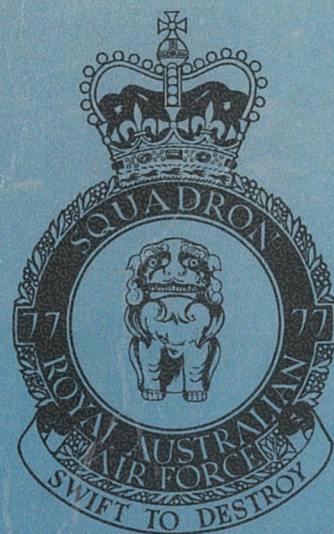
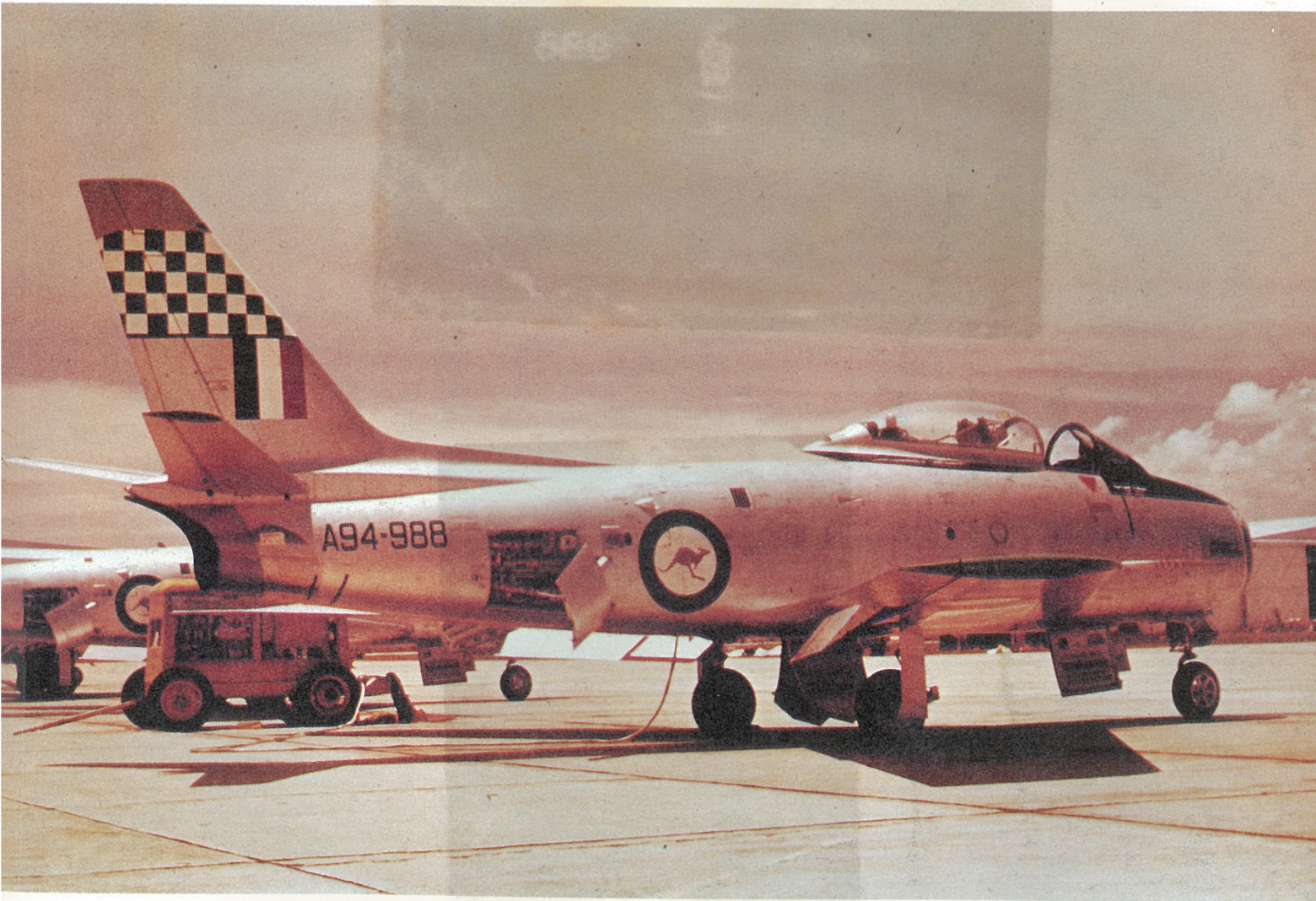


SWIFT TO DESTROY



**AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY
OF 77 SQUADRON R.A.A.F.
1942—1986**





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ROGER WILSON

'SWIFT TO DESTROY'

AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF 77 SQUADRON RAAF 1942 — 1986

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**COMPILED BY:
WAYNE BROWN
ANDREW CORK
COLIN FOGGO**

**EDITED BY:
ANNETTE DONSELAAR, B.A.**

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1. 1942 — 1945 — World War II (Kittyhawks).
2. 1945 — 1950 — British Commonwealth Occupational Forces in Japan (Mustang).
3. 1950 — 1956 — Korean War (Mustang to Meteor).
4. 1956 — 1968 — Malaysia (Sabre).
5. 1969 — 1986 — Williamtown (Mirage).

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- A. Original Combat Report SQNLDR R. Cresswell 23 November 1942.
- B. 77 Squadron personnel killed on operational duty.
- C. Aircraft Performance tables.
- D. 77 Squadron today — photographs of 77 Squadron Sections September 1986.
- E. Liaison with Kempsey Shire Council.

EDITOR'S NOTE

In February 1986, FSGT Col Foggo suggested that a book be published to commemorate the phasing out of the Mirage from 77 Squadron. It was not until April 1986 however, that FSGT Col Foggo, LAC Wayne Brown and LAC Andrew Cork approached me to help organise such a publication. Taking on such an ambitious project proved to be difficult due to intense squadron commitments in 1986, however it has been a thoroughly worthwhile challenge. A small word of thanks must go to the respective wives and friends, who have had to put up with 'THE BOOK' for the past six months, as the majority of the work was achieved after hours.

Through our research, I trust you will glean an understanding of No. 77 Squadron in this concise history. We did not set out to write a definitive history of the squadron, as we did not have the time, money or resources to do this properly. Instead, this book sets out to outline the role of the squadron, the personalities and events. I feel we have satisfactorily achieved this end. We appreciate that there are many things that could be added and many 'warries' that should be told. I trust that this publication will serve as a catalyst for such major work to be undertaken.

The choosing of the 77 Squadron motto as the title was no accident. By reading this book, I hope you will see that 77 Squadron is truly an integral part of the RAAF fighter world, which has been, and always will be, prepared for swift and destructive action.

FLGOFF Annette Donselaar,
Editor.

October, 1986.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would never have been written without the invaluable assistance of many people, and we would like to thank the following personnel for their contributions:

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COMMANDING OFFICERS OF 77 SQUADRON

16. 3.42	SqnLdr	D.F. Forsyth (Temp)	24.11.53	WgCdr	D.R. Beattie
23. 3.42	SqnLdr	R.E.P. Brooker (RAF)	27. 7.54	WgCdr	R.S. Royston
20. 4.42	SqnLdr	R.C. Cresswell	5. 6.56	FltLt	L.R. Watkin (Temp)
20. 8.43	SqnLdr	B.E. Brown	19.11.56	SqnLdr	M. Holdsworth A.F.C.
5. 1.44	SqnLdr	C.W. Stark	14. 1.58	FltLt	A.W. Powell (Temp)
26. 9.44	WgCdr	R.C. Cresswell	14. 4.58	SqnLdr	G.R. Harvey D.F.C.
23.12.44	SqnLdr	W.R.C. McCullough (Temp)	1. 2.60	WgCdr	J.W. Hubble D.S.O., A.F.C.
25. 3.45	FltLt	W.E. Miller (Temp)	29. 6.62	SqnLdr	E.J. Myers D.F.M. (Temp)
15. 4.45	FltLt	A.B. Taylor (Temp)	15. 8.62	SqnLdr	R.E. Trebilco D.F.C.
22. 8.45	SqnLdr	R.P. Curtis D.F.C.	1. 8.63	WgCdr	V.B. Cannon D.F.C.
16.12.46	FltLt	J.G. Chenhallis (Temp)	11. 9.63	SqnLdr	B. Gogerly D.F.C.
28. 3.47	SqnLdr	R.J. Susans D.F.C.	1. 3.64	WgCdr	V.B. Cannon D.F.C.
16. 9.48	SqnLdr	F.J. Lawrenson (Temp)	25. 2.65	WgCdr	L. Reading
4.10.48	WgCdr	W.J. Keenan D.F.C.	5.12.66	WgCdr	K.A. Martin
22.11.48	WgCdr	G.T. Newstead	30. 6.69	WgCdr	J.A. Treadwell
28. 2.50	WgCdr	L.T. Spence D.F.C.	30.11.69	WgCdr	W.H. Simmonds
9. 9.50	ACdr	A.N. Charlesworth C.B.E., A.F.C. (Temp)	10. 1.72	WgCdr	R.W. Bradford
27. 9.50	GpCpt	A.D. Charlton (Temp)	12. 2.73	WgCdr	R.V.A. Johnston A.D.C.
1.11.50	SqnLdr	R.C. Cresswell D.F.C.	2. 1.75	WgCdr	A.F. Taylor
16. 8.51	WgCdr	G.H. Steege D.S.O., D.F.C.	17.12.76	WgCdr	D.G. Stenhouse
26.12.51	WgCdr	R.T. Susans D.S.O., D.F.C.	19.12.78	WgCdr	L.A. Naylor D.F.C.
26. 5.52	SqnLdr	W.R. Bennett D.F.C. (Temp)	16.12.80	WgCdr	G.R. Gent A.M.
20. 7.52	WgCdr	J.R. Kinnimont D.S.O., D.F.C.	1. 8.83	WgCdr	A.W. Titheridge
20. 1.53	WgCdr	J.W. Hubble D.S.O., A.F.C.	29. 7.85	WgCdr	R.A. Wilson D.F.C.
5. 6.53	WgCdr	A. Hodges A.F.C.			

FOREWORD

AIR VICE MARSHAL R. T. SUSANS

C.B.E. DSO, DFC, (AMERICAN) DFC, AM. RAAF (RET)

FORMER COMMANDER NO. 77 SQUADRON

JAPAN:- MARCH 1947 — OCTOBER, 1948.

KOREA:- DECEMBER 1951 — JUNE, 1952.

I will always remember an incident which took place many years ago whilst I was attending a USAF Gunnery Meet at Nellis Air Base near Las Vegas in the U.S.A. I was discussing some of the fighter squadron's results with a U.S.A.F. General, whom I had met some years before in Korea, when he made a remark which I believe is well worth repeating here. He said, "Susans, I know that you Aussies have probably the finest small airforce in the world, but what impresses me most about it is the way that you can produce top line fighter outfits with top line fighter jockeys everytime the balloon goes up and the shooting starts."

The General was not wrong, for Australia has been doing just that since 1916, in France, when air to air combat involving fighter aircraft became a reality and the first Australian fighter squadrons were born.

The R.A.A.F. produced many famous fighter squadrons during World War II, most of which served with distinction in the many theatres where the war was waged. Of all the famous fighter squadrons which were born during the 1939-45 conflict, none is more famous than the one about which this book has been written — No. 77 Squadron.

77 Squadron has the unique distinction of being the only R.A.A.F. Fighter Squadron to see active service after the cessation of hostilities in World War II. The fact that 77 Squadron was able to engage in ground attack operations over Korea right at the beginning of that war says a great deal for the operational training that was carried out during the years spent as a unit of the occupational force in Japan. In fact it was said at that time that No. 77 Squadron was the only fighter squadron in Japan which was operationally ready to go to war when the war began. The stories of No. 77's operations in Korea are legend and are well documented in the pages of this book.

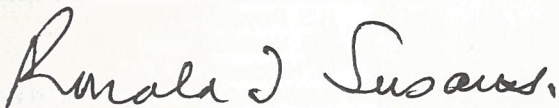
Successful squadrons always operate within a well developed team approach both in the air and on the ground; the three functions, flying, maintaining and supplying all working together towards one goal — effective operational aircraft in the air. No. 77 has always been able to foster this team spirit and it was because of this that the squadron was able to set so many records for sorties flown for the day, for the week, and for the month whilst in Korea.

Recently I had the pleasure of visiting No. 77 in their new headquarters at Williamtown and I was highly impressed with all I saw, from the command at the top, down through the various sections and out onto the flight line. They are still a top squadron.

I will remember the introduction of the Mirage fighter into squadron service at R.A.A.F. Base Williamtown and the efficient manner in which No. 77 Squadron switched over from the Sabre to that fine aircraft. They are now 25 years down the line and in a similar position, but this time it is the Hornet they have to tame. The introduction of new aircraft into squadron service, with all their complexities, is not normally achieved without some early teething problems. However, with the background and experience that No. 77 gained with the operation of the Sabre and the Mirage, the Hornet will no doubt prove to be "just another aircraft."

Congratulations No. 77 Squadron on your great achievements in peace and at war and all the best for many years of safe and productive flying ahead. A point to remember, however, is that the high standards set and maintained in the past will surely become the yardstick by which future squadron performance will be measured. I am personally proud of my long association with No. 77 and it has given me considerable pleasure to write the foreword to your book.

Finally I would like to offer my heartiest congratulations to the team who have put this book together. I know that it has involved a lot of hard work, done on a shoestring and more often than not after normal working hours. Well done, you are all worthy members of the "Great 77."



SIGNED. RONALD. T. SUSANS (AVM RET.)

AVM Susans (Ret.) was the CO of 77 Squadron in 1947 and again in 1951. Upon assuming command in 1947, SQNLDR Susans was a veteran fighter pilot with previous operational experience with 3 Squadron in the Middle East and with 79 Squadron in the South West Pacific Area.

In June 1952, WGCDR Susans was awarded an immediate DSO — the first awarded to an Australian after World War II. He was also awarded an American DFC and American Air Medal.

AVM Susans is now retired from the RAAF, and lives in Tuncurry N.S.W.

1942-1945 WORLD WAR II

KITTYHAWK

From Perth to Darwin

The opening months of 1942 brought with them the reality of a Japanese controlled South East Asia and the situation for Australia looked very bleak. When the first bombs fell on Darwin on 19 February, Australia's northern fighter defences consisted primarily of the 14 Wirraway general purpose aircraft from 12 Squadron. 10 USAAF Kittyhawks were also in the area, being in transit to Java.

With such a small force, it was obvious that Australia needed fighter aircraft urgently. An approach to the United States of America proved successful, and at the end of February the first P40E Kittyhawks were handed over to the RAAF. The first squadron to equip with the new aircraft, 75 Squadron, moved to Port Moresby only four weeks after having received its first Kittyhawk. The RAAF planned to form two more squadrons of Kittyhawks around a nucleus of RAAF pilots from England and the Middle East. The two new squadrons were to be called 76 and 77 squadron respectively.

