

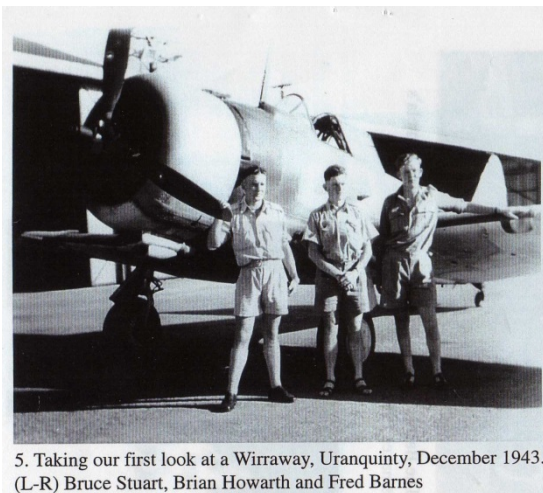
FRED BARNES.....A PROFILE

.....compiled by Jim Hall

Fred Barnes was CO of 3 Squadron, taking up the position in February of 1956 to see in the new fighter, the Sabre. Flying F86 and F100 Sabres with the USAF at the time, he was ideally suited to heading up the first RAAF squadron to be equipped with the new aircraft.

Fred retired in November 1981 with the rank of AVM, after 38 years of service and having flown 36 different types of aircraft, a feat unlikely to be matched these days. In this article, I will try to compress a very eventful life into a comparatively few words; not an easy task.

Fred was born in Melbourne in 1924, a son of parents of the Great Depression and started his first job as a Telegram Messenger Boy and subsequently a postman, also joining the ATC and eventually gaining entry to the RAAF in May 1943. After training at Narrandera and Uranquinty on Tiger Moths and Wirraways, he gained his wings in September of 1944. A time was spent flying Wirraways to train Air Gunners, before being posted to 77 Squadron at Morotai to fly Kittyhawks. After a move to Labuan Island, he started operations against the Japanese, including one to cover the re-occupation of Kuching at the end of hostilities, where the words 'get your fingers out' were displayed on the roof of a POW camp. The CO of the camp was an RAAF officer apparently. Nice fit.



The war ended at this time and the pilots converted to Mustangs, and filling in time before going to Japan as part of the Occupation Forces, by using hand grenades and TNT as bait for fishing, competing with sharks to pick up the dead and stunned fish. The squadron moved to Bofu in Japan in March of 1946 via Clark Field in the Philippines and Naha Airfield in Okinawa; escorted by Beaufighters and Mosquitoes, without incident. The other two squadrons, 76 and 82 had left earlier, but unfortunately, a flight of four Mustangs being led by a Mosquito at low level over the sea in broken cloud, encountered a small, but high island, resulting in four of the five aircraft crashing into it, with fatal results. Time was spent training on the new aircraft, and becoming proficient on ground attack duties, both with guns and rockets; the technique with rocket delivery being taught by a couple of Kiwi pilots from 14 Squadron RNZAF, who had experience in firing rockets from their Corsair aircraft. Off duty, he toured the countryside and found the locals friendly and polite, much to his surprise. Training and massed fly overs with the Allied Forces were the daily duties during this period. Fred was promoted in November 1945 from Warrant Officer, gaining his Commission with the rank of Pilot Officer.

Early 1948 saw the squadron moved to Iwakuni due to overcrowding at Bofu and this led to Fred taking part in a Ceremonial Guard in Tokyo to 'show the flag'. As these things work, Fred met his future wife, Pamela, who was living with her mother and step father who was working with the American Red Cross in Tokyo. Fred and Pamela were married in January 1949 and set up house in Married Quarters at Iwakuni, before being posted back to 21 (CAF) Squadron at RAAF Laverton, departing Japan on New Year's Eve 1949-50 aboard the SS Taiping. Pamela shared a cabin with other women, while Fred shared with two other blokes, one RAAF, one Army. Not the ideal trip back to Australia, I would think.

