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AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION – TOWNSVILLE BRANCH

FLIGHTLINE

Volume 22 No. 1

Next Branch Meeting

Sunday 13th February 2022

1000 Hours

Bolton Clarke Community Centre,
Rowes Bay

Next Branch Event

TBA

★ The strongest people make time to help others, even if they're struggling with their own personal demons ★



Welcome back to a new year that hopefully will be better than the past 2 years.

Our new Social Committee has some fun and exciting events planned for the year, we hope you enjoy them.

On behalf of all members, we wish those members who have had birthdays a very Happy Birthday



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MEMBER PROFILE

Welcome to our new member David Wilson. Here are some facts about David

David Wilson



Where were you born?

Sydney, NSW.

Where did you go to school?

Mainly Toowoomba, Qld.

What are your interests/hobbies?

Birdwatching, Documentaries.

Do you have a favourite book/movie/song?

Movie – The Good, The Bad and the Ugly.

When did you join the military?

Joined the Army 194 & transferred to RAAF 1995.

Where was your favourite posting?

RAAF Point Cook – 1FTS as a QFI

What is on top of your bucket list?

Visit Mission Control in Houston.

What do you like about Townsville?

The Strand area.

Do you have a story to tell, a joke to make us smile, a poem, an event you want to tell us about or anything else you think our readership would be interested in? Then send it to tvsec@raafaqld.org with the subject line "NEWSLETTER ARTICLE"



Australia's Forgotten Heroes

Women in aviation have always been a minority, and today they make up less than a quarter of the Australian Air Force. By remembering the stories of our first 'Flying Daughters', we can commemorate some of these female pioneers who first took to the skies.

Amy Gwendoline Stark Caldwell (Gwen)

Gwen was one of many young women inspired by the 1930 Australia visit of British Aviator Amy Johnson. Gwen took flying lessons at Mascot Airport where she gained her 'A' pilot licence on 10 July 1939 and was proud to be one of five women appointed as Assistant Section Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in NSW.

Before WWII, she was an active member of the Australian Women's Flying Club. This would become the New South Wales branch of the Women's Air Training Corps during the war, and she was its commandant in 1940. At about the same time, she joined the newly re-formed Australian Women's Flying Club, becoming assistant State commandant (1940).

Gwen was known for her comprehensive knowledge of aeromechanics and navigation. Newspaper records show that The Sydney Morning Herald published a piece titled 'Australian Women in Uniform' in 1940 which shows her among other Australian women in their respective career uniforms.

In 1964, she became the Federal President of the Australian Women's Pilots' Association. Gwen is also featured in Who's Who Australia in 1947, a book that shares the biographies of prominent Australians, where her amazing career achievements are highlighted. In 1972 The Sydney Morning Herald interviewed Gwen and featured her recent trip to Papua New Guinea and wartime achievements.

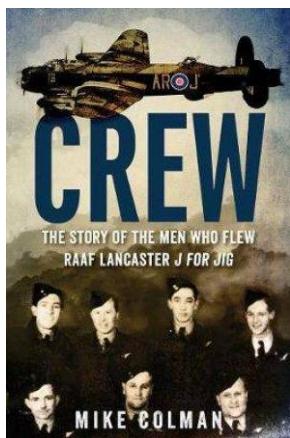
Nancy-Bird Walton [Born Nancy De Low Bird]

Nancy took her pilot license at just 19 years, the youngest age possible. She started taking flying lessons in 1933 and paid for them by working in her father's shop.

Like Gwen, her extraordinary life is documented in Who's Who Australia where it records how the young Nancy organised the first ever Ladies' Flying Tour in 1935 and flew 22,000 miles.

(continued on page 4)

A BOOK IN REVIEW



Authors
Mike Coleman
ISBN
9781742379111
Published
21/02/2018
Binding
Paperback
Pages 336

Price \$32.99

RAAF Lancaster bomber J for Jig took off on 24 February 1944 from RAF Binbrook airfield, near Bookenby, Lancashire, at 6:02 on a night in 1944. On board was a crew of seven young men. The mission was to bomb factories in Schweinfurt, Germany. J for Jig was never to return. It was shot down in the night skies over France.

This book is about the seven lives on that aircraft. It is about their families and the children some of them never saw. It is about the French villagers who helped some escape from the Nazis and buried others - two escaped through Switzerland, one became a POW and the other four were killed.

