-Marshal Brian Eaton; and Amberley Base Commander, Air Commodore 'Spud' Spurgeon. There was also a huge contingent of the press, including television crews and an estimated 3,000 onlookers.²³

The crew of the six F-111 to arrive on 1 June 1973 were:

A8-125	GPCAPT JW Newham	WGCDR TC Owen
A8-126	WGCDR RG Funnell	SQNLDR N Pollock
A8-127	SQNLDR IM Westmore	FLTLT JA Bushell
A8-128	SQNLDR WJ Emery	FLTLT RD Hardcastle
A8-129	SQNLDR WF Walters	FLGOFF PJ McDonald
A8-130	FLTLT RT Sivyer	FLTLT PW Growder



F4E Phantoms on hard stand at RAAF Base Amberley, c.1970.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).



Arrival of the F-111 at RAAF Base Amberley, 1 June 1973.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

It was appropriate that Air Commodore Spurgeon was among the aircraft's welcoming party. A RAAF veteran and POW survivor of World War II, 'Spud' Spurgeon had been posted to Amberley on a number of occasions since 1962. One of his postings away was to the United States as the first RAAF F-111 Project Manager and in 1965, he was the first Australian to pilot the aircraft.²⁴ In 1971 he returned to Amberley and as Base Commander RAAF Base Amberley in 1973 he was on the podium to welcome the first F-111 as it touched down.²⁵

On the arrival of the F-111, No 3AD and No 482 Maintenance Squadron geared up to take control of the full spectrum of maintenance and logistics. The USAF maintenance system initially adopted, proved less than satisfactory. Instead, a locally developed centralised maintenance system that encompassed routine flight line, hangar and workshops conducted by No 482 Squadron was instigated with the larger maintenance tasks directed to No 3AD.²⁶



F-111 crew together with Air Commodore 'Spud' Spurgeon.
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

No 482 Squadron and No 3AD, both veterans of RAAF Base Amberley, were highly skilled maintenance units. No 3AD had developed from an early role in assembling, dispatching and salvaging aircraft to conducting complex aircraft maintenance, while No 482 Squadron had been formed specifically to maintain the base aircraft.²⁷

The F-111 at Amberley was not without issues. There were a number of serious incidents resulting in the loss of eight aircraft – five of those crashes involved fatalities. Four of the fatal crashes occurred at night when the aircraft was flying at 'high speed and low level'. The resulting accidents, attributed to loss of 'situational awareness', led to extensive investigations and a change in procedures.²⁸

In addition, a procedure known as deseal and reseal (DS/RS) conducted on the F-111 fuel tanks was to leave a lasting legacy of health problems for a number of No 3AD personnel. The process involved exposure to highly toxic chemicals and in 2009, a parliamentary inquiry and subsequent study found that affected F-111 DS/RS personnel suffered a reduced quality of life.²⁹

In 1975, the F-111 was involved in an unlikely role for a bomber aircraft. Returning to base after bombing practice at Evans Head, the F-111 picked up a distress signal. The source was found to be a sloop that had sunk, with two survivors in the water. The pilots maintained surveillance of the survivors until a successful rescue could be undertaken. The F-111 pilot, SQNLDR Richard Kelloway, said the people were very lucky to be found. 'There was a 10-foot sea with a lot of breaking white water', he said. 'They were very difficult to see and we even kept losing sight of them from 500 feet'.³⁰ In a remarkable coincidence, one of the survivors was the son of the principal of Amberley State School.³¹



No 1 Squadron and No 6 Squadron equipped with F-111.
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

While the F-111 fulfilled the need for a bomber, the requirement for an aircraft with reconnaissance capability remained on the agenda. In 1980 four F111 from the existing fleet were modified for this purpose, the first conversion was undertaken by General Dynamics, Fort Worth and a further three aircraft were modified by No 3AD at Amberley.³² The reconnaissance aircraft were destined for the No 6 Squadron.³³

The arrival of the F-111 consolidated the importance of the base in the RAAF and in 1978 a new construction phase commenced. New facilities included a Group Headquarters and Communications Centre, a RAAF Fire and Security School and a Base Medical Centre. The base also benefited from the realignment and development of roads and the construction of a new entrance.³⁴

Change at the Base

While the F-111 was an important gain for the base it was tempered by some losses. As the base expanded, one change was not the addition of new buildings but the loss of long term occupants from its oldest group of buildings. Amberley State School was once again without pupils. A significant change also occurred in 1986 when it was announced that the control of all battlefield helicopters would be transferred from the RAAF to the Army.

Amberley State School

Amberley State School had been closed during World War II due to concerns for the children's safety, in 1982 it was closed again because of concern about the impact of aircraft noise on the children's health. A new school was constructed off base, however the 1903 school and teacher's residence remained in what was designated the School Heritage Precinct.³⁵

Linked to the school and RAAF Base Amberley was a remarkable man. Bill Belford, nearly two metres tall, was an accomplished boxer and highly



Amberley School Group, school house to the rear and headmasters residence on the right. (RPS 2016).

respected teacher and principal of Amberley State School between 1971 and 1979. During World War II he had trained as a pilot at Archerfield where he achieved notoriety as well as a stint in detention with the following exploit.

One day Bill allocated an hour's flying and knowing that Joan (his future wife) was on vacation at her parents' fruit shop at Shorncliffe, decided to show-off. He overdid it. He did a few loops over the water near the Pier; then made a low run up the main street just above the light poles and enjoyed it so much, he did it a few times. Then he saw Mr Newton, whom he knew, serving tea and drinks on the Pier...an ideal target. He flew just above the railings aiming for Mr Newton who dropped the tray as he and his customers fled. Bill then dive-bombed a lone fisherman on the wall near the swimming enclosure. Bill then tried the flat roof of the picture theatre; looped the loop and headed home to Archerfield...where he was promptly arrested.

On release and posting to Amberley, Belford's skills were considered best suited to a fighter pilot. He trained on the Wirraway and was sent as a pilot to England. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbour, Belford returned to serve in the war in the Pacific. Landing in Singapore shortly before its fall to the Japanese, he spent some days hiding in the jungle

before being captured. He was sent to work on the infamous Burma railway and later transferred to Nagasaki he witnessed its destruction by the atomic bomb. On return from war, he returned to teaching and a career as an amateur boxer, winning Queensland and Australian heavyweight titles before retiring from boxing in 1949. Belford remained in the RAAF General Reserve until 1965 and retired to Willowbank near Amberley.³⁶ He was a highly respected community member and well regarded by past students. He was a regular visitor to the base and on many occasions a guest of its commanding officers.³⁷

Helicopters at Amberley



New CH-47C Chinook arriving on base c.1974.
(Lance Haslewood Collection).

In 1974, the re-formed No 12 Squadron was equipped with 12 new CH-47C Chinook helicopters. The Chinooks' versatility resulted in their deployment for humanitarian programs including air-sea rescues and flood relief. No 9 Squadron, already based at Amberley was equipped with the Iroquois helicopter. Between 1982 and 1986, a deployment from No 9 Squadron joined the Multinational Force and Observers in an international peacekeeping role in the Middle East.³⁸

In 1986, a significant impact on the base occurred with the announcement that the control of all battlefield helicopters would be transferred from the

RAAF to the Army. Transfer operations began in 1989 with the Chinook transferred to the Army and No 12 Squadron disbanded. No 9 Squadron, equipped with the Iroquois, relocated to RAAF Base Townsville under the command of Wing Commander (later Air Chief Marshal) Angus Houston, where the squadron was later disbanded. The helicopters and a number of personnel from the two squadrons were subsequently used to establish the Army's 5th Aviation Regiment.³⁹

The relocation of the helicopters from the base provided the opportunity for further expansion of aircraft capability at RAAF Base Amberley. In 1992, No 38 Squadron (Transport) and ten Caribou aircraft were relocated to Amberley. The squadron was responsible for all Caribou conversion training, in addition to tactical transport operations. The Caribou was designed to operate in difficult areas and was particularly suited to take-off and landing on short or unsealed airstrips. The aircraft's versatility saw it deployed in 1999 to East Timor where No 38 Squadron provided tactical air services to the Army operating under the United Nations banner. In 2003, the squadron again responded in an international peacekeeping role, this time in the Solomon Islands.⁴⁰



Signposts erected by members of the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands at Honiara International Airport, 2003.
(Australian War Memorial. P04223.507).

RAAF Security and Fire School (military working dogs)

THE early guard dogs at the base were savage dogs, left loose in buildings, or tied to aircraft for security. Present-day military working dogs, often German Shepherd or Belgian Shepherd Malinois, are highly skilled assets providing security capability, advanced tracking, combat troop support, tarmac protection and booby trap detection. Assigned to RAAF Bases and deployed in locations around the world, these dogs have the training and capability to work in all terrains.¹



Dog Akyra and her handler Corporal Vanessa Wallis, a Security Police Military Working Dog Handler, 382 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron at RAAF Base Amberley. (Australian Government Department of Defence).