After settling back in Australia, Pamela presented Fred with a bouncing boy, Freddie, in May of 1950 and plans were made to build a house, which of course were interrupted by a posting to East Sale to undergo a Flying Instructors Course, commencing in July. On arrival at East Sale, Fred was told he had now been posted to 77 Squadron in Japan, and was to report to RAAF Base Richmond for kitting and travel to Japan.

The Korean War had already started and Fred's first operational flight was on 11 July, following a refresher flight the day before out of his old base at Iwakuni. This was a 3 hour 45 minute sortie, one hour of which was used to cross the strait between Japan and Korea. Weapon loads varied between combinations of 60 lb. rockets, 500 lb. bombs, .5 inch machine gun rounds and napalm canisters. Operations were staged through Taegu to allow more sorties to be staged, with the peak being in Aug-Sep 50 as the North Koreans pushed the South Koreans into the south-east corner of their country. Fred flew 8 sorties in the two days of 19-20 September, having his Mustang holed by ground fire through the wing and main oil tank during a strike on the airfield at Onogin. By October the situation on the ground had turned in the UN favour and the battle had moved north. 77 Squadron moved from Iwakuni to Pohang in southern Korea and settled into cold weather and long mission times. On the 9th September, the Squadron Commander, a very popular Lou Spence was killed. Lou fought with 3 Squadron in North Africa (see our newsletter of June 2011). A further 6 pilots would be lost up to the end of the Mustang era on 19 Jan 50. As the North Koreans were pushed back, the sorties again became longer; 4 hours duration not uncommon. The Squadron moved to Hamhung in North Korea, from where they operated at night and with snow covered runways (both new to the RAAF squadrons). The enemy made a major breakthrough on 28th November and it was maximum effort to stop their advance. It was learned later they were Chinese troops. The Squadron was forced to evacuate Hamhung back to their new base at Pusan in South Korea.

Operations for Fred continued until March of 1951, having clocked up 100 missions over Korea. It was a first for the squadron and he marked that point by arranging the 100th sortie with another 77 Squadron pilot, both completing their 100 missions at the same time. On one sortie, Fred noticed smoke coming out



18. Ross Coburn and myself after completion of our 100th operational sorties. Pusan. Korea 17 Februarv. 1951.

of one end of a railway tunnel, so he sent a couple of napalm canisters into the entrance on the other end. A satisfying large explosion resulted in the tunnel, with debris being blown out both ends. Before returning to Australia in April, he converted to Meteors, which were just starting to be delivered as the Mustang replacement. Fred would like to note the tremendous effort put in by the ground crew during his time in Korea; aircraft ready to go, despite the freezing weather conditions and frequent payload changes and always with good humour. Fred received the DFC and the USAF Military Medal for his contribution in Korea.

ARDU at Laverton was the next stop in June 1951 to undergo the 'Australian Test Pilot's Course', the first and last course, as all pilots were subsequently sent to the UK for the Empire Test Pilot's School. During June, he flew the Mustang, Wirraway, Vampire and Dakota. Time for flying a Mosquito was fitted in, but he wasn't able to get to the First Pilot stage. An arranged visit to a pilot in Laverton Base Hospital, who was wearing a body cast, with also one on a leg and one on an arm, gave Fred some idea of his next posting. Fred Knudsen, the other pilot, had pranged a Pika aircraft at Woomera. The Pika was the manned version of the pilotless Jindivik. There were many different trials going on at Woomera and the workhorse was the Lincoln bomber, so

another conversion was started at Laverton, before Fred found himself at Woomera, converting to the Pika. He flew the Pika as well as the Lincoln which was carrying out experimental weapons delivery systems and weapons. As time progressed, the Pika



was flown from the ground with Fred sitting in the cockpit as a back-up. The Pika morphed into the Jindivik, which was operated remotely initially from the back seat of a Meteor. The Lincoln, which took about 1.5 hours to get to 38000 feet for the bombing tests, was followed about an hour later by a Mustang which filmed the drops. After the Lincolns were fitted with Python turbo prop engines to the outboard stations, vastly improving the performance, the Mustang had to be sent off first! Not many weeks later, the first of two B-29 Super Fortresses arrived, then the Canberra bomber. Another two conversions for Fred. The Auster was flown and time as Second Pilot logged for the Dakota, Bristol Freighter and the Percival Prince. British Atomic Bomb tests were carried out at Maralinga about this time, resulting in a Lincoln having to be decontaminated at Amberley. A second boy, Robert, was born at Woomera Hospital in April 1952.

