

# Air Force Association

The official newsletter of the Air Force Association – Victoria ABN: 96 091 342 304

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(L) Flying Officer Michael Herbert and (R) Pilot Officer Robert Charles Carver, 2 Squadron.

### HONOURING THEIR MEMORY – THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOSS OF MAGPIE 91

**Tuesday 3 November 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the loss of Magpie 91, with commemorations held at the Australian War Memorial, the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island and a fly-past over RAAF Base Williamtown to honour and remember the crew – Flying Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver.**

On 3 November 1970, RAAF Canberra A84-231 (call-sign Magpie 91) successfully carried out a night, high level bombing mission under radar control over South Vietnam close to the Laotian border.

The airmen, both 24 years, departed Phan Rang airbase on a routine bombing sortie near the Laotian/South Vietnam border. As the aircraft headed back to Phan Rang, the US Radar Operator complimented the crew on the successful mission saying, "That was an excellent run, sir. It looked real good down here, and we enjoyed working with you and see you again another day." Mike Herbert replied briefly: "Magpie 91."

They were never heard from again. Shortly after, the aircraft radar return vanished from the operator's screen and despite numerous search and rescue flights by Australian and American aircraft over the next 3 days, no trace of the aircraft could be found. The flight crew were classified as Missing in Action.

Continued on page 2

A subsequent Court of Inquiry into the disappearance found no obvious reason for the loss. There were no enemy aircraft counter measures employed in the region and the weather was fine. The aircrew were competent aviators. Michael had flown 198 combat missions and was an experienced Canberra pilot. He was looking forward to his return home in several weeks. Robert was a recent arrival at the Squadron but had already impressed his superiors for his airmanship qualities.

When Australian forces were withdrawn from South Vietnam, a total of six MIA (four Army personnel and the two crew members of Magpie 91) were left behind. The need to repatriate these six servicemen was keenly felt by all veterans and none more so than Lieutenant Colonel Jim Bourke AM MG who initiated his "Operation Aussies Home" programme to search for and recover the Missing in Action personnel.

A two-tour Vietnam Veteran, Jim committed himself to investigating and accounting for 'The Forgotten Six' Australian servicemen listed as MIA during the Vietnam War. Sadly, Jim Bourke passed away on September 25th, 2015 aged 72 years.

The programme was instrumental in the discovery of the four Army Australians missing in action, and led to the eventual 2007 appointment of Major Jack Thurgar, from the Army History Unit, and RAAF Squadron Leader John Cotterell to review all the records and documentation and to visit Quang Nam province in Vietnam to speak with former North Vietnamese and Viet Cong commanders who had been stationed in the area where the aircraft had disappeared.



*Major Jack Thurgar, from the Army History Unit, and RAAF Squadron Leader John Cotterell confirm the wreckage of Magpie 91.*

Nearly 39 years later, the jungle gave up its secret. Vietnamese officials visited local villages in the area and returned with an air position indicator from the crash which

was later identified as part of a Canberra aircraft. This in turn led the RAAF to create a larger team to visit the crash site in 2009 to confirm the wreckage and recover the remains of Mike Herbert and Bob Carver.

The search and recovery process was completed on 21 August 2009 and a RAAF C130 aircraft carrying the two caskets arrived back at RAAF Base Richmond on 31 August 2009. A formal ramp ceremony with various dignitaries, senior RAAF staff, an Honour Guard and former members of No 2 SQN was conducted at RAAF Base Richmond after the aircraft arrived.



*The repatriation of Herbert and Carver with a formal ramp ceremony at RAAF Base Richmond*

Coincident with the arrival of the C130 aircraft at Richmond, another ceremony was conducted at the National Vietnam Veterans Museum at Phillip Island, where the last two of a precious collection of six Bracelets representing servicemen listed as a POW or MIA, were finally closed.

### **COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOSS OF MAGPIE 91**

On 2 November 2020, a Lockheed Hudson aircraft flew over the Australian War Memorial, Canberra to commemorate the Anniversary. Hudsons formed part of No 2 Squadron's fleet during WW2. The Australian War Memorial's Last Post Ceremony that evening was dedicated to Pilot Officer Robert Charles Carver.

On 3 November, a small but moving commemoration ceremony was held at the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island and No 2 Squadron conducted a flypast over the RAAF Base Williamtown (now the home of the Squadron), honouring the memory of the crew of Magpie 91.

Photos of the 50th Anniversary commemorations are included on pages 8-9.

Understand more about the story of Magpie 91

**Watch:** <https://youtu.be/6EWbru14l3A>

**Read:** <https://afavic.org.au/content/756/branch-vietnam-veterans>





**As 2020 draws to a close, I say good riddance to it, with the expectation that 2021 will be a much better year for all Victorians. Sadly, this year, every event that we had planned was either cancelled or severely impacted by COVID 19 – so definitely a year to forget rather than remember. However, there were several alternative ways employed by AFA Victoria and other Veterans organisations to commemorate significant events.**

Anzac Day was commemorated with a dawn driveway service with the photographs of our members published in the Contact magazine. For Vietnam Veterans Day, as well as a Zoom Meeting, the Vietnam veterans Branch created a video showing photographs of “younger” members taken during their Vietnam service.