In 1982 the Defence and Security Training School, now the RAAF Security and Fire School, was formed at RAAF Base Amberley. By 1997, dog handlers, police and police investigators were mustered under the RAAF Security Police, while the dog handlers became known as military working dog specialists.² In 2002, the new RAAF Security and Fire School opened on base with 'state of the art' facilities which combined the Security Guard Training Flight with the RAAF Police training element and the Police Dog Training Centre. The military working dogs are much loved personnel with their Facebook page attracting over 37,000 followers.³

Military working dogs – combat support capability

- Breeding RAAF Breeding Program Amberley
- Role Security of base assets and force multiplier in times of conflict
- Based at RAAF bases across Australia including Pearce, Edinburgh, Richmond, Williamtown, Amberley, Townsville, Darwin and Tindal
- Operated by RAAF Security Police Military Working Dog Handlers
- Speed 20–30km/h
- Crew Military Working Dog Handler
- Weapons 42 teeth⁴

1. RAAF, 'Military working dogs', Australian Government, 2012, viewed 12 May 2016, <http://www.airforce.gov.au/Technology/Combat_Support_Capability/Military_Working_Dogs/?RAAF-cW6sWLIlexAaxFuK+knX8rhpHBcC0DCO>.
2. G J Andrews, 'Royal Australian Air Force police dog history', 2006, viewed 12 May 2016, <http://xk9.customer.netspace.net.au/history_raafpdogs.html>.
3. RAAF, 'Military working dogs'.
4. RAAF, 'Military working dogs'.

The 1990s

In the 1990s the decision was taken to retain the upgraded F-111 and to purchase an additional fifteen F-111G aircraft. The intention was to reduce the number of hours flown by the F-111C airframes extending the service life of the F-111 from 2010 to 2020, with the additional purchase reducing the flying hours for individual aircraft.⁴¹ However, this period saw more substantial change at the base than new aircraft.



F-111 performing dump and burn.
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook).

Downsizing, outsourcing and deployment

In 1990, the RAAF-initiated Review of Air Base Support had recommended a reduction in base support and maintenance personnel. The F-111's highly intensive in-house maintenance program meant that change was inevitable.⁴² This came in the form of the Avionics Update Program. A contract to replace and upgrade the cockpit's analogue avionics instrumentation was outsourced and won by Rockwell Australia (later purchased by Boeing). This was to be an indicator of the future of maintenance and repair: downsizing the RAAF became a

government initiative and outsourcing maintenance work to commercial entities became the accepted strategy. In March 1992, No 3AD and No 482 Squadron were amalgamated to form No 501 Wing with the Strike and Reconnaissance Logistics Management Unit relocated from Melbourne to the base. In addition, a number of the maintenance personnel were posted to operational squadrons.⁴³

The base command structure was also destined for modernisation through the introduction of the RAAF Australia-wide Model Base Program in 1994. The program included the adoption of the title 'Air Base Wings' rather than 'Base Support Wings' – RAAF Base Amberley became No 301 Air Base Wing. The intention was that units and personnel, on paper at least, were not tied to a fixed base but considered a deployable force.⁴⁴

Closure of the parade ground

One casualty of the changes was the parade ground. In the 1990s it ceased to be for parades and was converted to a car park. The ground had been at the heart of the base since the 1940s when new graduates received their 'wings' at passing-out parades. A base parade was held on the first Monday of each month. As formal affairs, they included all personnel stationed on base. With Air Force, Army and Navy sometimes present, each with a different drill movement, there were some amusing parades.⁴⁵ Nev Comerford recounted that 'the parade ground was sacred and now they just use it as a car park. I quite often look at that and think — those old warrant officers would be turning in their graves'.⁴⁶

Memorial Garden

In 1990, RAAF Base Amberley gained a new entrance gate featuring the Canberra Bomber A84 – 201. Chaplain Paul Goodland's suggestion that this would be a fitting location for a memorial garden to those base personnel killed in the line of duty was accepted. The garden was established with the first trees planted by the families of Flight

Lieutenants Jeremy McNess and Mark Cairns-Cowan, killed in an F-111 crash at Guyra in 1993. The Memorial Garden continues to be a focus for commemorative occasions. On 16 November 2000, the Wall of Remembrance was dedicated by his Excellency Major General Peter Arnison AO Queensland Governor, while in April 2014 during their visit to the base, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge planted a tree in the garden as a tribute to the fallen. The wall is dedicated to those who died while serving at RAAF Amberley.⁴⁷



RAAF Base Amberley Memorial Garden.
(RPS 2016).

RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment 2000

In 2000 the RAAF Base Amberley Redevelopment works were announced and Stage One of the plan implemented. During this period, the Combat Support Group relocated to Amberley from Glenbrook and No 82 Wing was provided with a new Headquarters. Stage Two (2005) development garnered the label 'super base' for RAAF Base Amberley, with plans to expand personnel numbers, facilities and services. New facilities would be required to accommodate the new fleet of air-to-air KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport, to be operated by No 33 Squadron and the Army's heavy lift road transport capability, run by the 9th Force Support Battalion.⁴⁸

Stage Three (2008) works included both new construction and refurbishment and upgrades to existing buildings. New facilities included accommodation, a combined mess, a physical fitness training centre, military working dog accommodation and the Headquarters Combat Support Group buildings. In 2008 the construction of permanent facilities to support the C-17 heavy airlift aircraft commenced.⁴⁹

Aircraft maintenance and restoration

As base development continued, so did the push toward private contractors conducting what had been in-house maintenance. In August 2000, Boeing had won the Amberley Weapons System Business Unit and the Block Upgrade Program tender and was later to win the contract for life-of-type support of the F-111 fleet. Boeing now occupied Hangar 410. They were followed on base by Tasman Aviation Enterprises (TAE) who won the 501 Wing Workshop Business contract; Rosebank Engineering conducting maintenance of the aircraft's hydraulic systems; and Raytheon (previously Honeywell) running the Avionics Business Unit. There was initial disquiet amongst RAAF maintenance personnel over this shift. However, with many personnel moving to the new commercial entities and the first F-111 aircraft moving successfully through the new maintenance system, those fears were dispelled.⁵⁰

Aircraft assembly, maintenance, salvage and restoration activities had occurred at RAAF Amberley since December 1941, primarily by No 3AD. One of the more significant restoration projects undertaken by No 3AD was the restoration of the Lancaster bomber 'G for George', now on display at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. During the 1980s and 1990s, notable aircraft restoration tasks undertaken by No 23 Squadron Restoration Flight included: restoration of the Vampire A79-658; a Catalina for display at the RAAF Museum; and two Boston aircraft salvaged from Papua New Guinea. Of the two Boston aircraft, one is on display at the RAAF Museum and the other at the RAAF Base Amberley Aviation Heritage Centre. Aircraft restorations continue within the Aviation Heritage Centre today, with several restoration projects under way or planned.

With the withdrawal of the F-111 aircraft fleet in 2010, a team of No 82 Wing technicians prepared 13 aircraft and four modules for display at military bases and aviation heritage organisations within Australia and overseas.

Static display aircraft located at other RAAF bases throughout Australia and at Butterworth, Malaysia, are maintained by a dedicated team from within the Director General History and Heritage – Air Force. This team operates from RAAF Base Amberley.⁵¹



RAAF Base Amberley Aviation Heritage Centre.
(RPS 2016).

Overseas operations

The RAAF Base Amberley has often played a significant role in humanitarian missions, however, the scale of disasters in the early 21st century required a significant commitment.

Natural disaster relief

The Asian tsunami in 2004 resulted in the death of nearly 250,000 people. Australia's relief efforts focused on one of the worst affected areas, Aceh on the northern tip of Sumatra, where teams from Amberley joined other RAAF personnel in providing aid.⁵²

In 2008, devastating floods swept Myanmar with the loss of an estimated 150,000 lives. With 2.5 million people in need, an Amberley based No 36 Squadron RAAF C-17A Globemaster flew into Yangon with 31 tonnes of supplies. Later Pakistan bore the brunt of extreme weather with flooding affecting 21 million people, in support a RAAF C-17A Globemaster and crew provided transport for aid personnel



Squadron Leader Dennis Deering (front centre) gathers with staff and volunteers of the RAAF Amberley Aviation Heritage Centre, 2012.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

and equipment.⁵³ In October 2009, following a tsunami that hit Samoa, No 1 Airfield Operations Support Squadron Mobile Air Load Team from Richmond, together with No 36 Squadron C-17s participated in Operation Samoa Assist.⁵⁴



No 36 Squadron RAAF C-17A Globemaster with aid for Myanmar, 2008.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

The Iraq war

In 2004 No 2 Airfield Defence Squadron was tasked with protecting the Baghdad International Airport following the US-led invasion.⁵⁵ Australia's role in the fight against terrorism in the Middle East resulted in four RAAF airfield defence guards from the base's Airfield Defence Wing deployed to Iraq in 2004 to assist in training the New Iraqi Army to rebuild their defences. In 2008, RAAF Base Amberley's No 2 Airfield Defence Squadron was part of the security detail for the Australian Embassy in Iraq. For the deployment they were integrated into the 7th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, with tasks ranging from sniper duties to armed escorts and manning observation and entry control points.⁵⁶ In 2008 a C-17A Globemaster conducted its first aero-medical evacuation bringing home five wounded Australian Defence Force members.⁵⁷ The continuing conflict in the Middle East has resulted Amberley having a long-term association with the region with a number of units from the base participating.

Retirement of 'the pig'

In 2010, the F-111 was retired, the decision had been made in 2003 as the increasing cost of maintaining and flying the aircraft outweighed its benefits. Its inauspicious start, which had earned it the nickname 'the pig', belied its future relationship with the RAAF. The aircraft remained in service as Australia's primary defence deterrent until December 2010, a total of 37 years.⁵⁸ The strike aircraft for the Amberley based, No 82 Bomber Wing was extremely important as the RAAF Official Historian, Dr Alan Stephens, noted:

The F-111 is the most important aircraft the RAAF has ever operated. For over twenty years it has been, and remains, the region's pre-eminent strike aircraft. It alone has given Australia a credible capability to conduct independent land and maritime strike/reconnaissance operations, a capability which in turn has facilitated the development of self-reliant national defence strategies.⁵⁹



RAAF Base Amberley in 2009, with the 1940s base footprint highlighted.
(Google Image@2016 Digital Globe).