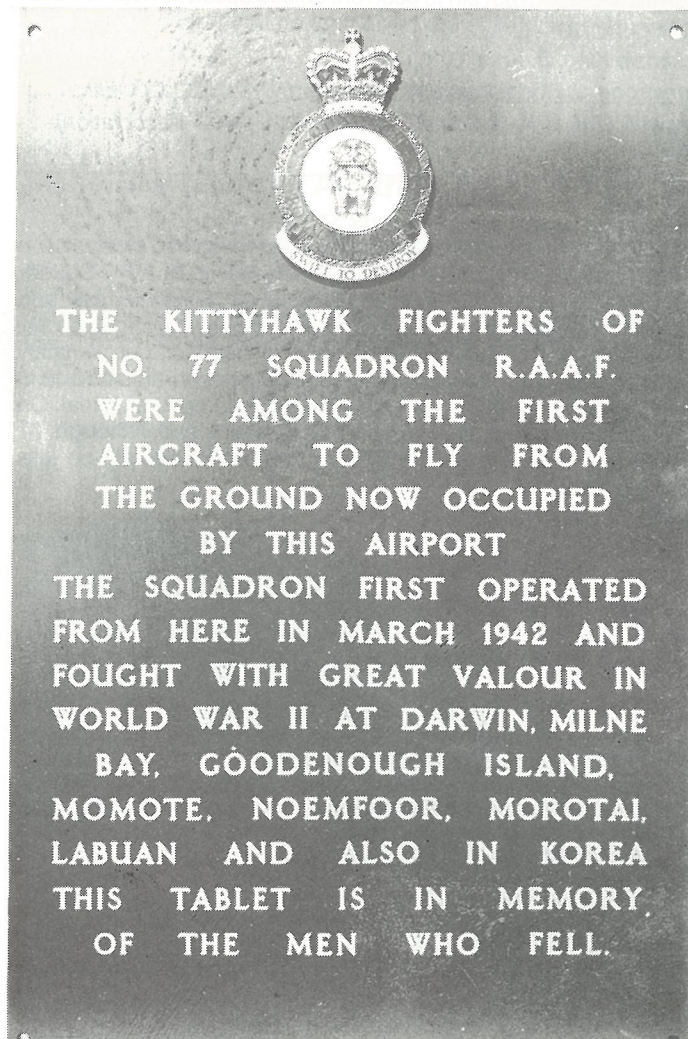
As a result, 77 (Fighter Interceptor) squadron was formed at Pearce, Western Australia on 16 March 1942, under the Temporary Command of SQNLDR D. F. Forsyth. The initial strength of the squadron comprised of three officers and 100 airmen. The squadron received its first aircraft, a Curtiss P40E Kittyhawk (A29-50) three days later. By the end of March, the squadron strength was up to 17 officers and 170 airmen.

During this period of build up at Pearce there were many training related aircraft accidents. 77 Squadron's first aircraft accident occurred on 4 April 1942, when PLTOFF S. E. Armstrong (A29-56) collided head on with a truck whilst taxiing to dispersal. The accident resulted in only causing moderate damage to the aircraft.

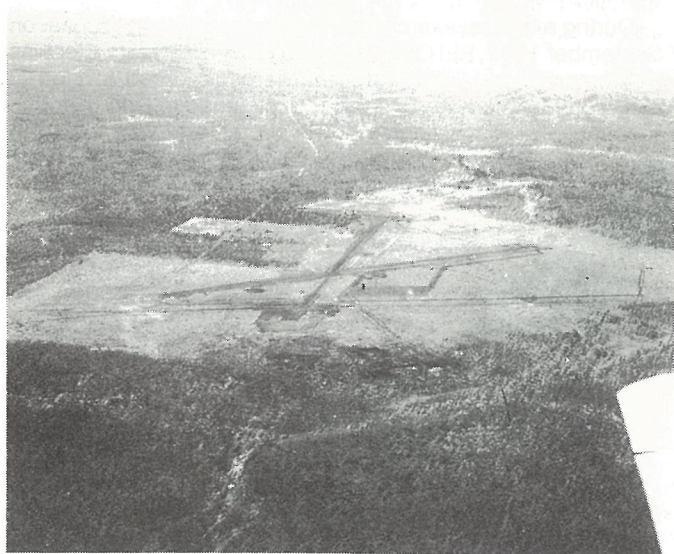
The Squadron detached Flight 'A' to operate from Dunreath Golf Course, Western Australia on 14 April 1942 where it also utilized the Golf Course Club House for the Squadron messing and accommodation. The detachment began training operations immediately, but only two days later the first accident at Dunreath occurred. On his initial take off run FLTLT D. M. Sproule (A29-58) encountered heavy sand (presumably from the golf course!), causing the aircraft to tip forward onto its airscrew and the undercarriage to collapse. Extensive damage was caused to the aircraft, resulting in the engine being written off.

The Squadron was to remain at Pearce (with detachments to Dunreath) until 20 April 1942, when 77 Squadron, under the command of FLTLT. R. C. Cresswell moved to Guilford airfield west of Perth. Once established at Guilford, the squadron was to form the main air defence for the City of Perth assisted by the Wirraways of 25 Squadron. Most of the next three months were spent intercepting friendly aircraft off the West Australian coast, and no enemy aircraft were sighted during this period.

By July 1942 the Japanese had yet to launch an attack on Perth, and the decision was made to send 77 Squadron north to Darwin to assist in the defence of the North West area. The Squadron was ordered to proceed to Batchelor airfield via Alice Springs.



This plaque stands at Perth Airport and commemorates the fact that 77 Sqn Kittyhawks were among the first aircraft to use the site as an aerodrome.



An aerial photograph of Batchelor airfield looking east taken in late 1941. (RAAF)

The first aircraft departed Pearce on 17 August, arriving in Alice Springs that evening. Two aircraft were damaged during the staging; SGT J. A. Allen had to crash land, and PLTOFF D. H. Kelly crashed after a tyre blow out on take off. The first aircraft arrived at Batchelor airfield, approximately 80km south of Darwin on the following day and immediately began operational training. The squadron had now effectively become the first Australian fighter squadron in the Darwin area. 77 Squadron's first 'Red Alert' occurred at 1155 hours on 22 August, when enemy aircraft came within 30 miles of the Batchelor airfield.



77 Sqn Aircrew at Livingstone 1942.

On wing: U/K*, R. Ballard, U/K, C. McKenzie King, B. Knot, U/K, U/K.

Rear row: U/K, R. Piper, T. Power, C. Winter Irving, J. Gorton, J. Armstrong, J. Hodgkinson, W. Meecham, U/K, U/K, J. Griffith.

Front row: M. Holdsworth, U/K, P. McEwan, U/K, D. Sproule, R. Cresswell, U/K, U/K, H. Schaffer, R. Kimpton. (RAAF Association)
* (Unknown)

During a tactical exercise off the Northern Territory coast on 7 September 1942, PLTOFF J. G. Gorton (who 26 years later was to become Prime Minister of Australia) was forced to land in A29-60 on Melville Island. PLTOFF Gorton had to land owing to a fuel shortage to the engine of the aircraft and was forced to spend several days marooned on the island before being rescued, his aircraft was later recovered and repaired by the RAAF.



Livingstone Airstrip July 1986. (W. Brown)

The camp site at Batchelor airfield however, had always been regarded as being utilized on a temporary basis. Thus, 77 Squadron moved north to Livingstone airfield on 17 September and began air defence operations against the enemy. Livingstone airfield is situated on the main Darwin-Katherine road approximately 45km south of Darwin, and was one of half a dozen airfields built in the area in mid 1942 to combat the Japanese bomber threat. On the 25th the Japanese bombed Livingstone and although 77 Squadron did attempt to intercept the enemy aircraft, no kills were claimed.

This proved to be an eventful time for the squadron, and they were constantly training for the strenuous tasks that lay ahead. Although few accidents were recorded at this time, PLTOFF J. G. Griffith (A29-62) had a lucky escape from injury on 12 October 1942, when he was forced to leave his aircraft at 26,000 ft over Batchelor due to an engine fire on a test flight.

During the last few weeks of November the squadron attempted many night interceptions of enemy bomber aircraft, but without success. It was not until 23 November that 77 Squadron drew its first blood. During the early hours of the morning, the Japanese launched raid Number 47 on Darwin. A force of 18 medium bombers were intercepted by 77 Squadron and in the ensuing combat SQNLDR Cresswell succeeded in shooting one of the bombers down. This was the first confirmed night kill over Australian soil. The wreckage of the bomber was found spread over a large area several miles from Darwin, along with the remains of the nine crew. On 21 January 1943 at 2200 hours FLTLT J. A. Cox fired at a 'BETTY' Bomber over Darwin but caused no visible damage. These were the only engagements that 77 Squadron had whilst in the Darwin area.

1. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of the original combat report by SQNLDR Cresswell.



Dick Cresswell poses beside the nose of his Kittyhawk A29-113. It was in this aircraft that he shot down the squadrons first enemy aircraft. (RAAF)

Milne Bay (Gurney Airstrip)

On 13 February 1943, 77 Squadron was tasked to move to Papua New Guinea to participate in the defence of the Milne Bay area. It was here that the squadron, along with 75 Squadron formed a formidable fighter defence for that strategic port. Not only did the squadron change location, but was also in the process of being re-equipped with 24 P40K Kittyhawk aircraft. It was while



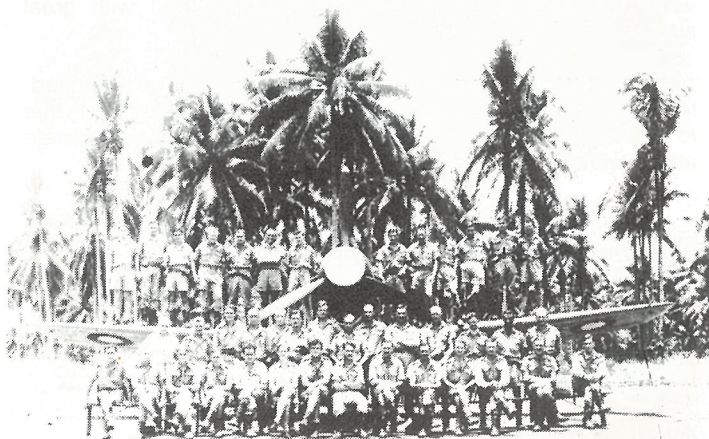
Gurney Strip Milne Bay June 1942. The Aircraft on the strip include Kittyhawks, Dakotas, a D. H. Dragon and an Anson. (RAAF Historical)

operating from Milne Bay with the new aircraft, that 77 Squadron made its first daylight kill. During a patrol on 11 April 1943, FLTLT R. C. Kimpton and FLGOFF J. A. T. Hodgkinson made contact with a force of approximately five to eight 'Zekes'. Hodgkinson was able to destroy 1 Zeke, and Kimpton fired bursts into another enemy aircraft. Unfortunately, Kimpton was unable to observe the results and was credited with only damaging the 'Zeke'.

In a last effort to destroy allied facilities at Milne Bay, Admiral Yamamoto ordered a large air strike on the town. For 77 Squadron this was to be the last major air combat action of the war and the results were to prove convincingly the air superiority of the allied forces in the Pacific. Thus, on 14 May 1943 37 'BETTY' bombers, 8 'VAL' dive bombers and 20 'Zeke' fighters were intercepted by 15 Kittyhawks of 75 Squadron and 77 Squadron. At the conclusion of the battle, four bombers and two fighters had been shot down with another five bombers being listed as probably shot down. It was not without cost however, as one Kittyhawk (A29-169) piloted by SGT L. C. Melrose was listed missing in action, and the pilot believed killed. The claims for that action read:

	Destroyed	Probably Destroyed
SQNLDR Cresswell (CO)	1 Bomber	—
FLTLT Sproule D. M.	1 Bomber	—
FLTLT Sudlow R. P.	1 Fighter	—
FLGOFF Kelly D. H.	1 Bomber	1 Bomber
FLGOFF Hodgkinson J. A. T.	1 Bomber	—
FLTLT Kinross I. R.	—	1 Bomber
FLTLT Cox J. A.	—	1 Bomber
FLTLT Johnstone	—	1 Bomber
FLGOFF Morrison A. W. C.	—	1 Bomber

SQNLDR Cresswell was to have a few anxious moments on the raid as he had his engine shot out and was forced to glide down to base. FLTLT Sproule led the squadron to the conclusion of the raid.

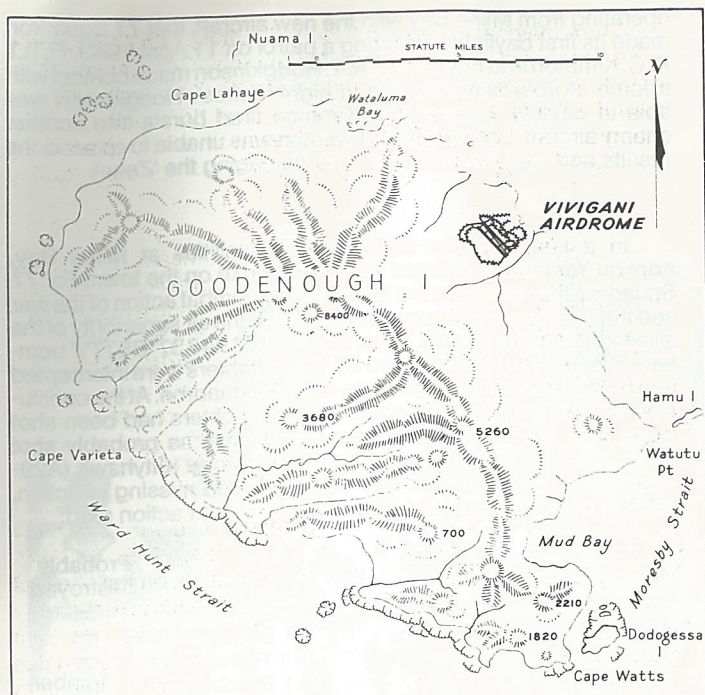


77 Sqn aircrew at Milne Bay 1943. (RAAF Assoc.)

Goodenough Island (Vivigani Airstrip)

The stay at Milne Bay was only a short one however, Due to the lack of Japanese air activity in the area, the squadron was ordered east to Goodenough Island. The squadron arrived at Vivigani Airstrip on 15 June 1943. It was here that 77 Squadron, along with 76 Squadron (Kittyhawks) and 79 Squadron (Spitfires) formed number 73 Fighter Wing under the command of GPCAPT I. D. McLachlan. From the air base at Goodenough Island, allied aircraft could attack the key enemy bases on New Britain, including the giant naval base at Rabaul.

On 22 July, following a reconnaissance of Gasmata airfield (New Britain) by 30 Squadron Beaufighters escorted by 77 Squadron Kittyhawks, a major attack was launched by the RAAF.