Author Mike Colman brilliantly recreates the mission and tells each individual's story - how they came to be on the plane, what happened to them that night, what happened afterwards and how it affected those left behind both in France and at home.

Have you read a good book lately that you think other members may enjoy? Then write a brief review and send it in for inclusion in our newsletter

2021 SNCO Award

As in previous years, Townsville and Cairns Branches sponsored the 2021 "Most Outstanding SNCO Award" as assessed by RAAF Townsville management.

FSGT WATSON, Firefighter from 383SQN was the 2021 award recipient. A presentation of both the perpetual and the individual trophies was made by SADFO, WGCDR Mat Green, and Lindsay Gordon, RAAF Association Area Vice President Northern, at the Sergeants Mess, RAAF Townsville. The presentation was attended by base members and by several Townsville Branch Members.



Branch Christmas Lunch



As we have done in past years, the Branch held its Christmas Lunch at the Mercure on 12th December. Despite any COVID-19 restrictions, the function was attended by 33 members and guests who, from all reports, enjoyed the food and fellowship. The Branch was able to subsidise each person's food bill by \$10 each

Again the raffle was a great success with the takings exceeding \$200. Thank you to all who brought along a gift for this raffle.



AVIATION HUMOUR



Forgotten Heroes – continued from page 3

After unearthing archived newspapers, a 1935 interview in The Sydney Morning Herald tells the amusing story of how Nancy and her co-pilot Peggy would stay in pop-up tents wherever they landed during the tour.

Who's Who Australia also states she won the Ladies' Trophy in 1936 for an air race from Adelaide to Brisbane and during World War II she started training women in skills needed to assist pilots in the Royal Australian Air Force.

Nancy later founded the Australian Women Pilots' Association (AWPA) in 1950, an organisation that still actively promotes women in aviation today.

Mary Teston Luis Bell [Born Mary Teston Luis Fernandes]

Born in Tasmania, Mary was an Australian Aviator and the founding leader of the Women's Air Training Corps (WATC), a volunteer organisation that provided support to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) during World War II. She later helped establish the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), the first and largest women's wartime service in the country, which grew to more than 18,000 members by 1944.

A 1927 interview in The Kansas City Times references Mary receiving her pilot's license along with other female pilots. Her photo was unearthed in the Great Britain, Royal Aero Club Aviators collection on Ancestry, that contains approximately 28,000 index cards and 34 photograph albums of aviators who were issued with their flying licences (certificates) by the Royal Aero Club from 1910-1950. Mary's certificate can also be found in this collection.

A C-130 was en route to a mission when a cocky F-16 pilot flew up next to him. The jet jockey told the C-130 pilot, "Watch this!" He went into a barrel roll, followed by a steep climb, then finished with a sonic boom when he reached the speed of sound. The F-16 pilot asked the C-130 pilot what he thought. The C-130 pilot responded "That was impressive, but watch this." The C-130 droned along for about 15 minutes then the C-130 pilot came back on and said "What did you think about that?"

The 16 pilot asked, "What the Hell did you do?"

The C-130 pilot responded "I got up, stretched my legs, went to the back poured a cup of coffee and took a piss."

Leaving military life behind at the end of the war, Mary took up farming with her husband in Victoria and then later in Tasmania.

Freida Thompson

Not all female aviators were able to serve in the war as pilots. Freida Thompson was referred to as "one of Victoria's pioneer airwomen" in the 19 July 1948 Barrier Minor newspaper. She took her first flying lesson in 1930 at Essendon and gained a commercial 'B' pilot's licence two years later, becoming only the fifth woman in Australia to do so, and in 1934 was one of the first women in the world to fly solo from England to Australia, as reported in the Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate.

At the start of World War II, Thompson sold her plane, named Christopher Robin, and thinking her flying experience might be useful, put her name down for the WAAAF in March 1941. However, she became tired of waiting for an answer and enrolled for the Australian Women's Army Service where she served as an ambulance driver, as reported in The News Adelaide.

She was also commandant of the Woman's Air Training Corps in Victoria from 1940-1942. An article from The Age, Melbourne in 1940 contains a photo of women attending an Air Training Corps meeting, including Freida. The Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners' Advocate reported Freida's 1934 journey from England to Australia in 1949 with images, details into her career and her long-lost flying adventures.