I finally managed to attend one formal commemorative service for the year; a very small Remembrance Day service at Point Cook, limited to 10 people all wearing masks. It was somewhat surreal to have 10 people on that large parade ground in front of the AFC Memorial.

The lockdown significantly impacted our financial situation, for our Real Estate agent could not show our rental property to prospective clients for a long period of time. Inspections are now resuming but no success as yet.

On a more positive note, one of our investments has now matured and with such small returns being offered the Board of Management has looked at alternative investment opportunities. Defence Housing Australia (DHA) provides rental accommodation to Australian servicemen and women and we are currently in the process of purchasing a four-bedroom house in Ipswich, which DHA will lease from us for 9 years with an option for another 3 years. This investment will return approximately 4.5% gross, and monthly payments are guaranteed by DHA even if the property is vacant.

I am pleased to announce that after a somewhat lengthy process, the Governor of Victoria, The Honourable Linda Dessau AC and her husband Mr Anthony Howard QC have agreed to be the joint patrons of the Air Force Association of Victoria. I look forward to having the Governor and Mr Howard at some of our functions in 2021.

The whole Association can look forward to a much better 2021 with restrictions being eased and most importantly the Air Force centenary events planned for throughout the year. The plans for the Air Force Centenary event in Canberra are still being finalised, and when known will be communicated to all.

Meanwhile the Board of Management is still planning to celebrate our Air Force Association Centenary which had to be cancelled in March, and as soon as we clearly understand the restrictions relating to indoor numbers, a future date will be advised to all members.

Finally, a reminder to all that 2021 Membership Renewals are now due. The Air Force Association continues the tradition established in 1920 of supporting current and former serving members and their families. This support takes the form of welfare assistance (in kind and financial), events and outings and assistance with claims for DVA entitlements as well as education bursaries and support for Branch activities. So your continued support of the Association is vital and very much appreciated.

On behalf of the AFA Victoria Board of Management, I extend our best wishes to you all for a safe and Merry Christmas.

**Max McGregor**

*President*

Air Force Association



## THE LATEST ON AIR FORCE 2021!

On 31 March 2021, the Royal Australian Air Force will celebrate 100 years of service to Australia.

Find out how our centenary year will be acknowledged and celebrated by visiting <https://airforce2021.airforce.gov.au>

# VIETNAM VETERANS 2021 BURSARY AND ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS – APPLICATIONS INVITED

Applications are now invited from eligible families for the 2021 AFA Victoria Vietnam Veterans bursary and encouragement awards.

**\*CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS – Friday, 22 January 2021\***

## WHAT ARE THE BURSARY AND ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS?

In 2009, the Royal Australian Air Force (Vic) Foundation in conjunction with the Royal Australian Air Force Vietnam Veterans Association (Vic) established an annual Bursary to provide financial assistance to eligible dependants in recognised educational or training courses. These Bursaries and Encouragement Awards are now open to ALL dependants of AFA Victoria members.

The Bursary, administered by the RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association, represents another facet of the assistance both Associations deliver to former and serving RAAF members and their families.

**Full details of eligibility, assessment criteria can be found on the Vietnam Veterans Branch page of the AFA Victoria website or you can click the link below:**

[http://afavic.org.au/1454/images/2021\\_Bursary\\_Application\\_Form.pdf](http://afavic.org.au/1454/images/2021_Bursary_Application_Form.pdf)

## ANNOUNCING TWO ADDITIONAL ENCOURAGEMENT AWARDS

Two separate Encouragement Awards, named in honour of highly esteemed past members, will provide an amount of \$500 to applicants deemed most worthy of such assistance.

### THE JOHN 'SNOW' COUGHLAN CGM ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD



### THE LEE AND ELLEN SCULLY ENCOURAGEMENT AWARD



**All applicants for the Bursary will be considered** for either the John 'Snow' Coughlan CGM Encouragement Award, or the Lee and Ellen Scully Encouragement Award as part of their application.

You can access the application form at: [http://afavic.org.au/1454/images/2021\\_Bursary\\_Application\\_Form.pdf](http://afavic.org.au/1454/images/2021_Bursary_Application_Form.pdf)



# RAAF RADAR BRANCH COLLABORATION ON THE 13 RADAR STATION CAPE OTWAY PROJECT SHINES A LIGHT ON ITS WWII HISTORY.

The RAAF Radar Branch's collaboration with Cape Otway Lightstation Management on the 13 Radar Station Cape Otway has acknowledged the historical significance of RAAF Ground Radar Operations during WWII.



13RS Cape Otway Doover building

The project has opened as an Exhibition on the Cape Otway Tourist Trail in mid-June 2020 and was also nominated for the 2020 Victorian Community History Awards.