Goodenough Island

In total 62 aircraft from five different squadrons took part in the raid including: eight Beaufighters from 22 Squadron, 24 Kittyhawks from 75 Squadron and 14 Kittyhawks from 77 Squadron. Each 77 Squadron aircraft carried six 40lb general purpose bombs with the intention of carrying out a low level attack after the bombers had finished. Unfortunately, 77 Squadron was forced to abort the raid due to bad weather enroute to the target, while the other squadron's carried out the raid with great success.

Four days later the raid was repeated and this time the squadron's luck held out. Although eight Kittyhawks had to turn back due to bad weather, the remaining 12 aircraft carried out an accurate attack without loss.

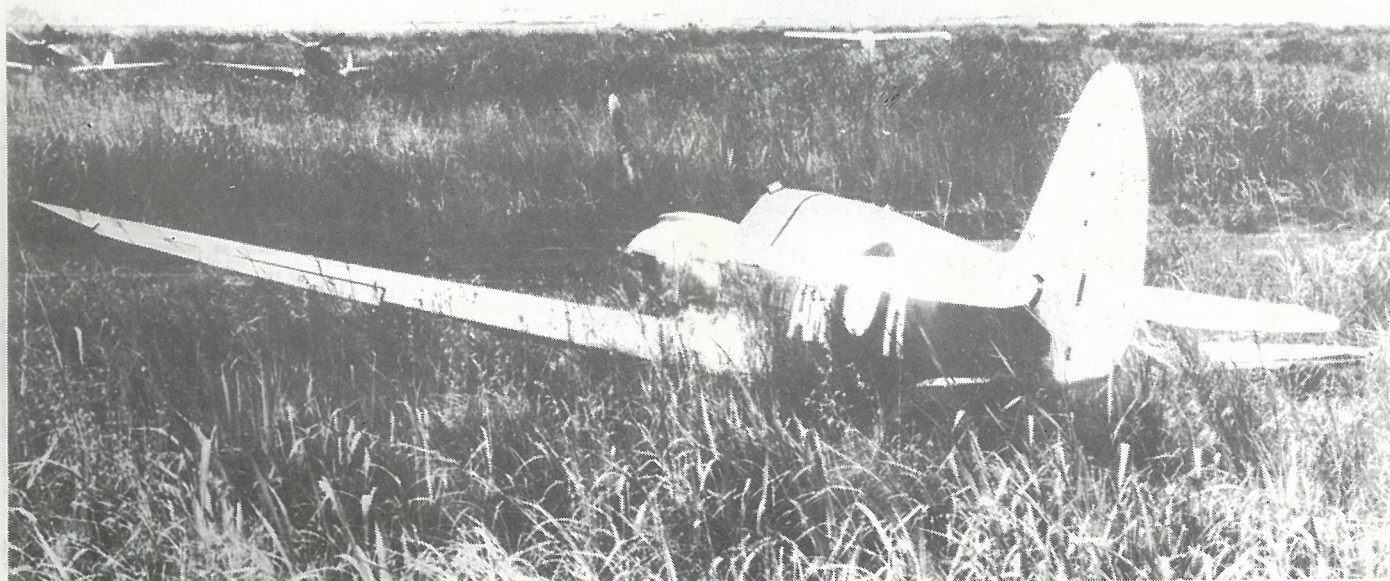
The raid was lead by SQNLDR Cresswell and each aircraft was armed with two 30lb incendiary bombs and four 40lb GP Bombs. Although successful, several 77 Squadron aircraft were badly damaged by enemy flak in the raid.



An aerial photograph of Gasmata airfield taken in March 1942. Note the bomb craters to the right of the runway. (RAAF Historical)

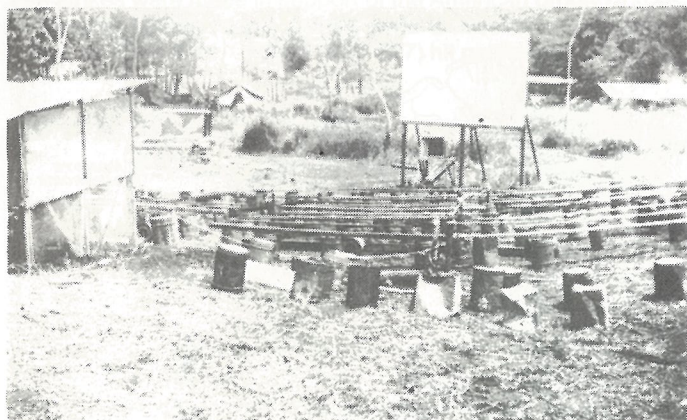
From this point it was decided to utilise the Kittyhawk in a fighter/bomber role and for offensive flying for which the aircraft had now proven itself to be far better suited. In addition, the original defensive commitment was not gainfully employing the squadron due to the lack of Japanese fighter activity in the area. This decision proved to be the correct one as one week later 77 Squadron was again involved in a major raid. On 2 August 1943 the squadron was ordered to provide all available aircraft to escort an attacking force of six Bostons and six Beaufighters in a strike against Gasmata airfield. 18 77 Squadron P40K Kittyhawks were sent on the mission, all carrying six 40lb GP bombs.

The attack on Gasmata was carried out at low level and with great success. After the attack the squadron proceeded on a fighter sweep along the south coast of New Britain. During the sweep, attacks were made on five barges, three of which were



P40 KA29-195 after crashing on Goodenough Island early in 1943. (RAAF)

claimed as sunk. During this action FLTLT Sproule (A29-301) was apparently hit by medium ack-ack fire and forced to crash land on the beach. Although he landed successfully, Bostons from 22 Squadron destroyed Sproule's aircraft later that day to prevent it falling into enemy hands. Sproule was captured by the Japanese and killed whilst a POW on 16 August 1943.



The 77 Sqn camp theatre at Goodenough Island. In the background can be seen the Messes.



The dispersal areas adjoining Goodenough airstrip showing Kittyhawks in the revetments. (RAAF Historical)



Two Photographs of 77 Sqn P40K A29-183 after coming to grief at Goodenough 12/2/44. (RAAF Museum)

The remainder of the month passed quietly, with 77 Squadron being employed on escort duty for Douglas C47 transports en route to Kirawina. On 20 August SQNLDR Cresswell, who had been the Commanding Officer for the past 16 months, left the squadron on posting to 20TU. Cresswell was replaced by SQNLDR B. E. Brown who was to remain CO for the following four months.

During the first two weeks of October the Japanese launched small scale attacks on Goodenough, Kirawina, Lae and Finschafen, and 77 Squadron was ordered to send a detachment of eight aircraft to Nadzab airfield, near Lae. From here the squadron was to provide escorts for the Boomerangs and Wirraways of 4 Squadron, who were flying tactical reconnaissance in support of 7 Division A.I.F. No Japanese air activity was encountered while the detachment was at Nadzab, and the detachment returned to the squadron at Goodenough Island on 19 October 1943.

Only three months after the Gasmata airfield raid, tragedy struck the squadron once again. On 3 November 1943 SGT R. W. McDonald (A29-185) was killed during an attack on Pal Mal Mal Plantation, Jaquinet Bay, New Britain. 12 77 Squadron Kittyhawks were carrying out a combined attack with 22 squadron Bostons and 30 Squadron Beaufighters when it is thought that McDonald's aircraft was hit by light anti-aircraft fire. McDonald was forced to ditch his aircraft into the water 20 miles south east of Kawa Island. A circling pilot saw McDonald floating in the water and dropped a rubber dingy to him. Unfortunately, he was not sighted again and it is presumed that he was unconscious or already dead when originally spotted.

1944 was to see the squadron start afresh however with the arrival on 5 January of SQNLDR C. W. Stark as the new 77 Squadron CO.

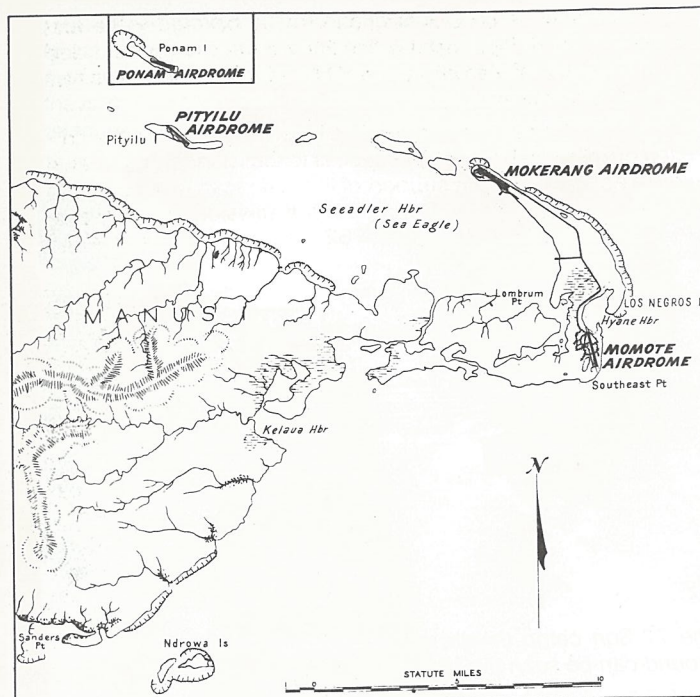


Los Negros Island (Momote Airstrip)

By early 1944 the allies had nearly isolated Rabaul and a decision was made to launch an attack on Los Negros and Manus Islands in the Admiralty group. Once the allies had control of Manus Island they would also have control of the Bismarck sea, effectively completing the isolation of the Japanese garrison at Rabaul. It was planned to establish air operations on the islands as soon as possible and 76, 77 and 79 Squadrons were tasked with providing fighter support for the invasion. Unknown to the allies, the Japanese commander on the island had anticipated the invasion and had instructed his troops to keep a low profile during allied reconnaissance flights over the island. The Americans landed on 29 February 1944 expecting very little resistance from what they thought was a small Japanese force.

The 77 Squadron ground party, consisting of nine officers and 194 airmen, arrived by landing craft seven days after the initial landings and found that the Americans had still only a small foothold on the island, holding only part of the airfield complex and the nearby beach. The Japanese still held most of the foreshore of the harbour, and as the ship carrying most of the 77 Squadron party entered the harbour it was fired at by enemy heavy machine guns and 25mm cannons. The Australians walked straight off the landing ship and into the front lines of fire! As the party unloaded the Squadron's equipment, they were able to watch American B25 Mitchell bombers attacking Japanese positions only 300 yards away. That night the Australians dug fox holes in the sand and spent an uneasy night keeping a careful watch for Japanese raiding parties.

The first Kittyhawks to go to the Los Negros airstrip, known as Momote, were those of 76 Squadron. Unfortunately due to Japanese sniper activity around the airfield perimeter, the transport aircraft carrying 76 Squadron's ground crew could not land. Therefore, it was decided that the 77 Squadron party on the



Los Negros

island would maintain the 76 Squadron aircraft until the 76 Squadron ground crew could be flown in. On 7 March 1944, the day the airfield opened the 76 Squadron fighters arrived. It was not until six days later that the transport carrying the 76 Squadron ground crew arrived along with the first 14 P40N Kittyhawks of 77 Squadron.



Fitters refuel a Kittyhawk on Los Negros Island (RAAF)

The conditions on Los Negros were appalling for the first few weeks. Dead Japanese bodies littered the area surrounded by large swarms of flies and up to 20% of the ground crews had malaria or dysentery.

77 Squadron's main task on Los Negros Island was the protection of shipping bringing in supplies to the islands. However, a few strikes were made in support of the American ground forces on nearby Manus Island. During such a mission on 24 March 1944. PLTOFF E. N. O'Reilly (A29-627) hit palm trees at the end

of the island as he was coming in to land and was killed in the ensuing crash landing. The islands were finally secured on the last day of March 1944.

For the next five months the squadron was kept employed on patrol duties around the islands. It was basically a quiet period, with only one incident occurring. This was a mid air collision between Kittyhawk A29-317 piloted by FSGT Roberts, and an American B24 Liberator bomber. Fortunately, both pilots were able to land their aircraft safely.



77 Sqn Aircrew Momote airstrip 5/6/44

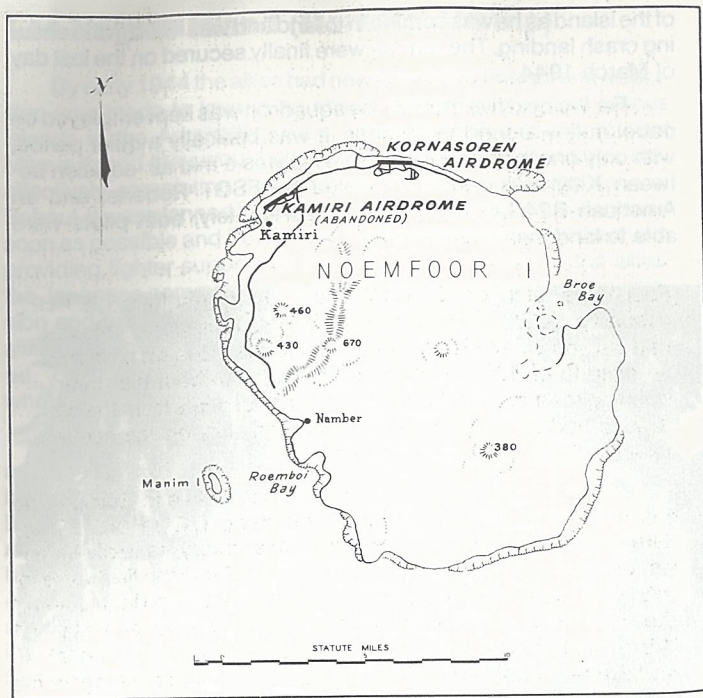
Back row: Summons, Neall, W. Martin, Tapsell, Pyke, Clarke, Bracklehurst, Eames, Collins, White.

Middle row: Toupein, Pagan, Bell, Prowse, Stark (C.O.) McTaggart, Scott, Rose, Kaye.

Front row: Crane, Palme, D. Rogers, K. Martin, Dickenson, Roberts, R. Rogers. (RAAF)



77 Sqn P40 N Kittyhawk A29-922 at dispersal at Momote airstrip. (AWM)



Noemfoor

Noemfoor Island (Kamiri Airstrip)

By August 1944, the Americans on Los Negros Island no longer required fighter protection. 77 and 76 Squadrons were transferred to 81 Wing, which at that time was under the command of CPCAPT G. H. Steege. The two Kittyhawk squadrons were ordered to proceed to Noemfoor Island; a small island off the east coast of New Guinea's Vogelkop Peninsula. The 48 Kittyhawks were ferried to Noemfoor via Wadke Island, arriving at Kamiri Airstrip on 14 September. The ground crews had already arrived a few days earlier. WGCDR Cresswell returned on the 26th to begin his second tour as Commanding Officer of 77 Squadron.