A quote unearthed from the Newcastle Morning Herald in and Miners' Advocate in 1949 captures Freida's commitment to flying "*Everyone asks me why I took up flying, she says. "I really don't know. But I do know that now I can't stop.*"

Padre's Piece

Most of us know about post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). There is another psychological disorder that can afflict military service personnel. It is called “**moral injury**”. It can be an important part of PTSD and requires recognition, so that the sufferer can receive adequate treatment and support. In traumatic or unusually stressful circumstances, people may perpetrate, fail to prevent, or witness events, that contradict deeply held values, moral beliefs, and expectations, eg: that prisoners of war, the wounded and sick, non-combatants and children should be protected.

Guilt, shame, disgust, and anger are some of the hallmark reactions of moral injury. So is repetitive self-interrogation - “What if I had done this or that, or said this or that, would it have made a difference.” Another very common reaction is an inability to self-forgive - “I cannot forgive myself for what I did.” Or “I cannot forgive myself for letting him/her/them do that”, are common phrases heard by those who are caring for those with moral injury. For those with spiritual beliefs they may believe that not even God can or will forgive them. That is not correct, and we will deal with that in the next newsletter.

It is very important to realise that, as the example that follows shows, the events that cause moral injury may not be illegal in terms of the rules of engagement or the rules of war and may be an “operational necessity” to protect yourself or others from harm. During the recent evacuation of Kabul, a pilot made the decision to depart without fully loading his aircraft because of the rapidly deteriorating security situation and a credible threat that insurgents were about to fire rockets at the runway. He looked out the window to see women and children being pushed away from the aircraft as he taxied out. During an interview he commented *“I will never ever forget the looks on those faces and the terror in their eyes, and I keep asking myself over and over, should I have waited a bit longer? I know that I had to get the aircraft out of danger, but I don’t think the people I left behind will ever forgive me and I don’t think I will ever forgive myself either”*. This is classic case of moral injury and that pilot needs help. In the next newsletter I will give some information on the treatment of moral injury and how all of us need to know how to provide help and support. If you would like more information before then, this is an excellent source.

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/cooccurring/moral_injury.asp



Padre Wayne Melrose,
Townsville Branch Chaplain

UPCOMING BRANCH EVENTS

Social Committee & Branch Calendar

The newly established Branch Social Committee (Doug Millican & David Shaw) are currently preparing a social calendar for 2022. Expect this to be published within the next few weeks. If you have any suggestions for these activities please don't hesitate to contact Doug or Dave via the Secretary's address.



Branch Annual General Meeting

The Branch AGM is getting closer. The meeting is planned for 13th March so get your thinking hats on and nominate who you would like to see as your executive committee for 2022. Formal notification of the AGM will be sent to you shortly and will include nomination forms for the exec positions.

Townsville War Cemetery Pilgrimage

On Tuesday, 9th November 2021 the Townsville Branch conducted a pilgrimage to the Belgian Gardens War Cemetery, to remember those RAAF personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice during operational service in the Second World War between 1939 and 1945. The pilgrimage commenced at 9.00am and was attended by the RAAF Association State President, Branch Executive and members, representatives from RAAF Base Townsville and Townsville City Council as well as representatives from Townsville based Ex-Service Organisations.

Townsville was an important shipping port and air base throughout the Second World War. The Royal Australian Air Force maintained a base here for its own aircraft and for American heavy bombers used by the Allies in their Pacific campaigns.

In 1941 Townsville became the base of operation for an Area Combined Headquarters, established to ensure naval and air co-operation in North-Eastern Australia.

Because of the significant role that Townsville played in WWII and in recognition of the ultimate sacrifice made by service personnel during war service in the region, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission constructed the Belgian Gardens War Cemetery which is maintained on their behalf by the Office of Australian War Graves. 222 defence personnel lay at rest here, of which 106 were members of the Royal Australian Air Force.

In the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the RAAF, the Townsville Branch of the RAAF Association took the opportunity to recognise those members of the RAAF who have passed before us, and who are interred here.

Branch Executives laid poppies on the headstones of the RAAF graves. This was followed by a brief service conducted by Rev'd Dr Wayne Melrose, RAAF Association, Townsville Branch Chaplain



This commemoration was supported by the Townsville City Council (*supplied shade, seating and a flagpole*). The Townsville Brass Band (*supplied a side drum for the Poppy Laying*) and the Salvation Army (*supplied the "Sally Man" on site*). This event attracted media coverage from Channels 7 & 9, The Bulletin and ABC Raio.