The last aircraft was retired in December 2010. On the final day six F-111s flew in formation over Brisbane and the Gold Coast with the finishing display a solo 'dump and burn'. The majority of the F-111 were scrapped, while eight were retained for preservation, including one for display at RAAF Base Amberley.⁶⁰

Showcasing the RAAF

Ipswich community connections

In 1998, to mark the 25th anniversary of the arrival of the first F-111, a Freedom of the City of Ipswich march was held.⁶¹ For the people of Ipswich, the base and its personnel were already part of the community. Since the first RAAF recruits to the base were cheered through the streets in 1940, the base had participated in numerous events such as Anzac Day and Air Force Week. The connection between the Ipswich City and the RAAF Base Amberley was evident with the Ipswich Heritage City logo emblazoned on the tail of two F-111s. The arrival of the F-111 had reinforced the links with and interest in the base. Peter Growder, F-111 navigator and later Air Commodore, recounted that he, together with other RAAF personnel, regularly visited schools with an F-111 model to talk of the aircraft and encourage interest in joining the air force.⁶² Some five years later, Mayor of Ipswich Councillor Paul Pisasale gave voice to the connection and echoed the feelings of the people of Ipswich when he said: 'these iconic aircraft were part of the Ipswich community on so many levels, not only economically but also in the contribution made to the social fabric of the city'. Councillor Pisasale said that countless local organisations had included the F-111 in their logos.⁶³

Brisbane festivals

Ipswich was not alone in its strong connection to RAAF Amberley. Its proximity to Brisbane meant the base often played an important role in



The F-111 performs the dump and burn for the last time at the Brisbane Riverfire Festival, 2010.

(Kristin Repsher Collection).

celebrating that city's events too. Since 1978, spectacular flying displays have been a part of the Warana Festival and later Riverfire, part of the Brisbane Riverfestival. The F-111 dump and burn display played a key role in the 1982 Commonwealth Games and at Riverfire from 1998 until its retirement.⁶⁴

The 2000 Olympic Games

In 2000 all eyes were on Australia for the Olympic Games in Sydney. Few aircraft could compete with the F-111 when it came to display, as the Brisbane experience had shown. An F-111 and its crew were provided with a worldwide audience for the trademark 'dump and burn' display as a climax of the closing ceremony of the Games. The pilot, Wing Commander Dave Steele, Commanding Officer No 6 Squadron, described it as an exhilarating experience:

The adrenaline really started pumping when we saw the stadium lights on our approach run. We came in at low power and then brought in the afterburners just before we went over the stadium which gives you a real



Defence Air Show at RAAF Amberley, 2008 included aircraft from the three Services, the United States Air Force, United States Marines, 'Warbirds', and those commercial entities supporting Defence Force activities.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

kick as the extra power comes on. Then we activated the dump and fed fuel out the rear of the aircraft between the two jet exhausts where it ignited into the long trail. Actually you can't see the dump and burn trail from the cockpit, just the orange glow in the sky behind the aircraft.⁶⁵

Open days

Open Days at Amberley have displayed the RAAF since 1948, when the base was opened for the first time since its construction. An estimated 5,000 cars were recorded at a time when fuel rations were still in place. 20,000 visitors were treated to a 'jet-propelled' Vampire aircraft, which astounded the crowd with its speed.⁶⁶ By 1950, the crowds had grown to approximately 25,000 people, who were treated to aerial displays

by Lincoln, Mosquito and Mustang aircraft. The ground crew also were heavily involved, having outfitted Hangar 76 with displays of technical and safety equipment.⁶⁷

In October 2008, the Defence Force Air Show was held at RAAF Base Amberley. Attracting huge crowds – 90,000 visitors over two days – this spectacular event provided the community with a chance to see up close the aircraft they often saw overhead and provided RAAF personnel with the chance to display their talents. The air display included Mustang, Vampire, Meteor, Hawk and Hornet aircraft, plus the stalwarts of Amberley, the Hudson, Canberra and F-111 bombers.⁶⁸

The Base in 2010

In addition to the physical, administrative and operational changes to the base, the years leading up to 2010 saw considerable change in units stationed there. Newcomers included the Airfield Defence Wing, relocated to Amberley in 1992, and No 3 Airfield Defence Squadron, formed at Amberley from a flight of No 23 Squadron in March 1995.⁶⁹

In 1998 the No 382 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron, a fully deployable unit providing operational support to forward operating bases, formed from the existing Combat Support Force at Amberley. No 382 Squadron provided specific elements of fixed base support until 2014 when that role transferred to No 23 Squadron.⁷⁰

In 2006 the Army's No 9 Field Support Battalion arrived, as did RAAF No 36 Squadron equipped with the Boeing C-17A Globemaster. In June 2008 No 33 Squadron, operating the Airbus KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport Aircraft, arrived, followed in 2010 with No 1 Squadron, being re-equipped with the F/A-18 Australian Super Hornet (ASH) that replaced the F-111 as the RAAF's strike aircraft.⁷¹

Wing Commander Linda Corbould

WING Commander (WGCDR) Linda Corbould achieved many firsts in the RAAF. This included being the first of either sex to pilot the C-17A Globemaster, the RAAF's largest aircraft, on its delivery from the United States to RAAF Base Amberley. As Commanding Officer No 36 Squadron, WGCDR Corbould was the first woman to command any RAAF flying unit.¹ Since 1990 WGCDR Corbould had specialised in transport operations and in 2006 was responsible for the introduction into service of the new heavy-lift capability not previously possessed by the RAAF.² In 2003 WGCDR Corbould was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) 'For meritorious performance as the C130 Deputy Detachment Commander, responsible for the delivery of vitally required Australian medical supplies in the Middle East Area of Operations during Operation FALCONER'.³ In 2008 she piloted a C-17A Globemaster transport from No 36 Squadron, with all crew positions filled by women,

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Chapter



Modern Amberley, 2011–2015

THE announcement in 2005 that RAAF Base Amberley was destined to become a super base was a precursor to substantial and ongoing development that would dominate the following years.¹ The planned upgrades to facilities for existing aircraft and the introduction of new aircraft began to develop a wider scope. By 2015, Group Captain Sheldon Kimber, base redevelopment officer, considered the changes more akin to a mega-base as the cost of proposed works reached the billion dollar mark.² The base now plays a more diverse defence role with several other tenants joining the air force. RAAF Base Amberley is now home to units from three RAAF groups – Air Combat Group, Air Mobility Group and Combat Support Group; the Army 9th Force Support Battalion, which includes logistics support; No 2 Wing Australian Air Force Cadets; and both Defence and non-Defence contractors. In 2015 there were 5,774 military personnel and contractors on the base, with 51 different Groups, Wings, Squadrons, Units and Sub-Units on the base including the following.

Air Combat Group – No 82 Wing

Air Combat Group commands all the Royal Australian Air Force's fast-jet combat aircraft with three operational wings. Of these, No 82 Wing, located at RAAF Base Amberley is responsible for designated target strikes and reconnaissance: its units comprise with No 1 and No 6 Squadrons (F/A-18F Super Hornets) at RAAF Base Amberley, while No 4 Squadron (Pilatus PC-9/A) operates from RAAF Base Williamtown.³



F-111 and F-18A – the Australian Super Hornets fly in formation with the F-111, symbolic representation of the old leading the new home, in the ferry across the Pacific Ocean. (Australian Government Department of Defence).

No 1 Squadron and No 6 Squadron

The arrival in March 2010 of the first five Boeing F/A-18F Super Hornets to replace the F-111 heralded a new era for RAAF Base Amberley. The F/A-18F was the RAAF's first new combat aircraft in 25 years, assuming the role formerly held by the F-111 and one that will be held by the Lockheed-Martin F-35 Lightning II in the future (around 2020).⁴ The first F/A-18F carried the logo of the 'City of Ipswich' confirming that the close link between the base and the city remains.⁵

No 1 Squadron was the first F/A-18F squadron outside of the United States.⁶ Followed by No 6 Squadron, the role of the F/A-18F equipped squadrons is to deliver combat air power in various forms,

including air-to-air, air-to-ground and air-to-surface strike capabilities. No 1 and No 6 Squadrons have undertaken a number of exercises and operations, including Exercise Pitch Black (Northern Territory), Exercise Bersama Shield (Malaysian Peninsula) and Operation OKRA (against DAESH in Iraq). In Operation OKRA No 1 Squadron flew 400 missions over seven months against Daesh terrorists.⁷

In 2018, the Boeing EA-18G Growler operated by No 6 Squadron at Amberley will reach initial operational capability, providing a complementary capability to the Amberley-based F/A-18F Super Hornet and the future F-35A Lightning II aircraft. Together, the aircraft will cover all defence requirements from peacetime evacuations to major conflicts.⁸



No 1 Squadron welcomed home at RAAF Base Amberley on return from Operation OKRA in the Middle East, 2015.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

Gate Guardians

EACH RAAF base has at least one former RAAF aircraft at its main gate to provide a symbolic display of 'guarding' the main entrance, as well as providing a link between the base and the aircraft that operated there.