AFA Victoria's RAAF Radar Branch, which now incorporates the Victorian RAAF Radar Association (VRAAFRAA), has been working with the Cape Otway Lightstation Management on the 13 Radar Station Cape Otway Audio and Visual Interpretive Project for several years (following commencement of that Project by the VRAAFRA).

The involvement of RAAF Radar Branch in this Project recognises and supports the historical significance of the resulting Interpretive Exhibition's presentation regarding WWII RAAF Ground Radar Operations and those RAAF Radar Personnel who served on such Radar Stations around Australia and in the South West Pacific Region.

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*This project shows the historical significance of the RAAF Ground Radar Operations in WWII in the Pacific region.*

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The history of WWII RAAF Radar has been a relatively unknown "secret story" due to its top-secret WWII status, which was effectively continued post-WWII by RAAF Radar Veterans who had committed to that secrecy status.

This has resulted in very little formal historical recording of WWII RAAF Radar. Consequently, VRAAFRA WWII Veteran Members have been committed to creating, recording,

and preserving for future generations, an historical understanding of WWII RAAF Radar and its critical role in defending Australia and winning the war in the South West Pacific.

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*The significance of this Exhibition cannot be understated.*

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Other than the Canberra Australian War Memorial's static display of WWII RAAF Ground Radar equipment, the Cape Otway Interpretive Exhibition is the only contemporary Exhibition recording WWII RAAF Radar history. The inclusion of WWII veterans' audio recollections of Radar Station activities is also significant in providing a personal balance to that secret and historic WWII RAAF Radar Story.

Over several years, the RAAF Branch supported the development of the Interpretive Project over several years in a number of ways. In addition to donations, the Branch also arranged audio recollections of WWII Radar Station life from Veteran Radar Operators Beryl Mainon and George Runting (George served on 13RS) as well as advice/assistance particularly from Branch Historian, Ian McKellar.

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*The 13 RS RAAF Radar facilities are located within the historic Cape Otway Lightstation precinct.*

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That Project development culminated with its opening as an enhanced Radar Station Interpretive Exhibition in mid-June 2020 that includes a static visual display and an audio experience within the original purpose built and still standing WWII 13RS Radar Operations Doover building in the vicinity of the Cape Otway Light Station.

The display of Corten Steel life-size silhouettes and Radar-related equipment is viewed through the Doover's windows and doorway. The supporting button-activated audio system is located outside the Doover and includes seven excerpts from the audio interviews of the Radar Operators, recalling their "secret war" experiences. The original turning equipment for the radar array (arial), is also displayed in the Doover.

RAAF Radar Branch is working with the Cape Otway Lightstation Management on a Dedication Service at Cape Otway for the 13 Radar Station Cape Otway Audio and Visual Interpretive Exhibition when permitted.

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## NOMINATED FOR THE 2020 VICTORIA COMMUNITY HISTORY AWARDS

The VCHA annual awards are presented on behalf of the Royal Historical Society Victoria and the Public Record Office Victoria.

The 13RS Cape Otway Project was nominated and shortlisted as one of five nominees for the Collaborative Community History Category, under the title 'Cape Otway

World War II Memories. While not the ultimate category winner, this is a significant recognition of the Project, the Exhibition and the vision of our WWII Radar Vets to record for future generations, the secret story and history of WWII RAAF Radar and those who served.

For further information on the RAAF Radar Branch or the 13RS Cape Otway Project, please contact RAAF Radar Branch President, Chris Harnath, via: [harnathc@bigpond.com](mailto:harnathc@bigpond.com).



Entrance to the Doover building



Original WT equipment inside the Doover building



Corten steel WT replicas in the Doover building

## ABOUT CAPE OTWAY LIGHTSTATION

Established in 1848, Cape Otway Lightstation was the first landfall light for shipping out of the Southern Ocean on their way to Geelong, Melbourne, Sydney & Brisbane & the lighthouse is the oldest surviving Lightstation on mainland Australia.

The Lightstation houses a collection of historic buildings, from 1850's Keepers Quarters & 1859 Telegraph Station, to the 13RS Doover, established in 1942 and is open to the public 10-5pm 7 days a week.

**Note:** There is an entrance fee discount of 50% (\$10) for AFA members (show proof of membership), which will also provide access to all the Lightstation attractions.

## MEMORIES OF A LOVING DAUGHTER – CORPORAL RONALD ALEXANDER (RON) RICHARDS 19275 RAAF FITTER II E

In response to John Elliott's call for photographs, he was contacted by Mrs Margot Goodwin who is the daughter of Ron Richards. Ron joined the RAAF on 9th February 1940 and was discharged on 26th November 1945 having served with No 2 Squadron during World War 2 in New Guinea and Darwin. The following are the memories of a loving daughter and a copy of an interview with her Dad in 1988, in which he shares memories of his war service;

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## **A SHORT OVERVIEW OF RON RICHARDS' LIFE.**

My father was born in February, 1917 and lived at Ballarat. His father was a butcher but died when Ron was about 7, so a year or so later his mother moved to Harkaway (near Berwick) to housekeep for his two older brothers who had bought a dairy farm there. He had a very happy early life on the farm.