Fred was posted in November 1953, back to ARDU at Laverton before his next posting to the US as an exchange pilot with the USAF. He boarded the RMS Oronsay in Sydney with Pamela and now two children. After arriving in Vancouver, it was a train trip down to the small town of Victorville in Southern California, where home was to be at George Air Force Base. The position of Squadron Operations Officer was to be taken up, only after an extensive course to gain a USAF Instrument Rating. The RAAF did not do much of this type of flying at the time, so it was a very demanding period. Fred was flying F-86, T-33, Beaver and soon the F-100 and the F-86F, which had retractable engine intake screens to minimise FOD. So in the after take-off checklist.....'screens in'. 'Screens out' before landing. Pamela had a little girl, Kathie, in July of 1955; life was demanding but good and all too soon the 2 years posting was up. A posting back to Williamtown to command the about to be reformed 3 Squadron which was to be equipped with the new Australian F-86. The children getting Chicken Pox shortly before departure from the US, saw Fred and his family miss the ship back to Australia, subsequently flying home with QANTAS via Hawaii and Fiji on a Constellation, arriving in Sydney late for his Williamtown appointment. Leaving the family in Sydney, Fred

went up to Williamstown alone until a house could be sorted out. A friend gave them a lift up, as the RAAF hadn't offered or arranged any transport.

3 Squadron was very busy with the introduction of the Sabre and Fred was able to pass on his knowledge gained on fighter tactics learned during his time with the USAF. The Rolls Royce Avon engine proved superior to the American engine, but the Aden 30 mm cannon was a mismatch with the sighting system, seemingly pointing in the wrong direction. All was overcome in time. Other aircraft flown were the Vampire and Meteor. Fred recalls an Airframe Fitter called Wal Tierney working extremely hard when Headquarters ordered the squadron to deploy to Townsville; the squadron never having used drop tanks at all before this exercise. I mention Wal Tierney because there would be a lot of our members who remember 'Wealthy Wal' with fondness.



Meanwhile another daughter, Deborah, had been born in 1956, bringing the number of children up to four. The next move was to undergo the Staff College Course at Point Cook in 1958. After completing the course, it was off to Department of Air at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne. The position was Director of Personnel Officers 2. The entire Dept. of Air was moved to Canberra in late 1959, so Fred and family were in a new home in Lyneham, a new suburb. Fred recalls this period as 'a long haul' and he was pleasantly surprised to get a posting in March of 1962 to lead the RAAF pilot team to France to train on and introduce the Mirage Fighter.

Down to Sale to the Central Flying School in July 1962 for 10 days on a refresher flying course on the Vampire and also to renew his instrument rating, before going to Williamstown to fly the Sabre again. He joined the rest of the team at Williamstown, all eager to tackle this new task. A 10 week course on the French language was carried out at the RAAF School of Languages at Point Cook in Oct-Nov 1962, but it was to be six months before this new skill could be used, due to program slippage. Posted to 75 Squadron in March 1963, saw another move of family to Williamstown. This position was short lived, as Fred and the others were off to France in May 1963, where all the training for the Mirage was carried out of course, and they found out the designator for our Mirage (the IIIO), indicated 'O' was for 'Orstralia'. The latest French Mirage was the IIIE. In July, the team flew the Fouga Magister and then the Mirage at The Centre D'Experiences Ariennes Militaires at Mont-De-Marsan at Landes in the south of France. A busy time, but also time to enjoy the French hospitality. The rocket motor option was rejected for the Mirage, as it was more suited to the European environment, where high altitude had to be attained quickly to intercept incoming enemy aircraft. A short stint with the RAF to compare tactics, and then it was home to Australia.