The former main gate (and memorial garden) at RAAF Base Amberley has a Canberra bomber on display, as Amberley was the home of the Canberra fleet until that aircraft was replaced by the F-111.

In 2016 RAAF Base Amberley's long and close association with the F-111 was recognised with the placement of a retired F-111 at the new entrance gate constructed as part of the base expansion program. The F-111 A8-138 was chosen to be Amberley's 'Gate Guardian', as it was the aircraft used as the test bed for the Pavé Tack targeting system that provided an all-weather, day-and-night laser designation for laser-guided weapons fitted to the F-111 fleet.

On 9 June 2016, a dedication ceremony marked the installation of the Gate Guardian. Notable attendees included the Deputy Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal Warren McDonald AM CSC, together with the Air Force Senior Leadership Team, Ray Perry and Peter Growder (the pilot and navigator, respectively on the F-111 delivery flight from the USA to Amberley), Senior Australian Defence Force Officer, Amberley, Air Commodore Winchester and Group Captain (retired) John Ward.¹

1. Wing Commander Clive Wells, interview with Laraine Nelson, 2016.



Deputy Chief of Air Force, Air Vice Marshal Warren McDonald, AM, CSC and former Base Redevelopment Manager, Group Captain (Ret) John Ward, CSC, unveil the Amberley Gate Guardian F-111 A8-138. (Australian Government Department of Defence).

Air Mobility Group – No 86 Wing

The Air Mobility Group is responsible for the Australian Defence Force's combat air mobility capability, with diverse responsibilities including air logistics support, VIP transport, air-to-air refuelling and aero-medical evacuation. The group commands No 86 Wing, the RAAF transport and air-to-air refuelling wing. At Amberley, No 86 Wing comprises No 33 Squadron and No 36 Squadron. These provide combat air mobility capability for the Australian Defence Force, including airlift responsibilities. The task of providing airlift often provides an integral part of disaster relief and humanitarian missions. Aircraft with airlift capability are often the first assets deployed in disasters for carrying medical personnel and aid, performing offload duties and assisting where required at airfields.⁹

No 33 Squadron

No 33 Squadron provides strategic transport capability through the carriage of passengers and cargo. In June 2008 the squadron arrived at Amberley to prepare for the arrival of the Airbus Military KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT).¹⁰ The KC-30A MRTT is a



May 2015 and the first air re-fuelling boom contact made by an RAAF crew of the KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) aircraft. (Australian Government Department of Defence).

heavily modified Airbus A330 that enables air-to-air refuelling and the capability of strategic airlift, being able to carry up to 270 passengers.¹¹ Five KC-30As are operated by No 33 Squadron at the base.

In 2015, a KC-30A performed an emergency refuel of a US Marine Corps Hornet in Iraq while flying over Daesh-held territory. The Hornet having lost one engine was unable to maintain consistent speed. The successful transfer, the first carried out during wartime, was conducted at a much higher altitude and lower speed than normal.¹²

No 36 Squadron

In 2006, No 36 Squadron, equipped with four Boeing C-17A Globemaster III transport aircraft, relocated to RAAF Base Amberley.¹³ The C-17A Globemaster III, at three times the capacity of the Hercules, is a significant presence on the base. It allows for strategic airlift capacity with ability



No 36 Squadron and No 37 Squadron members march onto parade to farewell No 36 Squadron as the C-130H Hercules departs, 2015. (Australian Government Department of Defence).

for the rapid deployment of troops, supplies, combat vehicles, heavy equipment and helicopters anywhere in the world. Capable of carrying loads as large as three Black Hawk helicopters, it can also be converted for aero-medical evacuations. During the conflict in the Middle East it has carried personnel and supplies and participated in Operation OKRA.¹⁴

No 36 Squadron was among the first relief groups on the ground following the devastating Tohoku earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011. No 36 squadron, operating the C-17A, was deployed to Japan together with 76 Urban Search and Rescue workers under Operation PACIFIC ASSIST. In addition to transporting the search and rescue team, No 36 Squadron remained to provide airlift support to the Japanese government, including 23 sorties providing intra-country airlift of vital stores and equipment needed in the humanitarian effort. The No 36 Squadron C-17A then assisted by transporting remotely-operated water cannons to assist in water containment operations at the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant.¹⁵

One sobering task for No 36 Squadron personnel was in 2014 when a C-17A Globemaster crew from Amberley conducted the repatriation flight for the remains of 203 passengers of flight MH17, from the Ukraine to the Eindhoven military base, Netherlands. The role of the crew did not end with the flight, at Eindhoven they met and spoke with families of those lost in the disaster.¹⁶

Combat Support Group, Headquarters

Combat Support Group is the Air Force's largest Force Element Group comprising approximately 3000 personnel located around Australia and overseas. It consists of No 95 Wing, No 96 Wing, Health Services Wing and the Combat Coordination Centre. No 95 Wing has responsibility for expeditionary airbase operations and non-airbase support to operations. No 96 Wing, which includes No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron, is responsible for permanent airbase operations, bare bases and supporting

operational capabilities. Health Services Wing is responsible for health support to operations, aero-medical evacuation systems and training for health personnel.¹⁷

As Headquarters for the Combat Support Group, RAAF Base Amberley has a primary expeditionary focus tasked with establishing, operating and maintaining aircraft support services on forward operating bases, including bare bases in Australia's north and in remote areas within Australia's area of strategic interest. In addition is the responsibility for providing the ongoing command and management of Air Force bases across Australia. Major functions include: airfield communications and navigational aid airfield engineering; aircraft loading and unloading; airfield rescue and fire services; airfield and aircraft security; health support and aero-medical evacuation crews; and catering. A significant capability is its ability to take any combination of services from a fixed base and tailor an expeditionary package designed to meet the needs of a specific mission.



The 70th Anniversary of the formation of No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron was commemorated by a Wreath Laying Ceremony, ANZAC Square, Shrine of Remembrance, Brisbane, 2007.

(Australian Government Department of Defence).

In 2015, Combat Support Group's structure on the base is:

- Combat Support Group, Headquarters – Combat Coordination Centre
- No 95 Wing, Headquarters
 - No 382 Squadron – Contingency Response
 - No 295 Squadron – Training and Standards
 - No 1 Combat Communication Squadron Detachment Amberley
 - No 2 Security Forces Squadron, Headquarters
- No 96 Wing, Headquarters
 - No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron – Airbase Operations
- Health Services Wing, Headquarters
 - No 1 Expeditionary Health Squadron, Headquarters
 - No 3 Aero-medical Evacuation Squadron Detachment Amberley
 - Health Operational Conversion Unit.¹⁸

Other Defence Force units on base

9 Force Support Battalion

The 9th Force Support Battalion (9 FSB), the Australian Army's logistics headquarters and battalion, has been based at Amberley since 2010. In addition to Battalion Headquarters, 9 FSB comprises six other units, namely: Special Advisory Group; 9th Logistic Support Company; 26th Transport Squadron; 37th Force Supply Company; 176th Air Dispatch Squadron; and the 8th Personnel Services Company.¹⁹

When serving with the Force Support Unit in Afghanistan, 9 FSB suffered the loss of Lance Corporal Andrew Gordon Jones when he was shot by an Afghan soldier on 30 May 2011. The 25-year-old Lance Corporal from Amberley was on his first deployment to Afghanistan.²⁰

6 Engineer Support Regiment

The regiment is an element of 6th Brigade with a mission to prepare and maintain combat ready individuals and formed bodies in order to successfully support land, joint and specified operations for the defence of Australia and its national interests.

The size of the Army contingent on base is destined to increase, with the announcement in 2015 that the 17th Construction Squadron would relocate to Amberley in 2017. It was announced that 'the new facilities will provide a consolidated Engineer Support Regiment with modern and fit-for-purpose facilities to work, operate, maintain and support the Army's efforts, both in war time and peace,' while 'relocating the 17th Construction Squadron to RAAF Base Amberley will provide



9 Force Support Battalion inaugural RAAF Amberley Parade, March 2008.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

enhanced operational and training effectiveness, increase deployment readiness and reduce travel and transportation times. It will also enhance command and control arrangements'.²¹

Joint Logistics Unit

In 2015, the new Joint Logistics Unit (South Queensland) was opened at Amberley as part of a program to help make the Australian Defence Force more efficient. The unit is responsible for providing logistical products and services to the Australian Navy, Army and Air Force in south-east Queensland. Housed in a complex of seven buildings, it supplies everything from nuts and bolts to complex aircraft components, as well as 22 workshop maintenance bays and 350 vehicles in a loan pool.²²



Air Vice-Marshal Margaret Staib, AM, CSC, (retd.) (left) with Commanding Officer Joint Logistics Unit South Queensland, Lieutenant Colonel Sue Graham, at the opening ceremony of the Joint Logistic Complex, RAAF Base Amberley, 2015.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

Air Training Corps

The Australian War Cabinet established the Air Training Corps in 1941 and since those early days the Corps has been an important part of RAAF Base Amberley. Since 2015 Amberley has been the home base for the No 2 Wing Australian Air Force Cadets.

The Corps not only trains cadets but also fosters the benefits available in a career in aviation. In 2011, the Aerospace Challenge held at RAAF Base Amberley, provided cadets with the opportunity to observe the aviation and engineering used in both the RAAF and civilian aviation industry. Three cadets from the program later participated in the International Aerospace Challenge in the United Kingdom.²³



In front of the Tomahawk trainer is former Spitfire pilot Lindsay Richards (front centre), Lancaster Bomb crew Robert Chestermaster (front left) and Laurie Woods DFC (front right) with the new Air Force Cadet pilots undertaking their training at RAAF Base Amberley, 2011.
(Australian Government Department of Defence).