During his teens he rode his push bike to Berwick (about 5km) to catch the train to Caulfield Technical College as he was an apprentice Motor Mechanic in Dandenong. He became an A-Grade Motor Mechanic and when of age bought himself a Triumph Tiger 100 motor bike – which he raced, including at the Phillip Island track where I believe he held a record at one time. He loved any vehicle that went fast and over the years had a bit of a reputation around the district. By the time he enlisted in October 1940 (23) he had a wide mechanical knowledge. Thus, his mechanical skills were very useful to the RAAF, which trained him in the Rolls Royce and other aircraft engines.

Dad didn't talk much about his experiences during his service, but his letters which mum kept give a bit of an insight into the conditions experienced in Darwin/Daley Waters and Batchelor where he was stationed. He did go to Ambon and New Guinea for a couple of short trips. But the friends he made he always kept in touch with as well as attended most reunions. No. 2 Squadron was very special to him, it seems I have known his dog tags number 19275 all my life.

I know that near the end of the war Dad was based at Sale and Bairnsdale and on one trip home on the motorbike he brought a black and white cattle dog pup home to the farm – down his jacket. My uncles named him "Mick" and he turned out to be good on the farm, I remember him.

My sister was born in 1944 and I was born in 1946 (9 months after Dad's discharge). After the war Mum and Dad rented a small house in Berwick – I was 2 months old. Dad rented a workshop in the Main Street of Berwick and sold Neptune petrol and was the RACV mechanic for the area. He loved Jaguars and worked on quite a few local ones and over the years owned several – Mark 4, Mark 5, Mark 2, Mark 1 and a Mark 10 – which my husband remembers well getting a fast trip down from Upper Beaconsfield doing easily 100mph on the straight stretch to Beaconsfield. After turning onto the Princes Highway at Beaconsfield my (future) husband said, "I didn't think you were going to pull up" – and Dad said "I didn't think I was either." He was a member of the Jaguar Car Club.

Dad was physically very strong, about 5ft 10in, and Lew who worked for him always remembered how he could lift engines out of cars on his own, including from Jaguars.

He was well respected for his honesty and generosity and always had people he would just "call in" on when in the area.

He changed jobs about 1958/9 and worked for the RACV as an Insurance Assessor, then the same with Club Motor Insurance which became AAMI in the Gippsland area.

Ron enjoyed life and lived it to the full. He raced speedboats in the late 50's and 60's – towing the boat (fast) to meetings at Sale, Metung, Negambie and others – luckily most times he took me as well (Mum stayed home with my sister). I have many happy memories of things he did after the war and intend to write down how it was, plus many stories of things Dad did.

Dad retired at 65 (1972) and had 20 years of retirement. Mum and Dad lived mostly at Berwick, but did have a few years at Frankston before moving back to Berwick. They also in later years lived at Inverloch and often stayed at our place in Berwick.

Ron died of cancer in 1992 and is buried in the Harkaway cemetery.

You can read Mrs Margot Goodwin's interview with her father Ron Richards by visiting the 2 SQN Branch page on the AFA Victoria website or by clicking on the following link: <https://afavic.org.au/content/762/branch-2-squadron>



(Front Row L-R): Clarrie Chambers, Jack Bruce, Les Hancock, Ron Richards



(L-R): Blue Johnson, Ron Richards, Larrie Charlic – 2nd November 1942

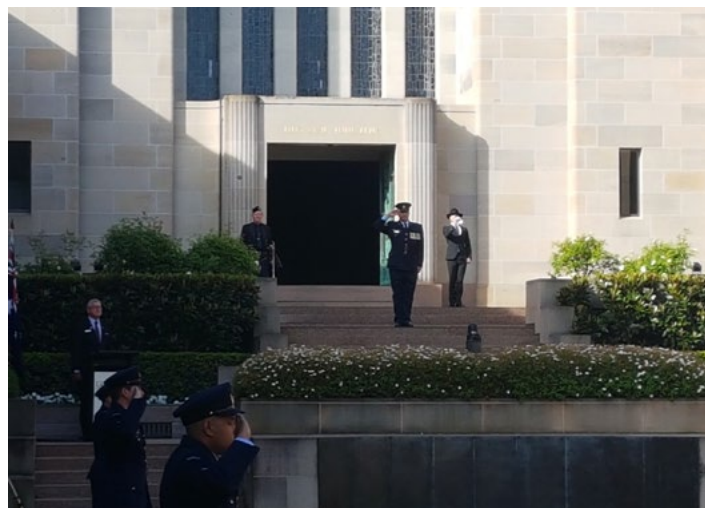


## LAST POST CEREMONY DEDICATED TO PILOT OFFICER ROBERT CHARLES CARVER, AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL, 2 NOVEMBER 2020

Tuesday 3 November 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the loss of Magpie 91, with commemorations held at the Australian War Memorial, the National Vietnam Veterans Museum on Phillip Island and a fly-past over RAAF Base Williamtown to honour and remember the crew – Flying Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver.