The squadron's first operation was not flown from Noemfoor Island until 30 September, when eight Kittyhawks of 77 Squadron joined ten Kittyhawks from 80 Squadron to bomb the Japanese holdings at Samate. The squadron continued to be tasked with bombing enemy positions on the Vogelkop Peninsula throughout

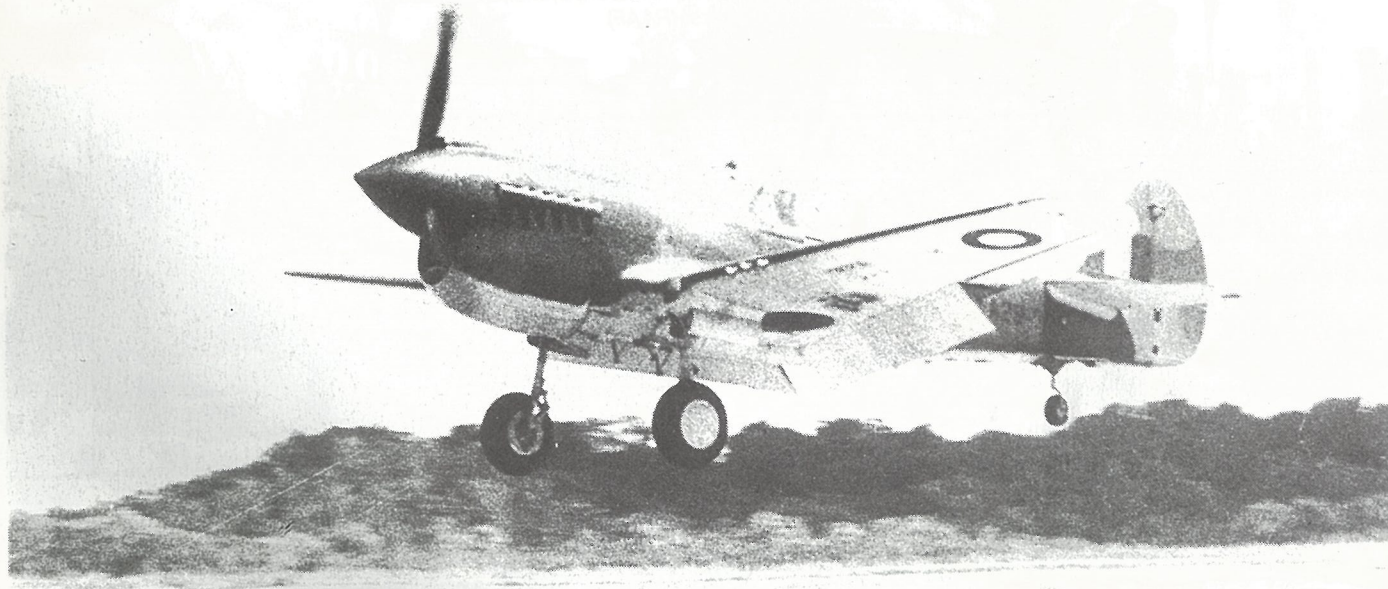
October, but this was not done without acquiring losses. On 8 October 1944, FSGT B. Johnson was killed when his P40-N (A29-825) crashed on landing following a watercraft sweep and six days later, WOFF P. G. Schlencker (A29-824) failed to return from a bombing mission, to Manokaari. Although an intensive search was carried out, no trace of Schlencker was ever found. As a result, Schlencker was posted missing, believed killed. October proved to be a tragic month with the further death of FLGOFF H. D. Summons (A29-821) who failed to return from a bombing and strafing mission on the 25th October. Summons was last seen entering cloud in the target area in preparation for making a bombing run. An extensive search was carried out, but no trace was ever found.

For the second time in two weeks, another 77 Squadron pilot was classified as missing.

On 23 December 1944 WGCDR Cresswell left the squadron once again, and SQNLDR W. McCullough assumed the position of Temporary Commanding Officer.

As the last year of WWII began, 77 Squadron aircraft strength stood at 24 P40-N Kittyhawks and 1 CAC Wirraway. Operational flying was suspended in early January however, in anticipation of a move to Morotai Island. With the combined effect of the recent deaths of several pilots coupled with the squadrons inactivity, moral began to weaken. The situation became worse when a freak accident on 1 January 1945 claimed the life of LAC F. Adcock, an Armament Fitter. A spark from a gun solenoid started a fire on A29-803 whilst he was performing a 160 hour inspection. The note in the squadron history reads: "His (Adcock's) death, due to his exceptional popularity amongst squadron personnel, cast a gloom over the entire unit to a degree that would not be expected". The situation began to grow slowly worse. A note inserted into the operations record by the CO also states: "Operations during the month (February) were practically nil. The morale of all ranks is deteriorating on account of inactivity".

Mid March saw the squadron still at Noemfoor and still not participating in operations. A lack of transport resulted in the squadron being unable to move to Morotai until the end of the month. To relieve the long hours of inactivity inter squadron cricket and volleyball competitions were organized. The squadron's personnel even set about building their own bakery to overcome the difficulty in obtaining fresh bread. The squadron was quickly brought back to reality however, as on 30 March 1945 LAC R. W. Hunter was killed when he walked backwards into a spinning propeller. The squadron was now looking forward to leaving Noemfoor along with the sad memories of squadron losses and the constant inactivity, to proceed onward to Morotai.



An RAAF P40 M Kittyhawk. 77 Sqn had several 'M' model Kittyhawks on strength at Noemfoor. (RAAF)

Morotai Island (Wama Airstrip)

77 Squadron finally left Noemfoor aboard the liberty ship "Clarence Roberts" on 2 April, with only the pilots and aircraft remaining behind. The trip lasted five days, with the ship arriving at mid-day on the 7th.

Morotai Island is situated in the Moluccas group in South East Asia. At the time, only the southern end of the island was controlled by the Allies, and the outside of the base perimeter fence on the island was considered Japanese territory. The two airfields of Wama and Pitu were hewn from coconut groves, and when it rained the sites became a sea of mud. The constant muddy and temporary state of the airfield made operations most uncomfortable.

The first 18 of 77 Squadron's Kittyhawks arrived from Noemfoor on 13 April 1945, with the first accident at Morotai occurring at Wama on the same day. WOFF A. R. Proudfoot (A 29-902) whilst taxiing to the service bays unsuccessfully tried to overtake the aircraft in front, piloted by FSGT J. R. Gillan (A29-916). This resulted in A29-916 receiving 90% fuselage damage and FSGT Gillan escaping with only minor injuries. Although both aircraft were severely damaged, they were both rebuilt and used in further missions.

77 Squadron flew its first sortie from Morotai on 21 April when the Kittyhawks were assigned convoy protection duties. On the return flight to Morotai WOFF L. Hanson (A29-819), ran short of fuel and was forced to bail out of his stricken aircraft at an altitude

of 5000 feet. Hanson was seen to get into his dingy and was covered during the entire evening by aircraft from the squadron. Due to rough weather however, a Catalina was unable to rescue him and covered the area when Hanson was assumed to be. The next morning no trace could be found of the pilot and Hanson was posted as missing. On 23 April, much to the delight of squadron-personnel, WOFF Hanson arrived back at camp with the story of how he had been rescued by a passing PT boat. This same day was to also bring a disaster to the squadron. During take off on a bombing mission, one of the bombs under A29-900 prematurely dropped and exploded, killing the pilot FLGOFF K. McFadden. Four days later, on 27 April, the squadron suffered a further casualty. FLGOFF H. O. Krause (A29-808) reported his engine had cut and he was bailing out. He was seen to leave his aircraft at an altitude of 400 feet and hit the water without his parachute opening in time. A destroyer and two patrol boats from the convoy Krause had been covering were immediately on the scene, but failed to find any trace of the body.

May brought with it the news that hostilities in Europe had ceased and in the words of the squadrons T/CO FLTLT Taylor 'Great Jubilation Prevailed'. On the 11th a victory issue of two bottles of beer per man was made from the canteen; the first issue for many weeks. As a result, flying duties were cancelled for the rest of the day. Towards the end of the month, news was received that 81 Wing was to take part in the proposed invasion of Labuan Island and Brunei, code named Oboe 6. Preparation and packing for the squadron move began immediately, after only spending two months at Morotai.



The airstrip complex at Morotai. The closer strip is Wama and the further Pito. (RAAF Historical)

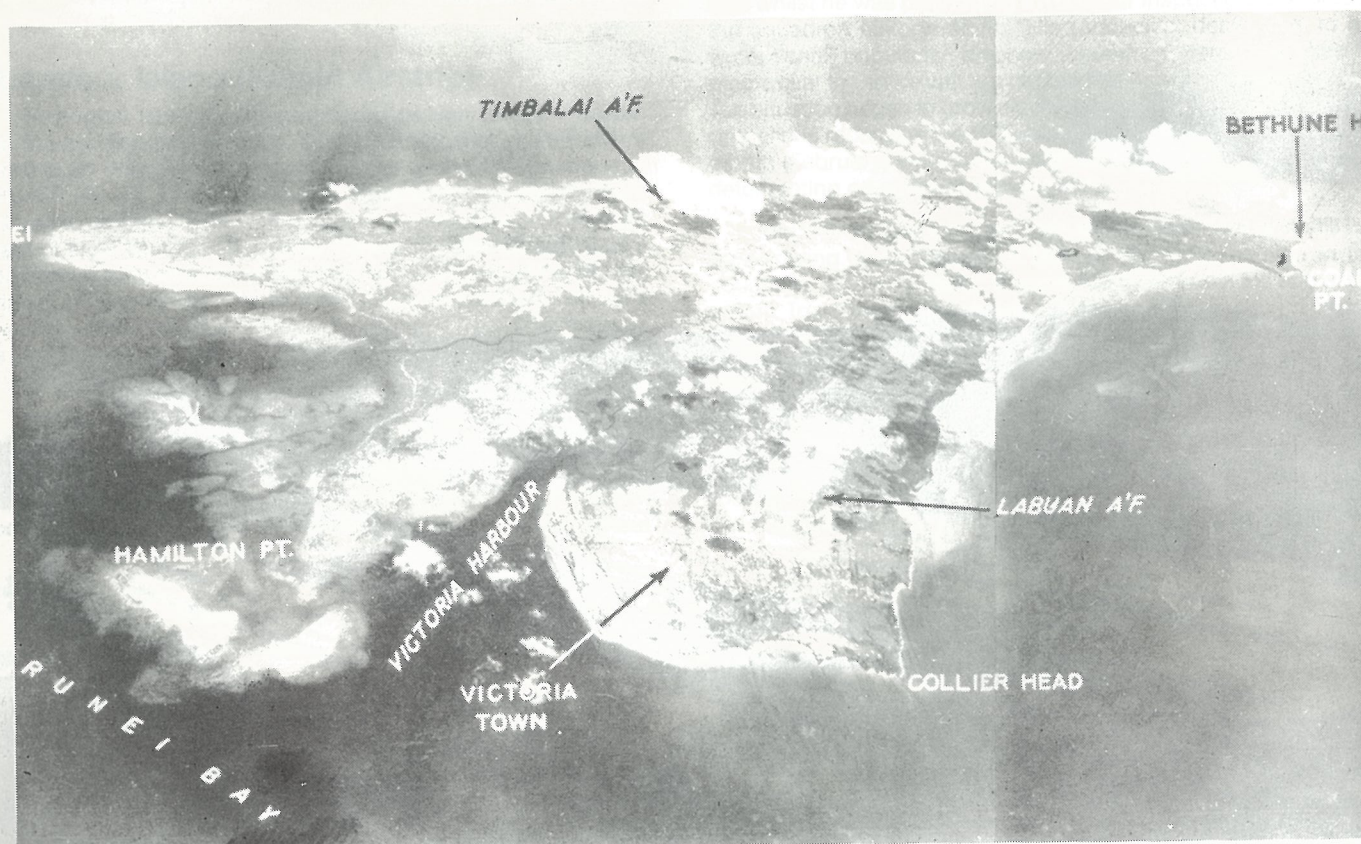
Labuan Island

The squadron embarked upon LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) Number 753 on 2 June 1945, with only the pilots and rear party remaining on Morotai. The night before embarkation was spent at the AIF embarkation area known locally as the swamp. 77 Squadron personnel emerged the next morning soaked and mosquito bitten, as no-one had told the army that the squadron was arriving. Consequently, the men had been forced to sleep out in the open. After a brief trip, the LCI arrived in Brunei Bay on the 11th and the squadron disembarked at Victoria Harbour, Labuan, on the following afternoon. The enemy still held part of Labuan and on 20 June 1945 in the early hours of the morning, an AIF patrol engaged a Japanese unit situated on the southern side of the 77 Squadron camp. Numerous bullets passed through the squadron's tent lines and although causing 'considerable anxiety', no real damage was done.

The first of the squadron's Kittyhawks arrived at Labuan on the last day of June. The first operation, an attack on Keningau and Sapong (North Borneo) was staged on 3 July. On the afternoon of 15 July the squadron suffered its first casualty since beginning operations from the Labuanbase. The fatality followed a strafing run at an enemy held position at Ravau, North Bornea. FLTLT H. Cooper (A29-827) crashed after hitting treetops and his aircraft burst into flames. The rest of July was spent attacking Japanese targets in North Borneo and flying armed reconnaissance missions from Langkon to Mattinggong.

On 6 August 1945, the USAAF dropped a single atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima followed, three days later, by a similar attack on Nagasaki. The end appeared in sight for the Japanese Imperial Forces. Squadron personnel were in a great state of excitement when on 3 August it was announced that the Japanese government had made peace overtures. Personnel were kept well informed over the five day respite period as to the happenings in the outside world over the welfare public address system. The first official announcement of the cessation of hostilities broadcast from London by the British Prime Minister Mr. Atlee was relayed over the public address system on 16 August 1945. On the following night a victory party was held in the Airmen's Mess, with the cost being borne by the Officers Mess. The mood became far more relaxed and activities were organised for the squadron. As part of the First Tactical Air Forces victory celebrations, a series of Brunei Bay island cruises were organised on the 27th, with quite a few of the squadron's personnel taking the chance to do some sightseeing.

On 29 August the official announcement that 81 Wing Units, including 77 Squadron, were going to Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) arrived. Volunteers were called for, but out of the 200 personnel in 77 Squadron, only a total of 36 people came forward. It was clear that after spending 30 months away from Australia on five remote locations in South East Asia, that the men of 77 Squadron were looking forward to going back home.



Labuan Island 1945 (RAAF Historical)

1945 — 1950

British Commonwealth Occupational Forces — Japan

MUSTANG

Labuan Island

As the war with Japan drew to an end, a period of demobilization began which would result in the fighter strength of the RAAF being reduced to one Wing comprising of three North American P51 Mustang squadrons. The RAAF was to eventually receive 299 American assembled and 214 Australian assembled aircraft, with the first Mustangs entering service in early 1945. The Mustang was an outstanding fighter and light attack aircraft possessing a performance vastly superior to that of the ever reliable P40 Kittyhawk, which at the time still equipped the majority of the RAAF fighter units.