Defence Public Servants

The work of members of the RAAF at Amberley is supported by Commonwealth public servants. These play an important role in areas such as administration, information technology, logistics, etc.

Contractors

Since the early years of the F-111, contractors have played an important role on the base. Major Defence aviation contractors still present at Amberley include Boeing, Raytheon and TAE. Since 2015, the range of contractors has expanded to include other non-core Defence activities ranging from garrison support services to aircraft maintenance.

2016 and beyond

By 2016, RAAF Base Amberley was home of the F/A-18 Super Hornets (air combat capability for air-to-air and air-to-ground missions); C-17A Globemaster III (high-wing four-engine heavy transport); the KC-30A Multi Role Tanker Transport (air-to-air refuelling and provide strategic air lift) and the Heron (a remotely piloted unmanned aircraft operated by No 5 Flight for real-time intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance information).

In 2016 the Defence White Paper, detailing the policy and planning for the Australian Defence Force to 2035 was released. The White Paper confirmed RAAF Base Amberley's role in Australia's future defence capabilities. To ensure the base was capable of fulfilling that role, a new round of development works was planned to include hangars, tarmac and aprons as well as additional buildings to support new squadron and base personnel.

RAAF Base Amberley will be home to the E/A-18G Growler, the F-35A Lightning II Joint Strike Fighters and the C-27J Spartan. The E/A-18G Growler will provide the Australian Defence Force with electronic warfare capability while the F-35A Lightning II supports future air combat and strike needs. The C-27J Spartan, a battlefield airlifter is capable of conducting airlift including from rudimentary airstrips in Australia or overseas and support humanitarian missions in remote locations.²⁴

Break with the past

THE development planned for RAAF Base Amberley from 2016 onward will result in the loss of a number of heritage buildings, most notably a venerable group from World War II that flank the original diamond-shaped parade ground precinct, including:

- 301 Air Base HQ (Asset 065)
- the Base Medical Flight building (Assets 061 and 243)
- the Air Base support building (Asset 246)
- the Parade Ground (Asset 242).

Other 1940s heritage buildings destined for removal include:

- the Astra Cinema (Asset 60)
- Airmen's Mess (Asset 042)

- Sergeant's Mess (Asset 041)
- Hangar 76 (Asset 076) was integral to the base and in 2016 was still in use. Constructed in 1939, it was one of the earliest buildings on base and the largest of the base's WWII hangars.
- The Bellman hangars (Assets 340, 255-258, 260-263 and 277-280), prefabricated and erected as temporary structures for the assembly of USAAF aircraft, also have remained part of the working base.

An additional group to go is associated with the Vietnam War, the Lysaght Huts, nicknamed 'Silver City', were part of the former Army Helicopter and Fixed Wing training area (Assets 095-104).



Hangar 76, constructed at RAAF Base Amberley in 1939.
(RPS 2015).

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Appendices

Appendix 1

HEADQUARTERS RAAF AMBERLEY – Base Commanders (1940 – 1988)

(Source: 23SQN Headquarters)

Commander	Date of Appointment
SQNLDR SAC Campbell TEMP	17 Jun 40
FLTLT JA Adam TEMP	15 Oct 40
WGCDR RH Simms AFC	28 Oct 40
WGCDR LV Lachal	14 Apr 41
WGCDR WR Hartwright RAF	11 May 42
WGCDR GE Douglas	18 Jun 42
GPCAPT GE Douglas	01 Jul 42
WGCDR KP Connolly TEMP	11 Sep 45
WGCDR EV Millet	15 Nov 45
GPCAPT GE Douglas	25 Feb 46
WGCDR RC Creswell TEMP	19 Apr 48
GPCAPT J Alexander OBE	10 Jun 48
WGCDR KR Parsons DSO DFC AFC TEMP	25 Feb 49
GPCAPT CT Hannah OBE	9 May 49
GPCAPT WH Garing CBE DFC	27 Aug 51
GPCAPT GC Hartnell	08 Nov 51
GPCAPT DW Colquhoun DFC AFC	14 Jul 53

Commander	Date of Appointment
WGCDR WJ Keenan DFC TEMP	03 May 54
GPCAPT DW Kingwell DSO	09 Jul 54
GPCAPT DW Chapman	06 Oct 56
AIRCDRE WN Gibson CBE DFC	16 Mar 59
AIRCDRE AD Garrison OBE	01 Apr 63
AIRCDRE GH Steege DSO DFC	20 Nov 64
AIRCDRE DW Kingwell CBE DSO	05 May 67
AIRCDRE CH Spurgeon CBE DFC	25 Jun 71
AIRCDRE SD Evans DSO AFC	14 Feb 75
AIRCDRE RF Drury MVO AFC	22 Apr 77
AIRCDRE PH Coy DSO	22 Aug 80
AIRCDRE JI Thomson AM	28 Jan 83
AIRCDRE IM Westmore AM	16 Jan 85
AIRCDRE RJ Walsh AFC	15 Dec 86

Appendix 2

RAAF Base Amberley – Senior Officers (1988 – 2017)

(Source: No 23 Squadron Headquarters)

STRIKE RECONNAISSANCE GROUP formed 01 Jun 88 – disestablished 31 Dec 01

Commander	Date of Appointment
AIRCDRE RJ Walsh AFC	01 Jun 88
AIRCDRE BD Searle AM	17 Feb 89
AIRCDRE DN Rogers AM	15 Jan 92
AIRCDRE RL Perry	09 Nov 94
AIRCDRE PW Growder	12 Dec 97
AIRCDRE DJ Dunlop	06 Mar 00

Combat Support Group – relocated to Amberley 06 Dec 99

Commander	Date of Appointment
AIRCDRE CA Beatty DFC AFC	06 Dec 99
GPCAPT GJ Fitzgerald	25 May 01
AIRCDRE SR Cameron CSC	27 Jun 01
AIRCDRE AE Kilgour AM	16 Jan 04
AIRCDRE M Gower OAM	31 Aug 05
GPCAPT PA Hislop	10 Jun 08
AIRCDRE CJ Sawade CSC	03 Oct 08

Senior Australian Defence Force Officer

Commander	Date of Appointment
AIRCDRE CJ Sawade CSC	01 Jul 09
AIRCDRE TC Innes	30 Jan 12
AIRCDRE SJ Winchester	05 Dec 14
AIRCDRE KJ Robinson CSC	15 Dec 16

Appendix 3

RAAF Base Amberley – Commanding Officers - Base Support Units (1952 – 2017)

(Source: No 23 Squadron Headquarters)

Commanding Officers role formed 1952 – disestablished 30 Jun 88

Commander	Date of Appointment
GPCAPT GC Hartnell	2 May 52
WGCDR WJ Keenan DFC	13 Apr 53
GPCAPT DW Kingwell DSO	30 Apr 55
GPCAPT NJ Quinn	6 Feb 56
WGCDR LN Kroll MBE	29 Aug 58
GPCAPT WJ Guthrie	16 Jan 61
GPCAPT CH Spurgeon DFC	16 Dec 63
WGCDR LN Kroll MBE	21 Apr 64
GPCAPT CAV Bourne MBE	14 Dec 64
GPCAPT JE Handbury AFC	6 Sep 65
GPCAPT WN Lampe OBE	2 Jun 69
GPCAPT DW Hitchins	14 Dec 70
GPCAPT LR Klaffer AFC	15 Dec 72
GPCAPT JT Dollison DFC AFC	24 Jan 74
GPCAPT CL Ackland DFC	26 May 77

Commander	Date of Appointment
GPCAPT A Barnes DFC AFC	7 Jan 79
GPCAPT HF Freeman	14 Feb 81
GPCAPT GA Perske	9 Jan 84
GPCAPT RF Lowery	26 Jan 87

Base Support Wing formed 1 Jul 88 – disestablished 30 Jun 94

Commander	Date of Appointment
GPCAPT RF Lowery	1 Jul 88
GPCAPT CJ Stjernqvist	24 Nov 88
GPCAPT AW Corlass	13 Jan 92
GPCAPT PL Presgrave	2 Jul 93

301 Air Base Wing formed 1 Jul 94 – disestablished 2 Aug 98

Commander	Date of Appointment
GPCAPT PL Presgrave	1 Jul 94
GPCAPT JS Hamwood AM	10 Jan 97
WGCDR JW Steinbach	6 Feb 98
GPCAPT SR Cameron CSC	4 Jun 98

Combat Support Force – Amberley formed 2 Aug 98

Commander	Date of Appointment
GPCAPT SR Cameron CSC	2 Aug 98
GPCAPT J Ward CSC	28 Sep 99
WGCDR RN Lawson	11 Jan 00

**Combat Support Unit - Amberley formed
01 Jan 02 – disestablished 31 Dec 07**

Commander	Date of Appointment
WGCDR SA Wardle	15 Jan 02
WGCDR SJ Butterworth	28 Jul 03
WGCDR MO Bartetzko	20 Jan 04
WGCDR JL Martin	16 Jan 06

382 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron

Commander	Date of Appointment
WGCDR RI McKenzie	01 Jan 08
WGCDR MJ Smith	24 Nov 08

Air Base Executive Officer (ABXO)