Fred took up the position of CO of 2 OCU at Williamtown in October 1963, the first squadron to be equipped with the Mirage. Due to delays in production and lack of ground handling equipment, the first aircraft was not delivered to Williamtown until 26 Feb 1964, flown by Fred. I recall the day well and I was suitably gob smacked by the look of the aircraft which



became known as the French Lady in some quarters.....but generally 'The Miracle'. June of 1965 saw Fred back in Canberra at Department of Air, until he was again posted; this time to Paris as the Air Attaché, but first it was back to the RAAF School of Languages for 3 months to brush up on his French. Then it was off to Paris in June with Pamela and the two girls; the boys staying at school in Canberra. Three years of a Paris appointment was very much enjoyed by all and some Mirage flying was also fitted in amongst the other duties.

The next posting was to Butterworth in October 1968 to be the Air Staff Officer, which was to supervise all flying and to be 2 I/C to the OC Base. After settling the family, Fred went back to CFS for refresher training and checked out on the Macchi, before going back to 2 OCU for refresher flying on the Mirage. He kept up his flight currency by flying with each squadron, including the Dakota with the Transport Support Flight. Time was spent at Butterworth representing the RAAF in the RAF withdrawal negotiations with the Malaysians. One of the British demands was quite a high price on the swimming pool on Base Married Quarters.....the Malays suggested they could take it with them upon withdrawal. "Tedious negotiations".

In October 1971 there was a new posting. This time to London for a course at the Royal College of Defence Studies, an essential course for further promotions. With just 3 months before the course began, Fred and Pam returned to Canberra from October 1971 to January 1972 to arrange family and domestic issues before heading off to the UK. Then back to Canberra in January of 1973 to take up the post of Director General of Personnel. This brought a promotion to Air Commodore. During this period, much to Fred's disapproval, the RAAF lost a fighter squadron, the last Airfield Construction Squadron, a band and the University Air Squadrons.

Fred was back at Williamtown in January 1976 to January 1977 as Officer Commanding, where he was able to do a little Mirage flying. Promotion to Air Vice-Marshal came with a posting to the position of AOC Support Command in January 1977.

Back to Canberra in March 1979 to DCAS, Fred found the continuous committee meetings less than desirable, and he saw the gradual depletion of war reserves of spares and stores due to lack of money. During this time, Fred was able to get a conversion onto the Caribou and logged 140 hours on the type. In his last three years of service, he did a refresher course on the Macchi, a familiarisation flight in an F-111, several Mirage flights, Mystere 20 and his last flight in the RAAF in a dual Mirage IID from Fairbairn to Williamtown in November 1981 for his dining out night. The night was a 'splendid occasion', attended by the Chief of Air Staff and the Minister for Air, Sir James Killen, among many others who wanted to honour Fred Barnes for his friendship and contribution to the RAAF over 38 years of war time and peace time service.

In initial retirement, Fred kept busy with volunteering on many boards and organisations, fitting in a little golf, of course; and living initially at Tweed Heads before moving to Berry in NSW to enjoy full retirement.

AVM Fred Barnes certainly has an impressive record, built over many years and he met many challenges with dedication and hard work. The highest accolade a WOD in the RAAF could give anyone was a shouted "WELL DONE THAT MAN!"I think this is an appropriate way to end this profile of Fred Barnes.

MEDALS AWARDED:

AO.....For posts of AOC Support Command and DCAS.

DFC.....For Korean War operations.

AFC.....For Test Pilot at Woomera.

1939-45 Star

Pacific Star

War Medal 1939-45

Australian Service Medal

Korea Medal

United Nations Service Medal – Korea

Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal

National Medal and Second Clasp

United States Air Medal

Returned from Active Service Badge

AIRCRAFT FLOWN:

Tiger Moth, Wirraway, Wackett Trainer, Kittyhawk, Mustang, Harvard, Auster, Dakota, Meteor, Mosquito, Anson, Lincoln, Pika, Python Lincoln, Washington, Sycamore, Bristol Freighter, Canberra, Winjeel, Percival Prince, T-33, F86, L20A, F100, Sabre, Vampire, Fouga Magister, Mirage, Macchi, F15 Eagle, Seneca II, CT4, F111, Mystere 20, Caribou, HS748.

His favourite aircraft was the Mustang.