Ten days after the end of hostilities the War Cabinet decided that all three Australian services would contribute units to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF), and to initially have the Prefecture of Hiroshima as its area of operation. The Air Force component of the BCOF was to be known as the British Commonwealth Air Forces (BCAIR) and was to consist of the following:

- One Wing — Three RAAF Mustang squadrons
- One Wing — Two RAF Spitfire squadrons
 - One RNZAF Corsair squadron
 - One RIAF Spitfire squadron

RAAF Headquarters allotted 81 Wing comprising of No. 76, 77 and 82 Fighter Squadrons, 381 Base squadron and 481 Maintenance squadron. This resulted in a total establishment of 1750 personnel as the RAAF contribution to the Occupational Force. No. 5 Airfield Construction Squadron (5 ACS) was also allotted to BCOF with the task of repairing the Japanese airfields in order to make them serviceable for BCAF use.

No. 81 Wing prepared to receive its first Mustangs at Labuan, replacing the Kittyhawks with which the Wing had been equipped since its formation. 77 Squadron received its first two Mustangs (North American built examples) on 12 September 1945, from the then disbanding No. 84 Squadron. Pilot conversion courses began the following day for the pilots who had elected to go to Japan, with all Kittyhawk flying being carried out by pilots who had nominated discharge or to return to Australia. The Squadron's last Kittyhawk mission was flown on 6 October 1945 when two aircraft made a tactical reconnaissance of Sapong and Keningau. On this particular mission, Japanese troops were sighted heading south between Keningau and Tambumen, all carrying heavy packs.

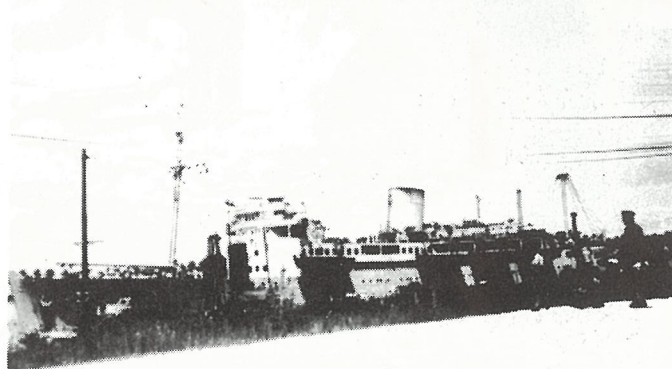
The conversion from Kittyhawks to Mustang was expected to take two months, but in reality was to prove a much greater task than originally thought. The Mustang, although a first class aircraft, had a few vices which could prove more than a handful for the unwary pilot. The biggest handling problem of the Mustang was the aircraft's tendency to develop a vicious swing on take-off and landing due to the torque effect of the large 1490 horse power Merlin engine. During the initial conversion period 77 Squadron had more than its fair share of aircraft accidents, although only a few were of a serious nature. The first Mustang accident occurred on 7 October 1945 when FLG OFF K. Crawford (A68-711) crash landed his aircraft on the airstrip due to a heavy cross wind. The Mustang was totally written off, but fortunately the pilot was able to escape unharmed. By the end of October the Squadron had suffered two further landing accidents, resulting in both Mustangs requiring substantial repairs. By this stage however, flying training had entered an advanced stage, resulting in all the pilots being converted to the Mustang and the majority of the ground crew having attended conversion courses at No. 22 Repair and Salvage Unit. As of 30 October the Squadron had a strength of 21 Mustangs, and had flown for that month a total 220 hours.

Meanwhile, the squadron's Kittyhawks had been handed over to the Repair and Salvage Unit and prepared for the long flight back to Australia. The first Kittyhawks departed for No 6 Aircraft Depot at Oakey, Queensland on 11 November 1945, being flown by the pilots posted out from No. 76, 77 and 82 Squadrons. After

the active service these Kittyhawks had experienced in the Pacific arena, they ultimately became victims of the scrap metal merchants axe.

Throughout November the squadron, under the command of SQNLDR R. P. Curtis, continued to work up flying hours on the new aircraft. Conversion flying continued, with an emphasis on formation flying, aerobatics, engine/airframe tests and ground attack training. The Mustangs' bad habit of swinging on take-off and landing claimed three more victims in as many weeks, with aircraft A68-727, A68-557 and A68-735 all receiving damage in separate incidents.

There was further drama at Labuan when, on 10 December, a No 93 Squadron Beaufighter (A8-184) crashed on takeoff into two aircraft from No 77 Squadron. The Beaufighter sheared the engines off A68-761 and A68-714 before bursting into flames. Five RAAF personnel perished in the accident, including the Commanding Officer 93 SQNLDR D. Gulliver, FLG OFF D. Seekamps FLTLT Harris together with two Leading Aircraftmen. Fortunately, apart from two extensively damaged Mustangs, there were no 77 Squadron casualties.



A ship being loaded at Labuan in preparation for the trip to Japan.
(G. Walshe)

Japan - Iwakuni Airstrip

In mid January 1946, the order was issued to commence packing for the trip to Japan, much to the relief and delight of Squadron personnel who had become weary of the continued delays. On the 21st all personnel attended familiarization lectures on the Japanese people and their customs, and ten days later, a final issue of eight bottles of beer per man was allocated to each member before embarkation to Japan. It was noticed that very little hesitation was shown in consuming it all that night!

By early February the squadron had packed and was ready to embark for the 1775 mile journey to Japan. The S.S. 'River Murrumbidgee' docked on the 8th, and the loading of 77 Squadron's vehicles commenced. Two days later, the majority of the squadron's personnel boarded the H.M.S. 'Glengyle', a converted cargo steamer, and the ship set sail the following afternoon. Conditions for the airmen aboard the ship were most uncomfortable and the accommodation was extremely cramped.

In the late afternoon of 20 February 1946, 77 Squadron personnel caught their first glimpse of the Japanese coast, as the convoy entered Japan's Inland Sea. The first thing the men noticed about Japan was its extremely cold climate, as it was winter time, especially since they had just left a tropical island in mid summer only eight days earlier! Early the next morning, the ships anchored off the Japanese port of Kure and the men surveyed the awesome scene before them:

"On the shore the former workshops of Japan's great naval Base were only masses of twisted metal, bombed out wharves, devastated factories, and general wreckage caused by fire after bombing, could be seen. The area was littered with wrecked and sunken vessels, battleships, cruisers, aircraft carriers... the pride of the Japanese Imperial Navy lay at the bottom of the sea". 1

77 Squadron personnel disembarked two days later and marched through what was left of Kure to the railway station where a train was waiting to take them south to their new base at Iwakuni. The journey to Iwakuni took them through the city of Hiroshima and here squadron personnel saw for the first time the effects of the American Atomic Bomb:

"We saw the city of Hiroshima and its people — the devastation was total. As far as the eye could see it was flattened. People sat around with burns visible on parts of their body — old people, young people and children — pathetic. I felt lost, and for the first time I felt for the Japanese people." 2



The remains of the Hiroshima bank. (G. Walshe)

The airfield at Iwakuni had been a Japanese Naval Air Station and consisted of a single concrete runway, a slipway for flying boats, and accommodation for 4000 personnel. Although the majority of the buildings were still in tact, they were badly in need of repair. However, despite their neglected state, the rooms that were allotted to the airmen were far more comfortable than the tents that the men had lived in at Labuan!

Meanwhile, back in Labuan, the pilots and rear party were preparing the Mustangs for the long ferry flight north. Base domestics were limited due to the small number of squadron personnel still at Labuan, and all camp hygiene was carried out by Japanese POW's. The squadron's diet was supplemented with large amounts of fish 'caught' by FLTLT Cock and FLGOFF Inger with the help of hand grenades and TNT!

Due to the lack of accommodation available at the first refuelling stop to Japan (Clark Field, Phillipines) the departure date was being constantly deferred resulting in further delays and disappointment.

On 4 and 5 March the pilots got as far as strapping themselves into their aircraft only to be informed that the ferry was delayed for another day. Finally, on 11 March 1946, the first formation of 15 77

squadron aircraft led by SQNLDR Curtis, took off and set course for Clark Field. The second formation of 15 aircraft, led by FLTLT Crossing, departed one hour later. All aircraft arrived safely at their destination by 1300 hours on that day, with the ground crews travelling with the formation in C47 transports. The departure from Clark Field was consistently delayed due to unfavourable weather, and it was not until the 18th that the two formations started out for the island of Okinawa, the next stop on their flight to Japan.

Bofu

At this time it was decided that the Australians would move from Iwakuni, which had become overcrowded with the arrival of both the RAF and RNZAF contingents, and set up operations at the airfield at Bofu. Conditions at Bofu, complete with excellent accommodation and steam heated rooms, were considerably better than at Iwakuni. The main 81 Wing ground party departed Iwakuni by train for the two hour 45 minute trip west on 16 March. The luxury of the new accommodation was short-lived for some personnel, as only three days after moving to Bofu a fire broke out in one of the accommodation blocks. The fire quickly destroyed four two storey wooden buildings but fortunately the majority of 77 Squadron personnel were quartered in block two, which was saved from damage.

The 24 Mustangs of 77 Squadron departed Okinawa on 21 March and arrived at Bofu that same afternoon. Upon arrival, the pilots put on a good display of formation flying which had the local Japanese working in the nearby paddy fields running for cover. Although the ferry flight had been a resounding success for 77 Squadron it was not without accidents, as 82 Squadron lost three Mustangs and an escorting Mosquito with all pilots enroute.

Over the next few weeks the squadron flew familiarization flights over the BCOF area of responsibility. Once the pilots were familiar with the area, the squadron settled down to the work at hand and began surveillance flights over the prefectures of Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane, Totori and Western Shikoku. The pilots kept particular watch over the Inland Sea and Tsushima Strait, which lies between Japan and Korea, monitoring ship movements and checking on the smuggling of aliens into Japan; especially Koreans. During this period of surveillance flying, training flying also continued with a large effort being expended on air to air combat and gunnery exercises.

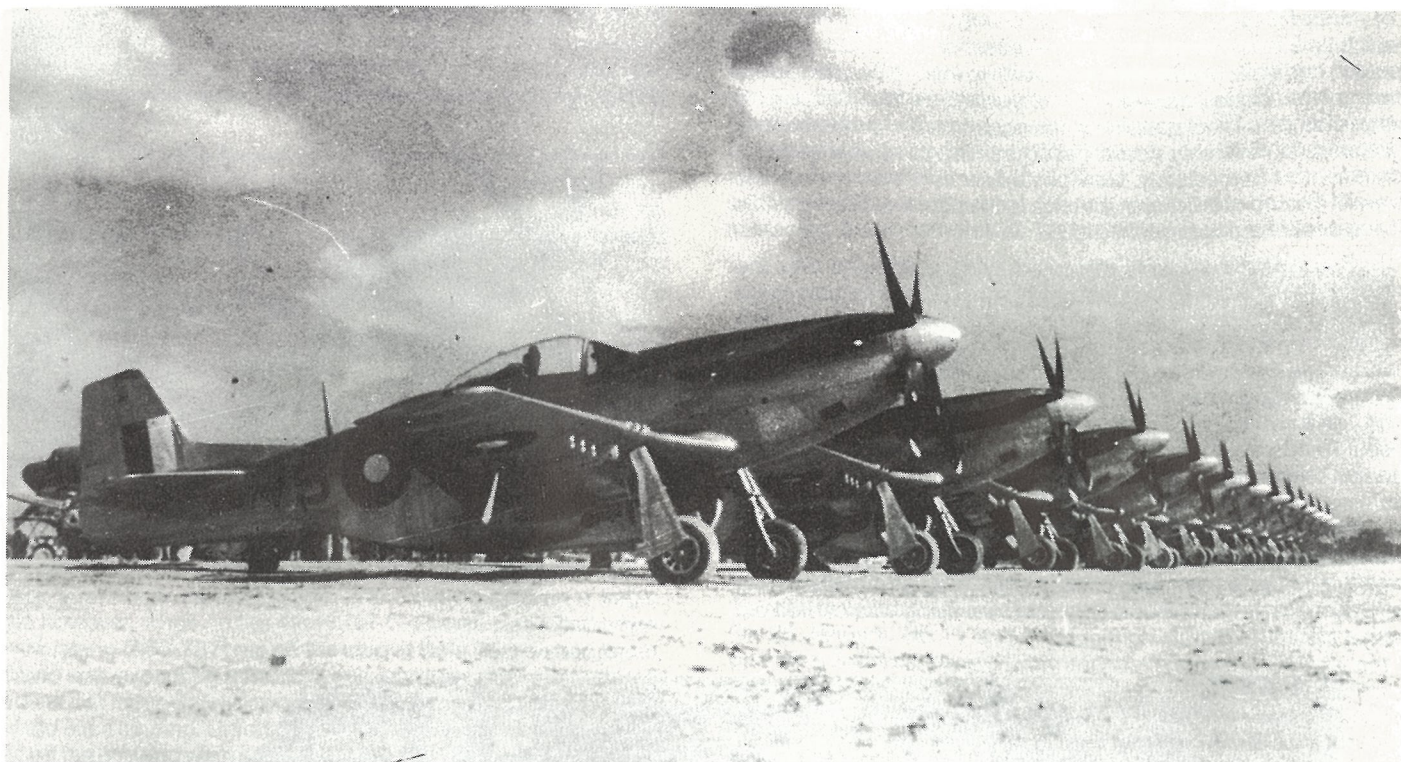
Unfortunately, the condition of the airstrip at Bofu began to deteriorate rapidly with the constant use from RAAF Mustangs and by late June it was closed to all but operational flying. With the closure of the airstrip the pilots found it exceedingly difficult to maintain their flying hours, and when flying training recommenced in mid July a drop in flying standards was observed.

During the next month, the squadron was tasked with spraying DDT over all the BCOF areas. The insecticide was sprayed from specially equipped Mustangs normally operating in a group of three. All flying was suspended between 1 and 19 September due to lack of serviceable fuel, which resulted in the squadron flying a total of nine days for that month.

The squadron was detached to the airfield at Miho on 29 September for air to ground attack training. Bad weather proved to be a constant problem, which resulted in live rocket firing not commencing until 9 October. In total, the squadron fired 665 rockets during the course with the overall results being of a high standard. On the 16th the air to ground gunnery programme commenced with an average of 70% being achieved on the first day. FLGOFF Peters achieved outstanding results with an average of 97.8%. The following day fifteen sorties were flown before lunch when, due to engine trouble on take-off, FLGOFF Peters was forced to land his Mustang on its belly. This was not the first time that engine trouble had been experienced during the exercise and as a result all P51D aircraft were grounded. It was not until nine days later after a spark plug change, that the aircraft were cleared for flight again, and all 77 Squadron Mustangs were flown back to Bofu. However flying was still limited due to the harsh Japanese winter and a shortage of Aviation Gasoline, which is illustrated by the fact that only a total of 93.4 hours were flown in December 1946.

1 and 2.

Eyewitness accounts from Gerry Walshe, an Airframe Fitter with 77 Squadron at that time.