*Members of 2SQN, including CO Wg Cdr Jason "Bomber" Brown, arrived in Canberra in a Wedgetail which then flew down Anzac Parade immediately after the ceremony*

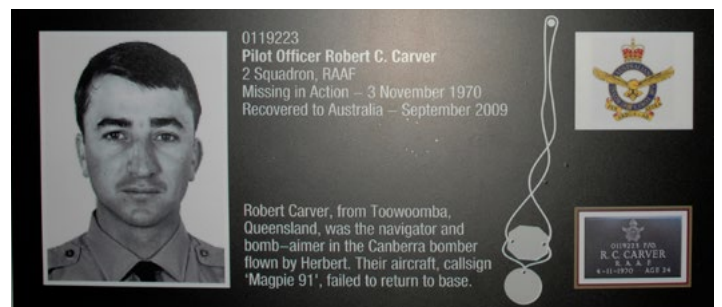
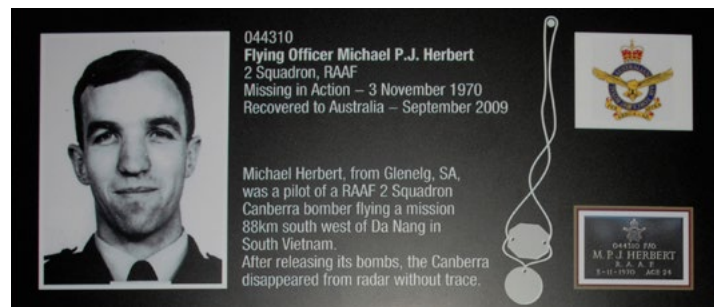




# COMMEMORATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LOSS OF MAGPIE 91, VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM, PHILLIP ISLAND, 3 NOVEMBER 2020



AFA Victoria, Ballarat Branch Senior Vice President Leigh Harvey OAM, Secretary Rob Petty and Major Neil Leckie RFD Manager of Ballarat Ranger Military Museum



(L) John Methven OAM (NVVM Board Member) and (R) Carl Schiller OAM CSM (AFA National President)



Bob Woods reading a poem by 2SQN Association member Tomas Hamilton.



Memorial crosses at the Yea Cenotaph for Flying Officers Michael Herbert, pilot, and Robert Carver, navigator, declared Missing in Action in South Vietnam on November 3, 1970. Their two squadron RAAF Canberra Bomber A84-231, callsign Magpie 91, went missing while on a mission. The aircraft wreckage was only located recently and their deaths in action confirmed with the recovery of the South Australian air crews' remains. Yea-Kinglake RSL Vietnam veterans remembered their comrades on November 3, 2020, the 50th anniversary of their deaths. Lest we forget. -S

The Yea Chronicle acknowledges the 50th anniversary of the loss of the crew of the RAAF Canberra bomber on 3 November 1970 in SVN. Source: Yea Chronicle incorporating the Kinglake Chronicle, Wednesday, November 11, 2020



# CATALINA SHRINE PILGRIMAGE 2020

**On 23 August 2020, in lieu of the usual annual event, a virtual event and live feed of the Catalina Pilgrimage and Wreath Laying Ceremony was shown on Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance Facebook page. Catalina Branch President Mr Ken Scott participated in the online presentation, which is presented below**

"The Catalina Branch of the Air Force Association welcomes you to this special service at The Shrine. We would like to thank The Shrine for making this service possible even though we cannot attend in person. Our thanks also go to our Patron, Group Captain Annette Holian and to Wesley College for their contribution to Catalina remembrance services.

It is now 75 years since the end of World War 2 – a time of great sacrifice over 6 years to protect Australia's freedom.

Catalina flying boats were the only RAAF aircraft to operate from the beginning of the Pacific War to the end. They flew a wide variety of missions – patrol, escort, rescue, bombing, minelaying, special missions in enemy territory and the repatriation of Australian POW's.

One of the most successful operations was the minelaying campaign throughout the Pacific Islands, South-East Asia and in the ports of Hong Kong and China. These mining operations against Japanese-held ports disrupted the delivery of supplies to the Japanese military and also vital cargo being sent to Japan.

Disrupting Japanese shipping assisted the allies in their island-hopping strategy designed to win the Pacific War. Nine Catalinas and their crews were lost on mine-laying operations. A24-50 from 11 Squadron was the first loss - it was tasked to lay mines in the port of Sorong in West Papua. The flying boat and its 10-man crew captained by Flying Officer Jim Oliver were never heard from again. Finally, in 2019, 74 years later, wreckage of the aircraft was located at the top of a mountain near the port of Fakfak in West Papua.

In total 320 Catalina men lost their lives on operations. Today we remember and honour this sacrifice. Our thanks go to all those aircrew, maintenance and support personnel involved in Catalina operations.

Thank you for participating in this online service."