Commander	Date of Appointment
WGCDR CJ Wells	01 Jul 09

No 23 (City of Brisbane) Squadron and ABXO

Commander	Date of Appointment
WGCDR CJ Wells	01 Jul 10
WGCDR SC Nickson	16 Jan 12
WGCDR TF Blair	12 Jan 15
WGCDR KL Breden	05 Dec 16

Appendix 4

Units stationed at RAAF Base Amberley – information available as at August 2017

(Source: 23SQN Headquarters)

Unit	From	To
Station Headquarters Amberley	17.06.40	21.10.40
No 24 Squadron	17.06.40	11.10.40
No 3 Recruit Depot	01.07.40	03.04.42
No 3 Service Flying Training School RAAF Station Sandgate: (Station Headquarters)	21.10.40	20.04.42
(No 3 Initial Training School and No 3 Embarkment Depot)	16.12.40	18.04.41
Units of US Army Air Corps (Various)	15.12.41	-.08.45
Station Headquarters Amberley	16.03.42	31.07.42
No 3 Aircraft Depot	16.03.42	01.04.92
Units of National Defence Corps	-.01.42	
Garrison Battalion	-.01.42	
Units of Volunteer Defence Corps	-.04.42	
Units of Australian Army Service Corps	-.04.42	
6th Anti-Aircraft Battery AMF	-.04.42	
No 3 Medical Clearing Station	01.05.42	
No 23 (F) Squadron	06.05.42	06.06.42
No 1 Air Liaison Section (Home Forces)	12.05.42	

Unit	From	To
No 10 Repair and Salvage Unit	15.05.42	01.09.42
No 6 Recruit Depot	24.08.42	01.12.42
US Army Airway Communication Service	-.09.42	-.08.45
USAFIA Ferry Div. Air Transport Command	10.09.42	05.07.45
22nd Service Group (5th Air Force)	25.11.42	
No 71 Squadron (Detached Flight)	26.01.43	02.02.43
No 77 Squadron (Air Echelon)	02.02.43	15.02.43
No 6 Aircraft Depot	14.10.43	
No 77 Wing Headquarters	22.11.43	17.01.44
No 10 Replenishing Centre	22.11.43	9.01.44
No 3 Central Recovery Depot	11.01.44	31.08.46
No 24 Air Stores Park	25.8.44	27.10.44
No 21 Squadron (Air Echelon)	17.11.44	21.01.45
No 300 Wing (RAF)	04.02.45	23.02.45
No 85 Operational Base Unit	08.03.45	25.05.45
No 85 (H/B) Wing Headquarters	10.03.45	06.06.45
No 31 Air Stores Park	11.03.45	01.09.45
No 23 Squadron (Air Echelon)	16.03.45	06.04.45
No 12 Squadron (Air Echelon)	20.04.45	-.05.45
No 1 Squadron (Air Echelon)	21.05.45	31.07.45
Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Detachment	01.08.45	30.10.45
No 99 Squadron (Air Echelon)	07.08.45	19.09.45
Air Defence Headquarters	05.11.45	22.11.46
No 12 Squadron	05.02.46	23.02.48

Unit	From	To
No 23 Squadron	12.04.46	23.02.48
No 82 (B) Wing Headquarters	18.04.46	01.02.74
No 21 Squadron	24.04.46	23.02.48
No 482 Maintenance Squadron	10.05.46	01.04.92
Headquarters RAAF Station Amberley	15.08.47	30.04.52
No 1 Squadron	23.02.48	15.07.50
No 2 Squadron	23.02.48	23.06.58
No 6 Squadron	23.02.48	
Base Squadron Amberley	01.05.52	31.05.88
Headquarters RAAF Amberley	05.05.52	31.05.88
No 1 National Service Training Unit	23.11.53	01.07.57
Lincoln Conversion Flight	18.04.55	26.03.56
No 23 Squadron	16.09.55	20.02.60
Base Squadron Butterworth	15.01.58	30.04.58
No 1 Squadron	11.08.58	
No 2 Operational Conversion Unit	16.12.58	26.03.59
No 75 Squadron	16.12.58	26.03.59
No 1 (B) Operational Conversion Unit	12.01.59	08.06.71
No 23 (Auxiliary) Squadron	20.02.60	
No 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron	01.12.60	25.04.66
1st Aviation Regiment	26.04.66	01.11.73
No 5 ACS Detachment "C"	26.06.67	15.09.69
No 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit	01.04.68	14.05.97
No 5 ACS	15.09.69	01.02.71

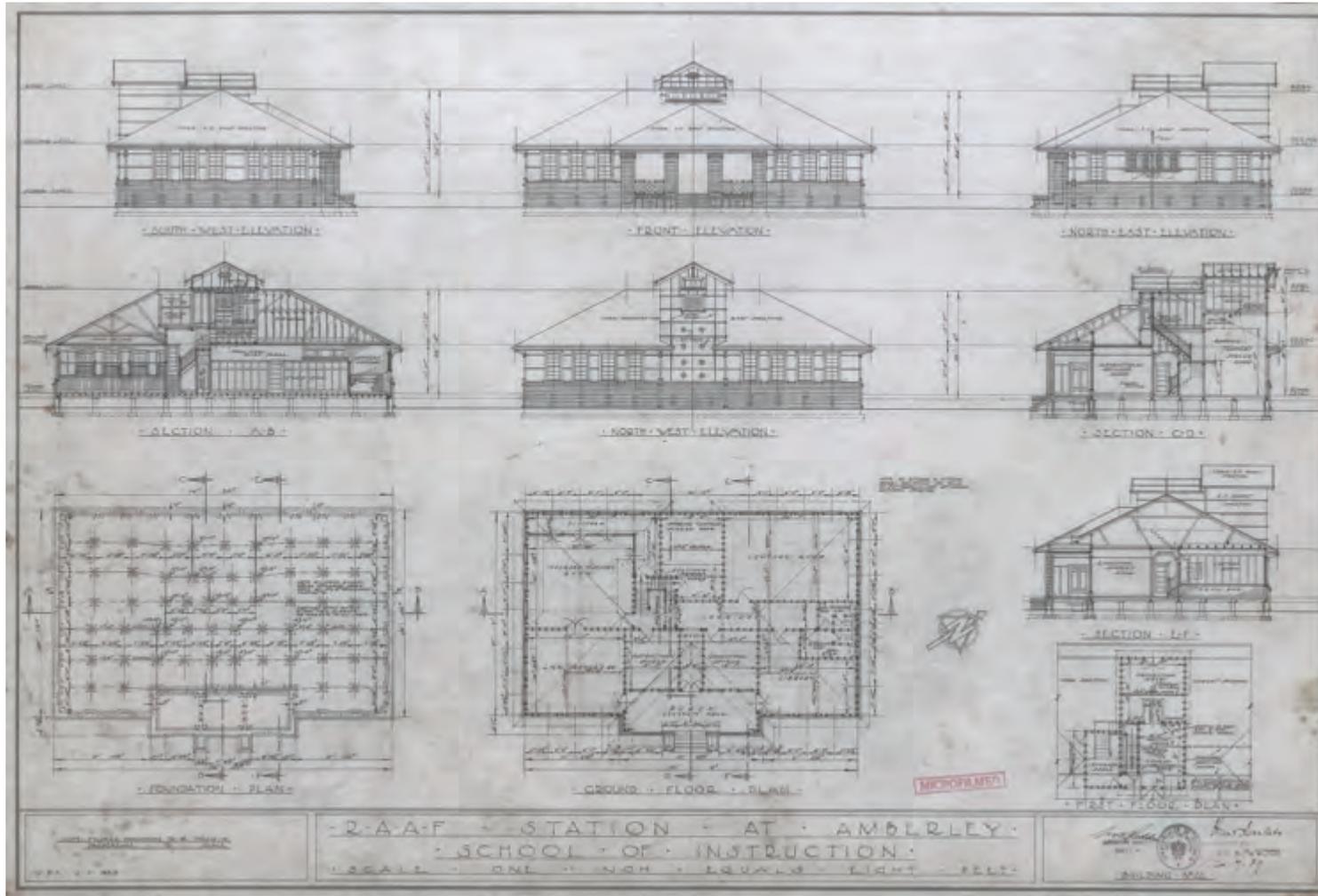
Unit	From	To
No 5 ACS Detachment "F"	01.02.71	21.12.73
No 2 Squadron	09.06.71	31.07.82
No 9 Squadron (Detachment "A")	8.11.71	18.12.71
No 9 Squadron	19.12.71	31.01.89
No 12 Squadron	01.09.73	25.08.89
Headquarters Operational Command (Detachment "E")	20.01.75	21.01.80
Australian Contingent Multinational Force & Observers SINAI	09.02.82	19.03.82
Defence Security Training School	23.11.82	31.12.86
RAAF Security and Fire School (RAAF SFS)	01.01.87	
No 2 Airfield Defence Squadron (2AFDS)	03.02.89	04.07.13
Headquarters Strike Reconnaissance Group	01.06.88	31.12.01
No 82 Wing	01.06.88	
Base Support Wing Amberley	01.07.88	30.06.94
Administrative Support Squadron	01.06.88	30.06.94
Operational Support Squadron	01.06.88	30.6.94
Supply Support Squadron	01.06.88	30.6.94
No 501 Wing	02.12.91	15.12.00
No 301 Air Base Wing	01.07.94	02.08.98
No 38 Squadron	18.12.92	-12.07
382 Expeditionary Combat Support Squadron	01.02.99	
School of Post Graduate Studies Detachment Amberley	-02.92	
Australian Air Force Cadets (2 Wing AAFC)	06.04.92	