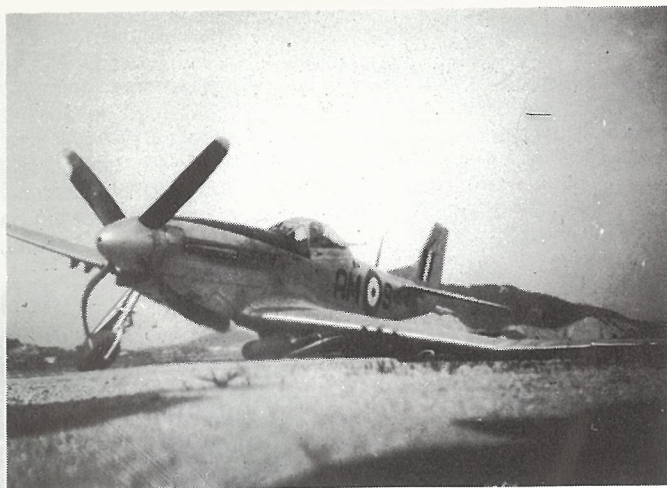
*Mustangs of 77 Squadron shortly after arriving in Japan.
(G. Walshe)*



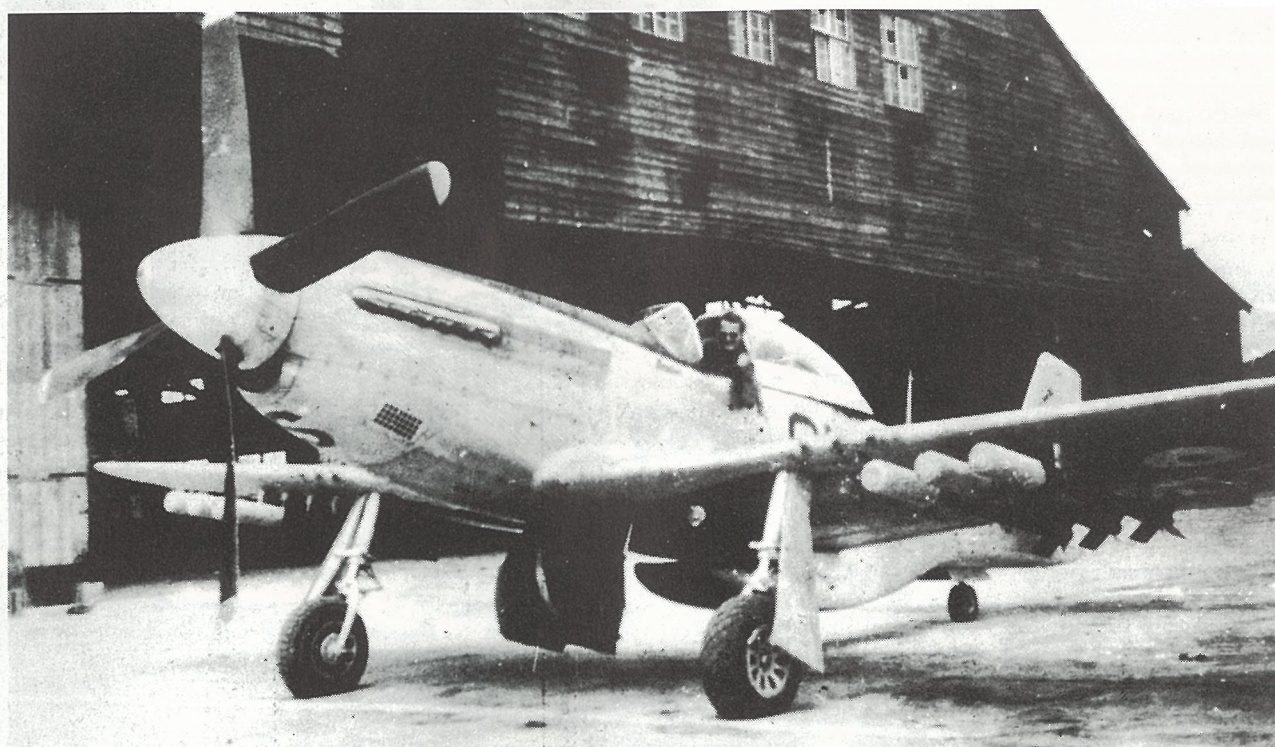
An RAAF WOFF supervises two Japanese labourers as they replenish a Mustangs drop tanks with DDT. Note the spray bars behind the main undercarriage units.

With February 1947 came the 'change over period' during which time many longer serving members of the squadron were posted out, while others were sent south to enjoy a period of leave before returning to Japan for another operational tour. With such a large change over of personnel, the squadron's experience level dropped considerably necessitating training programmes to be commenced immediately. New pilots flew familiarization sorties toward the end of the month, but due to the poor weather very little flying could be accomplished.

Bad weather severely disrupted flying operations over the next two months due to frequent heavy snow storms and low cloud ceilings. The usual patrols were completed when the weather permitted, resulting in the squadron's overall effort for March being 100 sorties. During this quiet period, the squadron had a change of Commanding Officer when SQNLDR R. Susans, on 18 March 1947 assumed command from FLTLT J. G. Chenhallis, who had been Temporary Commanding Officer during the changeover period. The weather improved considerably during May, and the training syllabus was continued with an emphasis on rocket dives and formation flying. A total of 340 hours was flown for the month, which was a vast increase on previous months. But just when the weather began to clear, strip unserviceability again curtailed flying operations during June and only essential flying was carried out with a minimum of training flights.



A photograph of A68-749 showing the damage sustained during FltLt Tates landing accident. (G. Walshe)



Gerry Walshe in the cockpit of A68-749 during the armament camp at Miho August 1947. (G. Walshe)



The remains of A68-787 in which FltLt Nissen lost his life. (G. Walshe)

During July 1947, 77 Squadron was called upon to join a mass formation flypast over Tokyo in conjunction with Independence Day celebrations. The squadron flew in formation accompanied by approximately 300 American aircraft and two Spitfire squadrons.

From 21 July to 8 August the squadron detached to the Armament Camp at Miho with the course officially commencing two days later. During the camp rocket exercises were carried out using 25lb steel, and both 25lb and 60lb concrete rocket heads. Air to ground gunnery was executed using two and six machine guns respectively.

On 12 August a Yamaguchi patrol, flown by FLGOFF Martin and WOFF Dunbar, was unable to return to Bofu due to bad weather and forced to land at Kochi airstrip. FLTLT Tate and WOFF Jorgensen carried out a search for the missing aircraft, but upon returning to Bofu FLTLT Tate (A68-749) ran off the strip causing damage to the port undercarriage and mainplane of this aircraft. The accident was attributed to a faulty tail wheel locking mechanism.

September 1947 was to be a busy month for 77 Squadron, as it was committed to Army co-operation exercises and a major Fire Power demonstration. The month began on a tragic note however, when on the 4th FLTLT C. Nissen was killed when his Mustang (A68-787) ran off the strip at Bofu. Nissen had taken off and was executing a Battle Climb when his engine spluttered and cut. He immediately lowered his undercarriage and executed a dead stick landing. Unfortunately he hit the strip too hard, bounced off the end and went into a rice field filled with mud. The aircraft nosed over onto its back, and by the time rescuers could reach the site, Nissen had drowned.



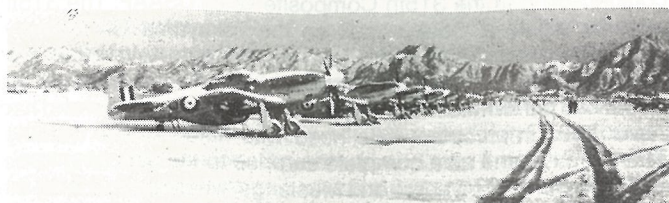
77 Squadron Mustang A68-724 taxiing with five 60lb rockets under each wing during the fire power demonstration on September 1947. (RAAF Historical)

On the 23rd the Squadron took part in a massive Fire Power demonstration in which all squadrons of BCAIR participated. The attacks were carried out on targets set up on an island east of Iwakuni. A total of 84 aircraft took part with 77 Squadron supplying 17 Mustangs, each carrying ten 60lb Warhead Rockets and 600 rounds of 0.5 calibre ammunition. The weather was perfect and 77 Squadron gave an excellent performance by destroying all of the targets allocated to it.

The remainder of 1947 was spent on routine duties, consisting mainly of patrols and general flying. However, the squadron did participate in a large formation flypast over Tokyo on 21 November, in honour of the marriage of HRH Princess Elizabeth to Lieutenant Mountbatten. All the squadron's pilots assisted the ground crews in cleaning and polishing the Mustangs before the flypast which was an unqualified success, both from a pilots and an observers point of view.

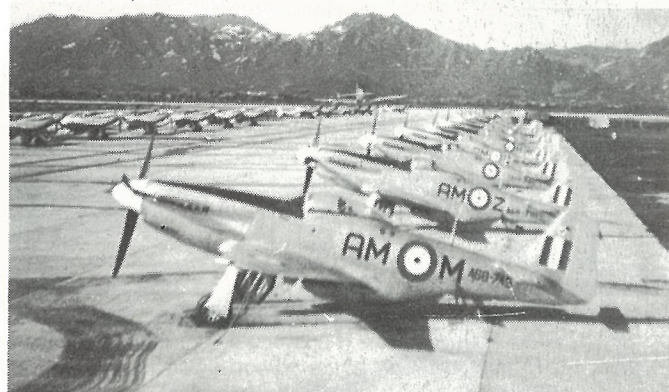
One major thorn in the side of squadron operations since their arrival in Japan was the lack of a suitable hard stand or hangar for the squadron's aircraft, resulting in all squadron level maintenance

being performed out in the open. This problem came particularly to a head in winter, and during December the serviceability of the squadron's Mustangs suffered considerably. Another factor which contributed to the unserviceability rate was the posting out for discharge of all experienced squadron ground crew who had originally volunteered during World War II, and had not selected to re-enlist in the Permanent Air Force at the conclusion of that conflict. It is a credit to the ground crews that despite these obstacles, the squadron flew 280.25 hours during December.

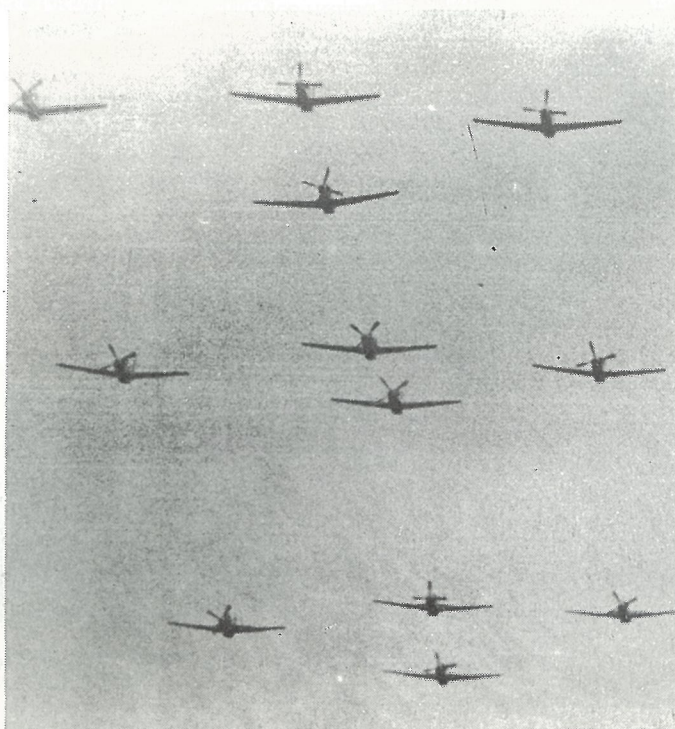


Winter at Bofu. A lack of suitable hangers made maintenance difficult. (G. Walshe)

1948 brought with it drastic changes to the structure of BCAIR. Due to the poor state of the British economy it had been decided to withdraw the majority of the RAF units from the BCOF. On 26 January, No 11 and 17 Squadrons RAF, who had been operating Spitfires, ceased flying and the rundown of RAF personnel at Miho and Iwakuni began. On the same day a mass formation flypast was flown over Bofu to mark the event. The formation spelt out the letters B.C.O.F. with 77 Squadron forming both the letters C and F.



The 77 Squadron flight line at Bofu late in 1947. Note the Mustang doing a 'beat up' between the two lines. (G. Walshe)



A formation of 77 squadron Mustangs at Iwakuni during 1948. (RAAF Museum)

Return to Iwakuni

With the run down of the RAF units at Iwakuni it was decided that 81 Wing would move in to take their place, and that No 14 Squadron RNZAF would move its operations to Bofu. 77 Squadron's aircraft were transferred to Iwakuni on 11 and 12 March with all ground personnel joining them some three days later.

On the 24th, 77 Squadron carried out a special exercise in conjunction with the 315th Composite Wing USAF. The 315th were to initiate a mock attack on the Tokuyama Oil Refinery, Generating Station and Reservoir. They had been told in their pre-strike brief that they may be intercepted over the target, but as the 315th had performed many of these exercises in the past and had never been intercepted, little heed was taken to the warning. Therefore it came as a complete surprise to the attacking force, consisting of A26 Invaders and Mustangs, when approaching the target they were intercepted by 36 No. 81 Wing Mustangs and four RNZAF Corsairs; Particularly as the US Airmen had no know-

ledge that the Corsairs were in Japan at all! 77 Squadron's aircraft also played an important part in the exercise, which was hailed as a complete success. The exercise in March was followed by another in April, when the squadron launched a series of mock attacks on two USN warships.

General training flights during the month had to be kept to a minimum however, due to the construction of a new airstrip at Iwakuni by No 5ACS. With the move to Iwakuni the squadrons' working conditions had vastly improved due to the acquisition of a hangar and a high quality hardstand for aircraft maintenance. These improvements were reflected in the fact that the squadron was able to fly a total of 387.35 hours during May.

- 3 Before 1947, the US Air Force was known as the United States Army Air Force. The abbreviation USAF, used today was adopted after 1947 when the word 'Army' was deleted.



77 Squadron Mustangs lined up at Bofu during 1948. The Mustangs in the background belong to 82 Squadron. (G. Walshe)

Operation Platypus

To test the efficiency and mobility of No 81 Wing, and tripartite exercise was held involving amphibious landings and operation from an advanced landing ground. From 23 to 25 July, 77 Squadron moved to the advanced landing ground at Takamatsu, Shikoku Island by land, sea and air. The equipment that was designated for sea transportation was loaded onto nine barges along with the majority of the squadron's personnel, and set course for the beach-head at Hoju. As the first two barges touched the sand an attack was forced through by two RNZAF Corsairs of the 'enemy' force.