**Note:** The Catalina Pilgrimage Virtual ceremony is available for viewing via the YouTube link below  
<https://youtu.be/ZXxLFm7p4Zg>



*The Google Earth image shows a line between Catalina A24-50's Grooteylandt refuelling stop and the port of Sorong. The red pointer shows the indicative position of the crash site.*



*Identified as the empennage (tail assembly) of Catalina A24-50 in 2019 located at the top of a mountain near the port of Fakfak in West Papua. Image research by Ms Tessa Occhino.*



*Identified as one of the propellers from Catalina A24-50 in 2019 located at the top of a mountain near the port of Fakfak in West Papua. Image research by Ms Tessa Occhino.*



# GENERAL INFORMATION

## 2021 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING/STATE CONFERENCE

### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS & MOTIONS

Members are advised that the 2021 AGM followed by the State Conference will be held on 27th May 2021, at AFA office, Suite 3, 24-36 Camberwell Road, Hawthorn East.

#### Nominations for AFA Victoria State President, Treasurer and Board Members

Nominations for the office of State President, State Treasurer and Board members are to be sent in writing to the RAAFA Office no later than 1st February 2021 and must be signed by the candidate and proposer.

The President's and Treasurer's tenures will expire at the Annual General Meeting. Nominations for these positions are invited. Current incumbents are:

- **State President** – Mr Maxwell McGregor.
- **State Treasurer** – Mr Peter Colliver OAM
- **Board members** – All current Board members' tenures have one more year to serve.

Nomination forms may be obtained from the Branch Secretaries or the Office Manager, AFA Divisional office.

#### Motions for 2021 AGM and State Conference:

- All proposed motions must be forwarded by Branch Secretaries to the State Secretary 28 days prior to Conference.
- Copies of all motions must be forwarded to all Branch Secretaries, 14 days prior to Conference.
- Financial Reports must be sent to all members 21 days prior to Conference.

#### Clause 31: Purpose of Annual General Meeting

The business of the Annual General Meeting shall be to:

- Receive the Report of the Board;
- Receive the Statement of Accounts;
- Elect the President, Treasurer and members of the Board;
- Transact any other business of which 28 days notice in writing specifying the motion to be moved has been received at the registered office of the Division.

All business transacted at the annual General Meeting pursuant to this paragraph shall be deemed special.

### CONTACT: EDITORIAL DATES

#### AUTUMN 2021

Contributions by 26 February 2021

Publication: 12 March 2021

#### WINTER 2021

Contributions by 31 May 2021

Publication: 11 June 2021

#### SPRING 2021

Contributions by 22 August 2021

Publication: 9 September 2021

#### SUMMER 2021

Contributions by 26 November 2021

Publication: 17 December 2021

### AFA VICTORIA BRANCH CONTACTS

2 SQN	Walter Sherman	0407152479
21SQN	Mike Dance	0438764629
ATC/AAFC	Hugh Tank	03 98773424
B24 Liberator	Tony Muller	03 97414635
Ballarat	Noel Hutchins	0439 929 322
Bendigo	Glenis Gordon	03 54369293
Catalina	Ronald Kirk	03 98193527
Engineer	David Graham	0407 248 874
Fighter SQN	(contact AFA Vic)	03 98134600
Geelong	Darrell Robinson	0409 942 856
Gippsland	(contact AFA Vic)	03 98134600
Melbourne WAAAF	(contact AFA Vic)	03 98134600
RAAF Radar	Chris Harnath	0425 770 011
RAF	Val Boyd	0428 174 070
Sunderland SQNs	Ricky Hattam	03 52413431
Vietnam Veterans	Gill Coughlan gilly4346@gmail.com	
WAAAF	(contact AFA Vic)	03 98134600
Williams	(contact AFA Vic)	03 98134600



## AROUND THE BRANCHES

### ATC/AAFC

Hello to all Branches and our own ATC/AAFC branch members.

Well, the virus certainly upset the appletart for everyone this year and with the extended lockdowns and distance of travel restrictions no-one can deny that it's been a long and very trying time we've all been experiencing. In fact, I fear that when the masks eventually do come off completely, we might have difficulty in recognising anyone.

With the situation of our members not being able to gather socially this year

such as we normally would at the Box Hill RSL, it's been encouraging to hear of and observe the continued rapport and support between members be it via phone and/or emails and I'm happy to be able to say that so far, it would appear, most members have managed to maintain this valuable contact with each other. Well done to all.

Sadly, our traditional Christmas function is not taking place this year, but I've been optimistically working on the branch calendar and hopefully our monthly gatherings etc. will be back on track sometime

early in the New Year. Our busy Secretary Hugh Tank has, as requested by the RSL, submitted details and preferred dates of our intended calendar to the Functions Manager of the RSL and we await this advice in due course.

Meanwhile, for any of our members who might like to attempt a pre-Christmas catch-up with each other, it might be possible for small groups of a few to make lunch bookings in the Bistro area but this will of course depend on availability, spacing of tables and sitting times which may be in place.