Unit	From	To
No 3 Airfield Defence Squadron (3AFDS)	-.03.95	-.12.06
Headquarters Airfield Defence Wing	-.01.96	-.12.06
Combat Support Force (Amberley)	02.08.98	31.12.01
Combat Support Group (CSG)	06.12.99	
Strike Reconnaissance Systems Program Office (SRSPPO)	19.09.00	31.12.10
44 Wing Det AMB	27.11.00	15.02.11
Headquarters Health Services Wing (HQ HSW)	21.12.01	
Combat Support Unit (CSU)	01.01.02	31.12.07
Joint Logistics Unit (South Queensland) Amberley	01.07.02	
No 278 Squadron (TTF)	01.07.03	
No 87 Squadron (CSTIF, 82TIF, AMTIF ELMS)	-.07.06	
No 36 Squadron	17.11.06	
1 Airfield Operations Support Squadron Detachment	01.01.07	01.01.14
Combat Support Coordination Centre	07.10.07	
No 395 Expeditionary Combat Support Wing (395ECSW)	-.12.07	13.01.14
Heavy Airlift Systems Program Office (HALSPO)	01.01.08	
9th Force Support Battalion (9FSB)	01.01.08	
No 33 Squadron (33SQN)	01.07.08	
No 1 Expeditionary Health Squadron Amberley	01.04.09	
Health Operational Conversion Unit	01.04.09	
1 Combat Communications Squadron Detachment Amberley	01.01.10	

Unit	From	To
Tactical Fighter Systems Program Office (TFSPPO)	11.01.10	
No 5 Flight	18.01.10	
No 1 Airfield Defence Squadron (1AFDS)	01.11.10	04.07.13
Disposal and Aerial Targets Office (DATO)	01.01.11	-.12.13
LAND 121 IIS Training Team	-.01.11	
6th Engineer Support Regiment	-.01.11	
452 Squadron Amberley Flight (formerly 44WG DET-A)	16.02.11	
Amberley Health Centre	09.01.12	
No 86 Wing Headquarters	16.01.12	
No 3 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron Detachment Amberley (3AMES Det AMB)	01.01.13	
No 1 Security Forces Squadron (1SECFOR SQN) (previously known as 1AFDS)	04.07.13	01.01.14
No 2 Security Forces Squadron (2SECFOR SQN) (previously known as 2AFDS)	04.07.13	
No 95 Wing	13.01.14	
No 295 Squadron	13.01.14	
No 96 Wing	-.01.14	
Air Combat Electronic Attack System Program Office (ACEASPO)	-.01.14	
Air Force Gap Year	01.10.14	31.12.17
No 65 Squadron	01.07.15	

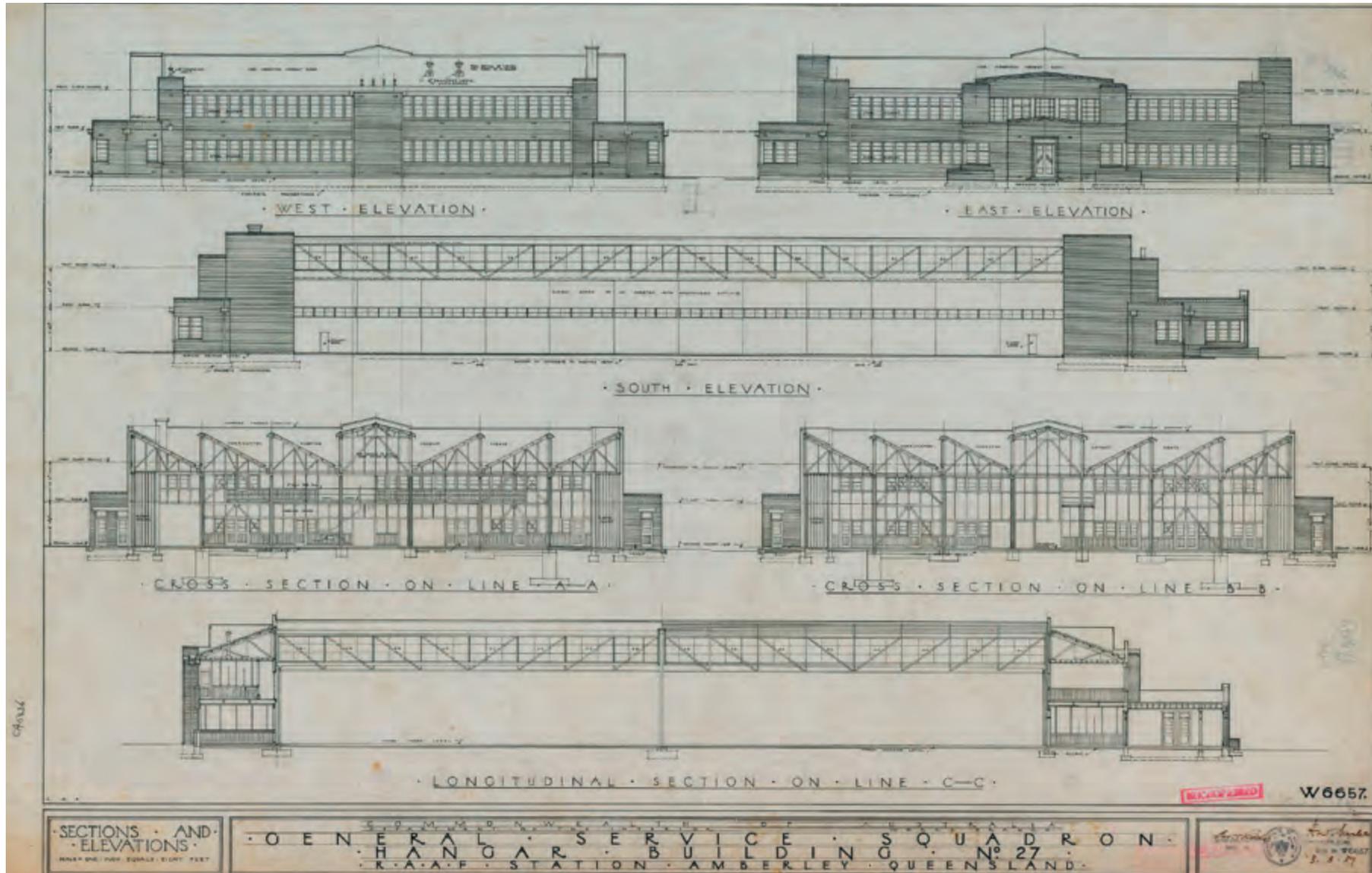
Appendix 5

RAAF Base Amberley – Building plans



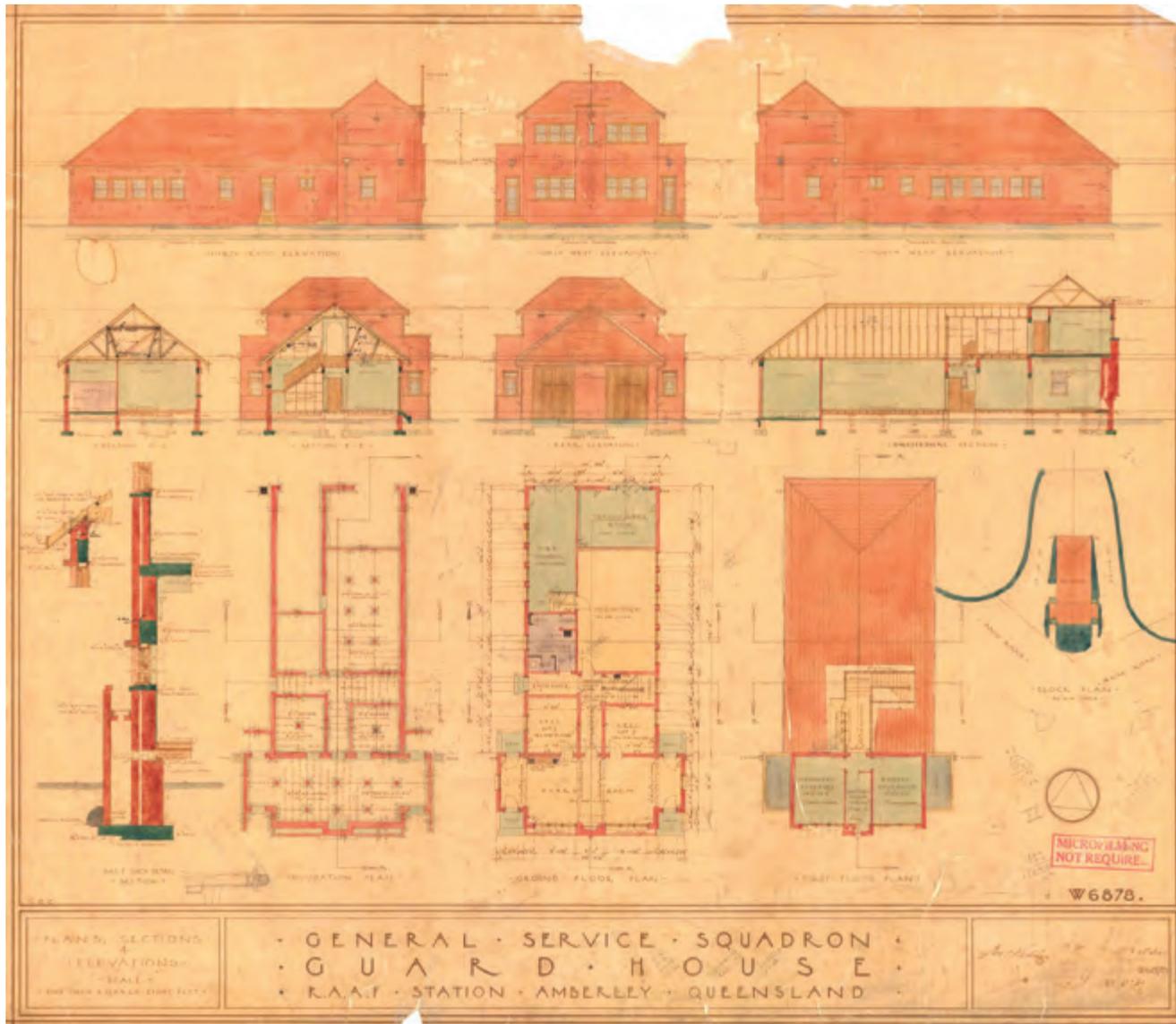
RAAF Station at Amberley – School of Instruction (4 July 1939).