After unloading the barges the road, convoy to the airfield commenced. The convoy was considerably hampered by vehicle unserviceability however, and had to be continually halted to enable repairs to be carried out. During the afternoon of the 24th the convoy was 'attacked' twice by Corsairs, although little damage could have resulted due to the shelter given by the terrain. The convoy finally reached Takamatsu the following day, and work began immediately on erecting a camp site. Three airlifts of personnel and equipment were completed on 25 July, with each aircraft carrying a 5000lb load. The squadron's Mustangs departed Iwakuni at 1130 hours on the same day, and arrived at Takamatsu at 1200 hours. Exactly one hour later the squadron became 'fully operational' and from that time onwards the operations came thick and fast.

For the purpose of the exercise, the scenario evolved around occupying Takamatsu airfield which had been recently vacated by the 'enemy'. The Mustang squadrons of No 81 wing were to take turns in operating from Takamatsu, with each unit occupying the base for nine days. For the following eight days 77 Squadron defended the area from regular attacks launched by the Invader bombers and dive bombing Corsairs, as well as executing their own attacks on 'enemy' warships and the 'enemy' airstrips at Bofu and Iwakuni. At the conclusion of the exercise the squadron had flown a total of 175.45 hours, and returned to Iwakuni on 2 August.



WgCDR G. T. Newstead — CO 77 SQN
22 November, 1948 to 28 February 1950.

On 6 August 1948, the third anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, 12 of the squadron's Mustangs performed a flypast over that city. The flypast coincided with the actual time that the bomb was dropped, and the event was remembered with much reverence.

All squadron personnel were shocked on 24 August when 77 Squadron flying was ordered to cease and preparations began for the squadron to be disbanded. Flying ceased forthwith and arrangements were made to close down the squadron by 1 September. Fortunately, on 6 September, word was received that the squadron would be reduced to nucleus only, pending the arrival of replacement personnel. All aircraft remained in the squadron and were flown only the sufficient number of hours to keep them serviceable.

On 15 September RAAF Component BCOF was formed, and the decision was made to disband all No 81 Wing units other than 77 Squadron, although a rear party from both No 381 Squadron and No 5ACS were to remain for the initial reformation. Two weeks later on 29 September, 77 Squadron was tasked to function as a Japanese Occupation Squadron, and on the following day SQNLDR F. Lawerenson assumed the appointment of Officer Commanding 77 Squadron. No. 77 Squadron was now directly responsible to Headquarters BCAIR, while the remainder of the RAAF Component revolved around the squadron's operations. The re-organised 77 Squadron performed similar tasks to those they had carried out whilst in 81 wing, and was soon flying the same patrols and undergoing the same training flights as before.

During November and December the squadron continued its programme of armament training, and on 2 December the squadron undertook its first training in firing at moving targets. Ten details carried out a rocket attack on a spray target towed behind a Search and Rescue launch, with the following day's programme consisting of rocket attacks on an island target. It was during one of these attacks that tragedy struck, when FLTLT R. R. Hill (A68-802) was killed when his Mustang disintegrated as he pulled out of his attack dive. All 77 Squadron Mustangs were grounded pending the outcome of the crash inquiry, resulting in flying not recommencing until 7 December. At the end of 1948 77 Squadron had a complement of 299 personnel and contained 40 Mustangs, two Dakotas, three Wirraways and two Austers, making it the largest flying unit in the RAAF.

In January 1949 the Japanese people went to the polls in a national election, and from the 20th to 23rd of that month 77 Squadron provided six teams of observers tasked with surveillance duties to ensure the elections ran smoothly and fairly. The teams visited all the polling booths and counting areas in the Iwakuni, Hongo, Kuga, Takamori and Oshima Island areas with no major incidents being reported. During this election period the squadron's Auster V aircraft had the unusual task of dropping leaflets on the local towns and villages urging the population to vote.

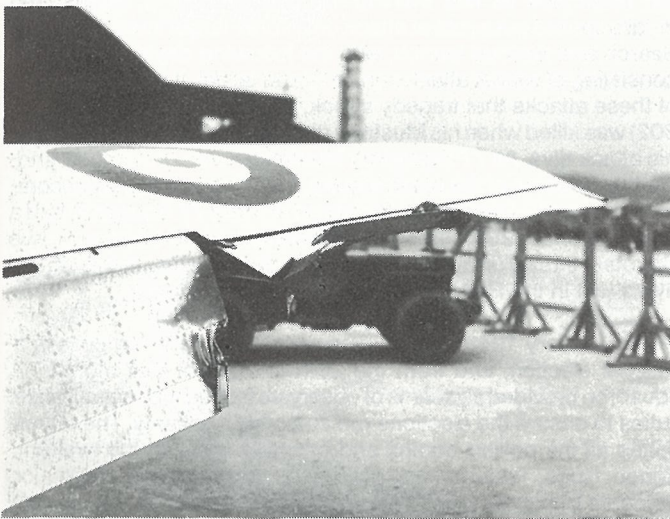


The USAF helicopter giving its demonstration before members of 77 squadron 1 March 1949. (RAAF)

It was at about this time that the activities of the local Communist Party began to attract the attention of the Occupational Forces in Japan. A close watch was kept on Communist activity in the Iwakuni area by the Intelligence Section of 77 Squadron, as fears were beginning to grow that the Communists, supported by the North Koreans, were trying to infiltrate the factories of the area through the trade unions. On 10 March 1949 FLTLT S. Park, Directorate of Intelligence RAAF, arrived for liaison duties with the 77 Squadron Intelligence Officer and the squadron found itself a participant in the rapidly developing Cold War between the East and West.

The squadron's members and their families were treated to an interesting display of flying on 1 March when a visiting USAF Helicopter was put through its paces on the 77 Squadron tarmac. Many of the squadron's personnel had never seen a helicopter at close quarters before and were left spell-bound by this amazing machine and its capabilities.

On 17 March a potentially tragic accident occurred during squadron formation practice. As the squadron's Mustangs drew into formation, two aircraft collided with such a force that one of the pilots, FLTLT Adams (A68-811) had to parachute to safety, leaving his damaged aircraft to crash into the sea approximately eight miles from Iwakuni. The other aircraft in the accident (A68-765) was skillfully flown back to Iwakuni by the pilot, WOFF Thornton, where it landed safely with a badly damaged aileron.



The damaged aileron of A68-765 after its mid-air collision with A68-811. (RAAF)



Ground crew prepare to fit parachute test dummies to 77 Squadron Wirraway A20-745 on 6 June 1949.

Empire Day was celebrated in grand style when, on 24 May, CO 77 Squadron, WGCDCR G. T. Newstead, lead the RAAF Component in a march through the streets of Tokyo with other units of

BCOF. This parade was soon followed by another on 4 July to mark American Independence day, which was reviewed by General MacArthur.

77 Squadron's flying programme during mid 1949 was frequently disrupted by typhoons with associated heavy rain and high winds. When flying was possible, the squadron's ground attack and air combat training was continued. An interesting incident occurred on 21 October when two 500lb practice bombs were released onto the island target off Iwakuni, both missing the target and exploding in the surrounding water. When the squadron launch reached the area, they discovered a bountiful supply of dead and stunned fish floating on the surface. Needless to say, the squadron ate well that night!

The squadron celebrated the first anniversary of their reformation on 26 October by staging what was probably one of the most spectacular airshows ever seen in Japan. After a full ceremonial parade in the morning, the air show opened with a display of high level dive bombing, followed by live rocket firing and strafing. After a mock ground defence battle, the squadron's newly formed aerobatic team took the stage, and kept the crowd entertained with an exhibition of formation aerobatics in Vic formation and line astern chases. After an afternoon tea, the two Austers performed for the crowd with a slow flying and short take-off display. The highly successful day concluded with a squadron formation flying the figure 77 and fireworks display.

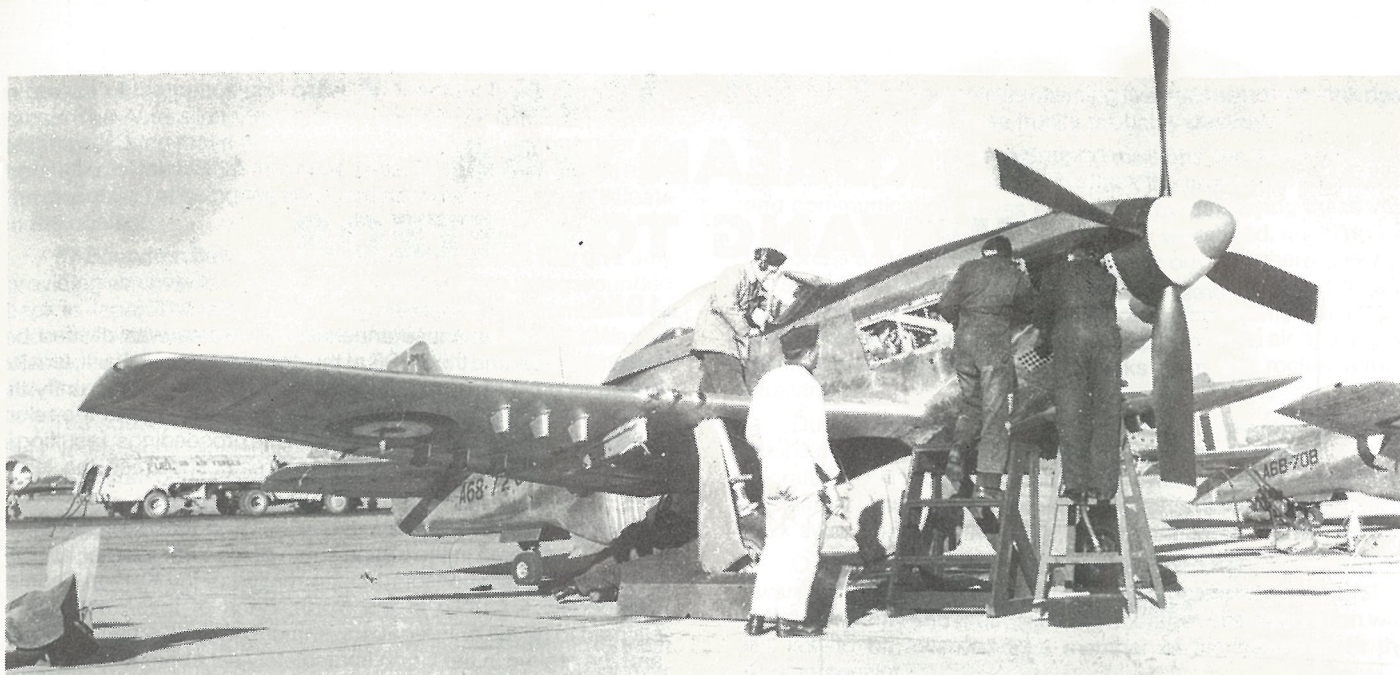


Members of the squadron parade to commemorate the first anniversary of the squadrons reformation (RAAF)

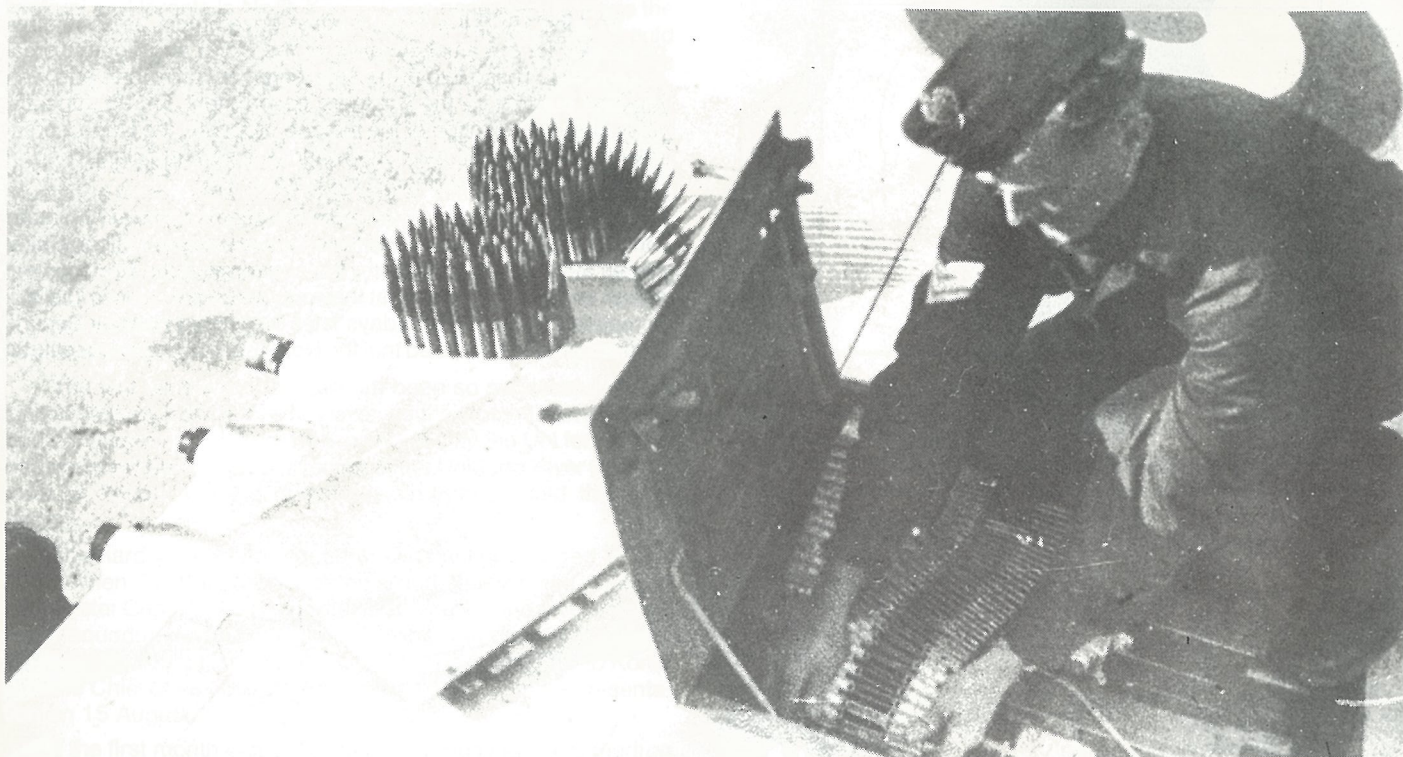
In December 1949, a Far East Air force (FEAF) Gunnery competition was to be held at the USAF base at Yokota, with teams competing from 77 Squadron RAAF, as well as the 8th, 18th, 35th, 49th and 51st Fighter Groups USAF. The competition also provided the opportunity for the pilots of 77 Squadron to test their abilities and their aircraft against jet powered aircraft for the first time. After two weeks of constant practice in all forms of armament delivery, the team of four pilots comprising of FLTLT Adam, FLTLT Strout, FLGOF Fitzsummons and WOFF Thornton departed for Yokota, accompanied by a dedicated group of groundcrew. The team performed extremely well in the early stages of the contest, excelling in Rocket Firing and Dive Bombing, resulting in a strong lead by the second to last day of the competition. Unfortunately, the last day was to include Skip Bombing, which was a form of weapons delivery that the squadron had little experience with. Thus, at the conclusion of the competition, 77 Squadron had to be content with second place. It is interesting to note that the two F80 Shooting Star jet fighter units were only able to attain fourth and fifth placings, behind three Mustang Units.