Merry Christmas everyone and Happy New Year as we head towards 2021.

Best wishes

**Laurie Bell**  
*President*

WANT TO KNOW MORE  
ABOUT THE ATC/AAFC  
BRANCH?

VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON  
THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION  
VICTORIA WEBSITE

### BALLARAT

Like other branches, activities and commemorative events have been severely affected by Covid-19 restrictions.

Remembrance Day commemorations in Ballarat generally attract very large gatherings; however, this year the Ballarat RSL's Remembrance Day Commemoration was reduced to an 'Invitation Only' small commemoration

held at the Ballarat-Midlands RSL Sports and Services Club at which I was invited to attend and lay a wreath on behalf of the Ballarat Branch of the Air Force Association.

With some of the Covid-19 restrictions easing I have now been permitted to visit some of our elderly members in aged care facilities.

Also with easing restrictions we were able to hold our December Christmas Social Luncheon meeting on Tuesday 15th December.

On behalf of the Committee and Members of the Ballarat Branch I extend our best wishes for Christmas and New Year to all members of the Air Force Association.

**Noel Hutchins**  
*President*



*Remembrance Day 2020 Ballarat*

Want to know more about  
the Ballarat Branch?

Visit our branch page on  
the air force association  
Victoria website



It seems such a very long time ago since we were all together.

Bendigo Branch held a gathering on the 5th November at White Hills Botanical Gardens where approximately 12 members got together for a chat, but sadly the weather let us down and the extremely cold wind which was blowing in from the south pole made it impossible to enjoy ourselves. Those of us hardy people chatted about what had been

happening over the past months before eating our picnic lunch and heading back to the warmth of our cars. Can't do anything about the weather!

On 3rd December, members went to the Victoria Hotel, Elmore to partake in some Christmas fare. Unfortunately, we couldn't find a hotel in Bendigo who would provide us with this. You'd think after all these months being closed down they would be glad to provide a Christmas fare.

Hopefully, we will be able to conduct our first Branch meeting in February 2021 at the Bendigo RSL, which is still closed, otherwise we will have to find a new venue.

The President and members of Bendigo Branch RAAF Association wish you all a wonderful Christmas with all your family & friends & a safe and healthy 2021

One of our members, John McCosker, filled in his time when in lockdown by

writing poetry, one of which is included below. Do hope you like it.

**Glenis Gordon**

*Secretary*

Want to know more about the Bendigo Branch?

Visit our branch page on the air force association Victoria website

## SOLITARY SOLDIER – BY JOHN MCCOSKER

*At the going down of the  
sun and the dark of night  
approaching,*

*I stand here in solitary silence,  
standing to attention, always  
watching*

*No more orders to be ready, no  
more fear and no more fighting,*

*I watch the rain and snow  
falling, the wind, the storms, the  
lightning*

*I feel no pain or suffering but I  
remember the times of past*

*The silence of the guns, no more*

*sounds of pain and groans*

*There are those who did not  
make it, a few remaining home.*

*In the morning, I feel the light  
and the warmth surrounding  
me*

*Two days a year you come  
and see me, flags and bugle  
sounding*

*Troops and families marching,  
a pause with silence,  
remembering*

*Those soldiers who did not  
return and sacrificed their life*

*and all*

*These brave men and  
women who answered their  
countries call*

*My friends are all around me  
as I do not stand alone*

*Spend some time, and read  
their names*

*Always to be remembered,  
a memory, forever etched in  
stone*

*I stand here, the solitary  
Cenotaph Soldier*

*A reminder of our fallen past.*



There have been no Catalina Branch activities during Winter due to the Coronavirus Government restrictions. Our scheduled AGM and get togethers during 2020, together with Executive meetings throughout the year, had to be postponed.

## CATALINA PILGRIMAGE

Each year, we look forward to our annual Catalina Pilgrimage to The Shrine in August, but unfortunately personal attendance was not possible in 2020.

However, with the support of The Shrine

Commemorative Events Liaison Officer Mr Dale Capron together with Exhibitions Research Officer Ms Tessa Occhino, AFA Catalina Branch President, Mr Ken Scott participated in the development of an online presentation.

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A virtual live feed of our Pilgrimage and Wreath Laying Ceremony was shown on The Shine's web page through Facebook on our scheduled date of Sunday 23 August 2020 at 2:30 pm.

The Catalina Pilgrimage Virtual Ceremony is available for viewing via the YouTube link below:

<https://youtu.be/ZXxLFm7p4Zg>

Note: This link opens the screen display at the start of the Wreath Laying Ceremony which was pre-recorded. This is 3 minutes 18 seconds into the presentation. To view the introduction and associated images move your mouse

cursor to the bottom portion of the movie screen, place the cursor on the red dot and drag left to show 0 seconds.

You can also find the transcript supporting the live presentation by AFA Catalina Branch President Mr Ken Scott on page 10 of Contact.