(National Archives of Australia: J2774, W6993).

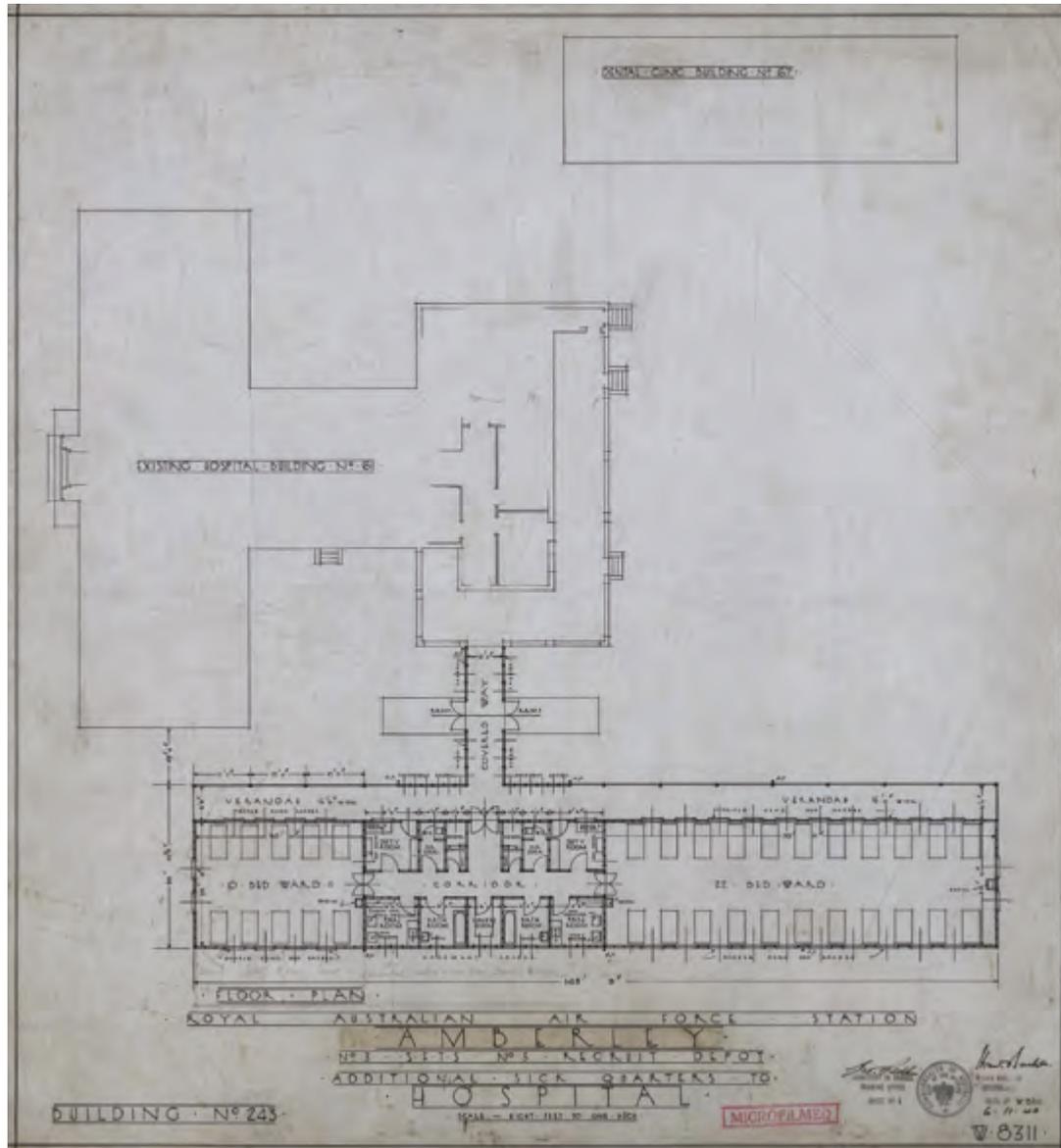


RAAF Station Amberley – General Service Squadron Building No 27 (Hangar 76) 3 March 1939.

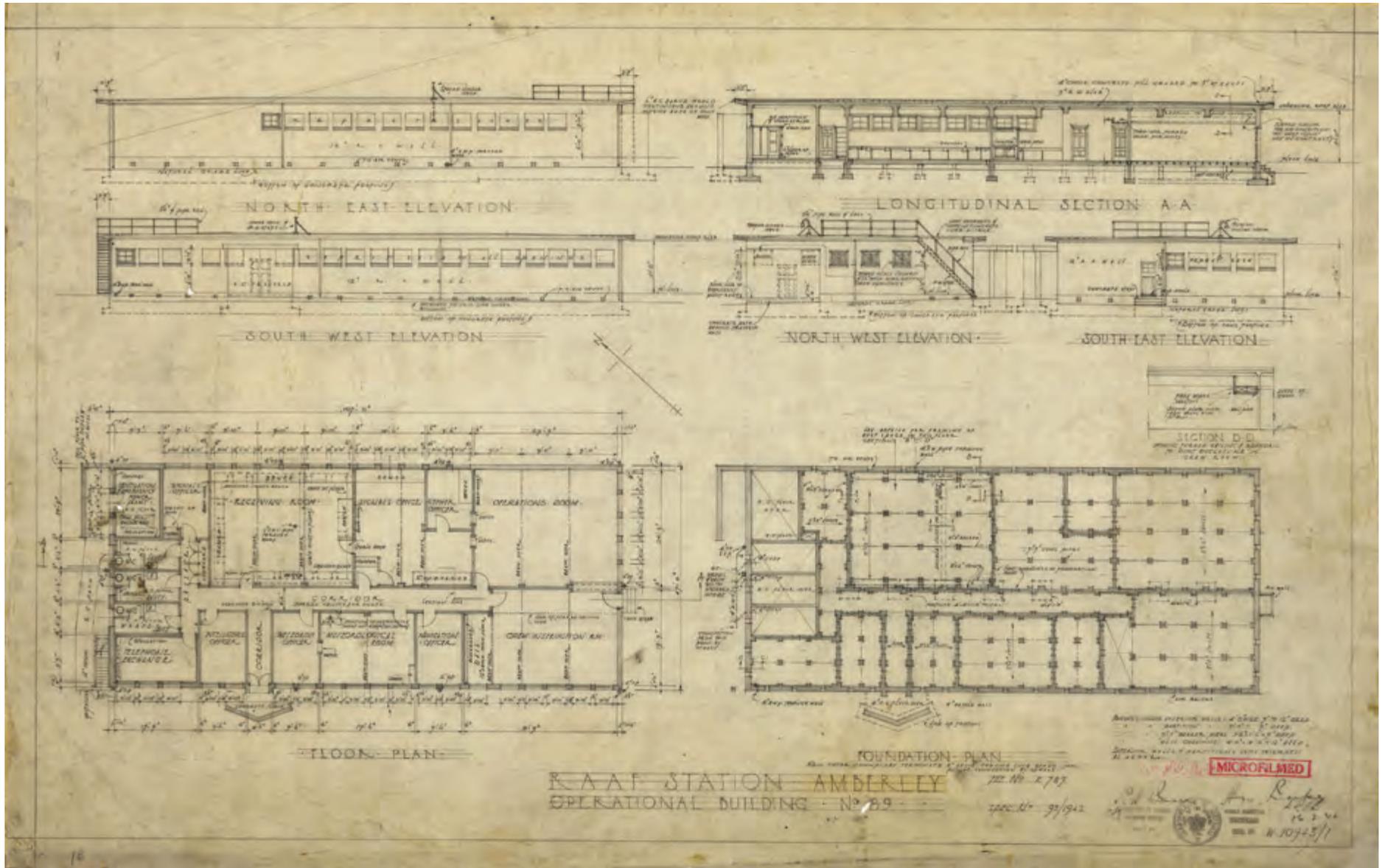
(National Archives of Australia: J2774, W6657).



RAAF Station Amberley Guard House (18 May 1939).
 (National Archives of Australia: J2774, W6878).



RAAF Station at Amberley – Additional sick quarters to hospital (6 November 1940).
 (National Archives of Australia: J2774, W8311).



RAAF Station at Amberley – Operational Building (26 February 1942).
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Proposed Landing Ground "AMBERLEY" QUEENSLAND

Scale: 20 Chains to an Inch