## VALE

It is with much sadness we advise of the passing of Veteran member Mr Ian Clark (149711 LAC) on 27 June 2020.

Ian Clark enlisted at Kew, Melbourne on 8 June 1944. He served as a Flight Mechanic at No 1 Flying

Boat Repair Depot (FBRD) at Lake Boga situated approximately 15 kilometres south of Swan Hill. Ian was mainly involved in the dismantling of the Dornier Flying Boats prior to the sale of the usable parts and scrap metal. He also attended the No 1 Air Gunnery School. Ian was posted at the Exhibition



*Mr Ian Clark is presented with a certificate of appreciation by Catalina Branch President Mr Ken Scott in recognition of his 65 years membership of the Air Force Association (Vic) in 2015.*

buildings and the No 1 Engineering School at the Melbourne Showgrounds, upon discharge, on 26 March 1946.

Due to the current Coronavirus restrictions in Victoria, all future AFA (Vic) Catalina Branch events have been cancelled until further notice.

**Ron Kirk**

*Branch Secretary*

Want to know more about the Catalina Branch?

Visit our branch page on the air force association Victoria website

## VIETNAM VETERANS

In many ways, 2020 is a year that members of our Branch will be glad to put behind them with the State Government lockdown restrictions forcing us to rethink the ways we communicate with each other. The impact of COVID 19 on Branch activities was also significant with the re-arrangement to our normal gatherings on Vietnam Veterans Day as I mentioned in our last Report.

Our planned visit to the National Vietnam Veterans Museum to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the loss of a 2 SQN Canberra and its crew was also impacted by the last-minute notification from the Victorian Minister for Veterans that permission for

travel by persons living in the Melbourne Metropolitan Area to Phillip Island had not been approved. We were also notified that the planned fly-past by the Air Force Roulettes had also been cancelled for operational reasons. These unfortunate developments led to some last minute re-arrangements and the AFA National President, Carl Schiller and four members of the Ballarat Branch of the AFA Victoria who all live outside the metropolitan area were able to travel to Phillip Island and kindly represented our Branch and the 2 SQN Branch at the commemoration at the Museum.

During the year, our Branch Committee has been holding our monthly

meetings using video-conferencing software which has meant that some committee members not able to "Zoom" were not able to contribute. With the further easing of restrictions on gatherings announced by the Victorian Government on 22 November, life is steadily returning to the normal and our Branch Committee will now be able to meet in person at the AFA (Vic) office.

Educational Bursaries sponsored by the RAAFA (Vic) Foundation together with the RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association (Vic) will again be available for next year. Details regarding the eligibility and administration of the bursaries is being sent to

all Division members via email and will be available in Contact.

On behalf of our Branch, I take this opportunity to wish all Division members a happy time with family and friends over the Christmas and New Year festive season and a safe (and COVID free) and prosperous 2021.

**Chris Hudnott**

*President Branch*

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE VIETNAM VETERANS' BRANCH?

VISIT OUR BRANCH PAGE ON THE AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION VICTORIA WEBSITE





Vale Phil Taylor

## VALE PHIL TAYLOR

In October, with great sadness, we farewelled Phil Taylor, who had worked on the B-24 Liberator Restoration Project for around 16 years.

Phillip Taylor was born in Geraldton, WA, on 21 September 1941 and he passed away in Werribee on 20 October 2020.

He grew up in Western Australia, one of a family of 10 children.

At the age of 17, he joined the RAAF and trained at Rathmines primarily as a boiler attendant, subsequently moving to RAAF Base Point Cook. It was there that he met Wendy. They were married in 1965 and would go on to have a wonderful 55 years together as a devoted couple. They had two sons, Darryl and Andrew, and later became grandparents to four grandchildren.

When he gave the eulogy at Phil's funeral, his son Darryl described Phil as open, generally calm and relaxed, hardly ever angry. He was devoted to family and friends, an active sportsman and a devoted St Kilda supporter.

After he retired in 2001, he and Wendy enjoyed travelling, taking many overseas trips.

In late 2019, Phil's health deteriorated and he was diagnosed with mesothelioma. In late September 2020, he was admitted to palliative care in Werribee.

The B-24 Liberator Restoration Project played an important part in Phil's post-retirement life. It meant a lot to him to contribute to this memorial.

Phil was an easy going and cheerful worker at the Liberator restoration hangar and a great colleague to other volunteers. We shall miss him very much, and our thoughts go out to Wendy as we grieve his passing.

– The B-24 Liberator Restoration Project Team



A final farewell at the B-24 Liberator hangar

## VALE

*It is with the greatest respect and fond memories, we remember our colleagues who have passed on before us.*

The following members have passed away since our last publication. May they rest in peace.

Mr Keith Silverwood Bendigo Branch .....	07/06/20
Mr Ian Clark Catalina Branch .....	27/06/20
Mr Rod Garmaise Nth Metropolitan Branch .....	15/09/20
Mr Philip Taylor B24 Liberator Branch .....	24/10/20

*Let Us Not Forget*

# Air Force Association

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