On 28 February 1950 WGCDCR Newstead relinquished command of 77 Squadron to WGCDCR L. T. Spence DFC, a veteran from No 3 squadron serving in the Middle East during World War II. 77 Squadron's time in Japan appeared to be coming to an end, and it seemed only a matter of time before the squadron would return back to Australia, a country it had not seen for eight years. It was not until May however, that the order was received to disassemble the base and begin a wind down of operations in anticipation of the move. The last sortie was flown on 23 June 1950.

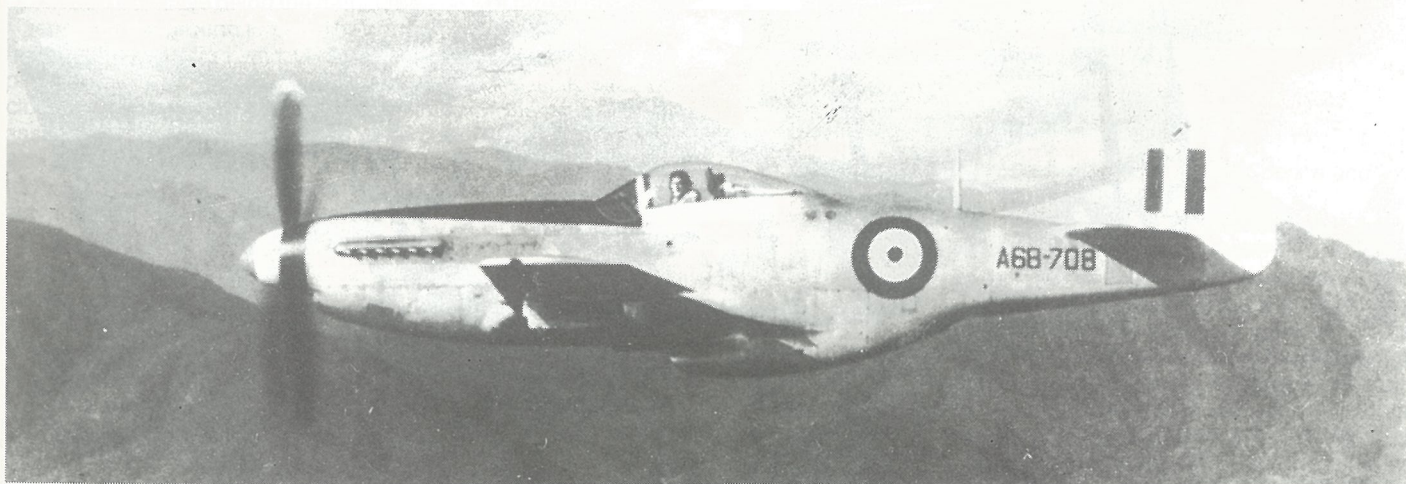
Unfortunately squadron personnel would have to wait another four years before returning back to Australia, as the clouds of war were beginning to gather once more over No. 77 Squadron.



Engine Fitters repairing A68-726 during the F.E.A.F. Gunnery Meet at Yakota (RAAF)



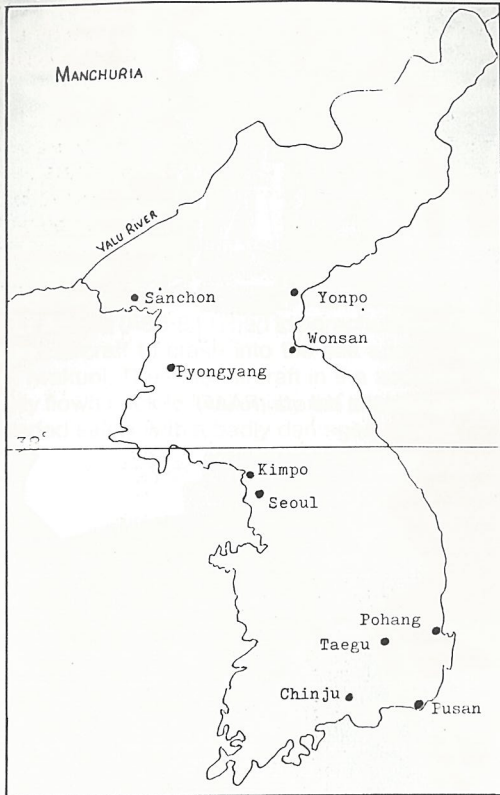
Re-arming a Mustang's .50 calibre guns during the F.E.A.F. Gunnery Meet. (RAAF)



Mustang A68-708 flying over the Japanese Inland Sea early in 1950. (Via RAAF Museum)

1950 - 1956 KOREAN WAR MUSTANG TO METEOR

Map of Korea



1950

When the Japanese annexation of Korea was divided between the USA and the USSR at the end of the World War II, tension began to build up along the 38th parallel. Attempts to unify the country during the late 1940's failed primarily due to the reluctance of the Soviets to take any part in the proceedings, resulting in an "Iron Curtain" effectively being created between the North and South.

During 1948 the Americans sponsored the formation of the Republic of Korea in the region south of the 38th parallel, and the Soviets similarly sponsored the formation of the Korean Peoples Democratic Republic in the North. Each of these new states claimed to be the only legal government on the Korean Peninsula and the regime in the North immediately set about to bring down the South Korean government. Initially this took the form of subversive activities and propaganda but as time went on their methods became more violent and threatening.

In June 1950 the North Korean government presented two proposals for the amalgamation of the North and South Korean Assemblies. These two proposals were very pro-North and were rejected outright by the Southern government. On 25 June, five days after the rejection of the second proposal, the North Korean Peoples Army (NKPA) launched attacks at several points along the border, effectively beginning the Korean war.

On the morning of 25 June the Sergeants Mess at 77 Squadron received a telephone call from the Operations Officer, United States 5th Air Force, informing the squadron of the North Korean attack and warning them that they may be called upon to "help do something about it." Two days later the United Nations Security Council met and declared that the North Korean action constituted



A line up of 77 Squadron Mustangs at Iwakuni early in the Korean War. The inscription on the nose of the near aircraft reads "Swift in Destruction". (AWM)

a breach of the peace and called on Member Nations for assistance. The Australian Government advised 77 Squadron on the last day of June that it was to assist in 'policing' Korea under the command of the US 5th Air Force. Thus, 77 Squadron was to have the distinction of being the first Commonwealth unit to participate in the conflict.

77 Squadron flew its first mission of the Korean War on 2 July providing air cover for USAF C47 transports evacuating wounded back to Japan. The task of escorting transports and bombers was soon discontinued due to an almost total lack of North Korean air activity, as the North was only equipped with second hand Soviet Yak 7 and 9 fighters of WWII vintage.

The squadron's first ground attack mission was flown on 3 July when eight Mustangs, led by WGCDR Spence, attacked targets on the road between Heitaku and Suwon. The attack was a resounding success with the squadron destroying two Locomotives, one truck and six other vehicles; a bridge was also strafed and damaged.

The squadron suffered its first casualty of the conflict on 7 July when SQNLDR G. Strout (A68-757) failed to return from an attack on targets of opportunity along the North coast of Korea. It was assumed he had been shot down by ground fire whilst over the target area.

Because of the vast distances between the RAAF Station at Iwakuni and targets in North Korea it was necessary to stage the aircraft through the Korean airstrip of Taegu. The Mustangs would depart Iwakuni each morning, attack their allotted targets before landing at Taegu for refuelling, rearming, and if possible, staging a further attack on the North Koreans before returning to Iwakuni that night. The squadron's maintenance personnel would work through the night repairing any battle damage and prepare the Mustangs for the next day's operations. The squadron's Dakota would fly maintenance personnel to Taegu every morning for staging duties and return with them at the end of flying each night. The operation worked extremely well, despite its complexity. During the first month of fighting the squadron had flown a total of 206 combat sorties resulting in 1337 flying hours being flown for the loss of one Mustang and pilot.

The war on the ground had not been so successful for the United Nations (UN) forces however, as the Communist advance had continued unchecked. By the end of July the UN forces had been pushed back to an area south of the Nakdong River near the town of Pusan and the desperate struggle to hold the town began.

The hard work of the squadron was acknowledged in July 1950 when 77 Squadron was awarded the coveted Duke of Gloucester Cup. The Cup is awarded annually to the most efficient RAAF squadron and was presented to the squadron by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable R. G. Menzies, who flew to Korea with the Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshall G. Jones, for the presentation on 15 August.

If the first month of the War had been busy for 77 Squadron the second month proved to be hectic. This was due to the UN ground forces requiring immediate assistance with the squadron's main objective being the demanding task of providing Close Support for the ground forces. The squadron's Mustangs worked in close co-operation with Ground Controllers who guided the pilots onto enemy positions. The controller was usually situated close to the enemy and thus the accuracy of the attacks was assured. Often the ground forces were out of view of the enemy and an Air Controller, usually flying a light aircraft such as an Auster, would be used to direct the Mustangs onto their targets. Either way the results were impressive.

A good example of this kind of operation took place on 1 August when four Mustangs, led by FLGOFF T. McCrohan, were tasked with providing close support to the UN forces in the Chingju area. After making contact with the Ground Controller, the Mustangs were directed to attack three Anti Aircraft Gun positions. The Mustangs carried out a strafing run and quickly silenced the enemy guns. The controller then directed the four aircraft to a building which housed a number of .50 calibre machine guns, this was attacked with rockets and then strafed with machine gun fire. The pilots then turned their attention to another enemy gun position 200 yards further West which they again rocketed and strafed but with no visible results. Before departing, the Mustangs strafed

a number of enemy vehicles claiming five trucks and one tank destroyed and a further three trucks probably destroyed.

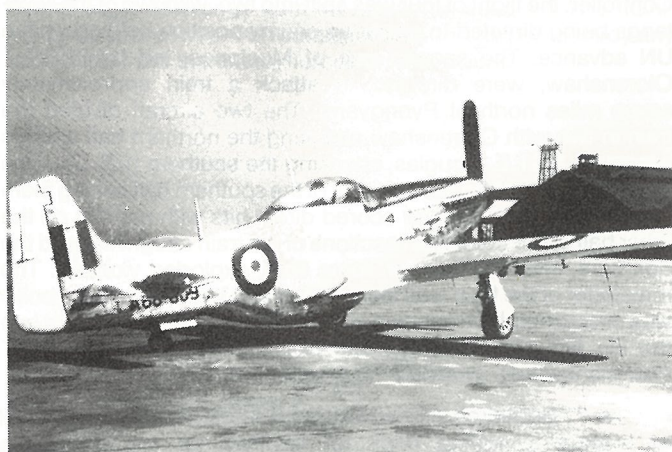
As well as flying Close Support missions, the Mustangs of 77 Squadron were also directed to attack the enemy lines of supply and communication. It was hoped that by destroying these vital targets the enemy would be sufficiently weakened, enabling the UN forces under seige at Pusan to break out. To achieve this aim the squadron's Mustangs carried out attacks on railways, bridges, roads and supply dumps during August. The enemy often used railway tunnels to hide trains and equipment from air attack and these tunnels drew repeated attacks from the rocket armed Mustangs.

During an attack on a town suspected of harbouring enemy troops on 9 August, SGT S. Williamson (A68-775) was hit by anti aircraft fire and found he could not lower his flaps for landing. Williamson crash landed his aircraft at Pohan and was fortunate to walk away uninjured, however, his aircraft had to be written off.

On 22 August, the squadrons CO, WGCDR L. T. Spence was awarded the American Legion of Merit for 'outstanding leadership, devotion to duty and great personal courage'. The decoration was the first to be awarded to a member of the squadron in the Korean conflict.



WINGCDR Lou Spence receives his American Legion of Merit from LTGEN Stratemeyer USAF. Spence was killed three weeks later.



Mustang A68-809, the personal aircraft of Lou Spence and the aircraft he lost his life in. (AWM)

September 1950 began tragically when, on the third, PLTOFF W. P. Harrop (A68-753) crashed five miles from Taegu. Harrop had been part of a four aircraft formation providing cover for B29 bombers of the USAF, attacking the North Korean Capital of Pyongyang. Worse was yet to come when three days later, four Mustangs led by WGCDR Spence attacked the town of Angang-Ni with rockets and machine gun fire. The weather was bad with low clouds around the target making visibility poor and flying dangerous. Spence was seen to commence a steep attacking dive onto the target when his Mustang was apparently hit by light anti aircraft fire and plummeted into the ground killing him instantly. Spence was posthumously awarded the American Airforce Medal.

WGCDR Spence was succeeded in command by SQNLDR R. C. Cresswell, who had first commanded 77 Squadron in the dark days of 1942. On 15 September, in an attempt to split the enemy forces in two, General MacArthur landed the 10th US Marine Corps at Inchon near Seoul. Caught between this force and the U.S. 8th Army fighting its way up from Pusan the North Koreans were at last put on the defensive. The UN forces recaptured the South Korean capital of Seoul on the 17 September and a concerted effort to push the enemy back to the Manchurian border began.

During September 77 Squadron operations gradually moved north with the advancing ground forces. The squadron's aircraft repeatedly struck at the enemy supply lines and communications, in particular the North Korean rail system commanded special attention. The ground forces moved swiftly and by the end of the month 77 Squadron Mustangs were roaming deep into North Korea.

On 22 September the squadron launched an armed reconnaissance mission north to the North Korean town of Sinmak. Eight Mustangs departed at 1125 and proceeded to the village of Nakeong Dong where a suspected NKPA camp was located. The Mustangs destroyed the village with napalm and strafed approximately 500 troops with .50 calibre machine gun fire. The pilots then turned their attention on the town of Sinmak where buildings were attacked and left to burn. A rail tunnel was rocketed and rockets were seen to enter the tunnel mouth and explode. The Mustangs then attacked the town's rail yards where a locomotive was rocketed and four box cars left ablaze. The Mustangs returned to Iwakuni some three hours after taking off making it the longest sortie flown by the squadron at that time of the war.

POHANG

By the end of September the UN forces had crossed the 38th parallel and it was decided that 77 Squadron would move to a Korean airfield where the Mustangs could strike at North Korean targets without having to transit large distances. On 12 October the squadron relocated to Pohang, situated on the east coast of South Korea, and began operations against the enemy from there the following day.

Two aircraft from the squadron carried out a particularly successful mission on 19 October. Four Mustangs, lead by WGCDR Cresswell, set out from Pohang to attack targets close to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang. After making contact with a Ground Controller, the flight of four was split into two, with two of the Mustangs being directed to attack an enemy position holding up the UN advance. The second pair of Mustangs, led by FLTLT I. Olorenshaw, were directed to attack a train approximately seven miles north of Pyongyang. The two aircraft divided the train in two with Olorenshaw attacking the northern half and his wingman, SGT E. Douglas, attacking the southern half. Douglas scored a direct hit on the box cars of the southern half setting them on fire whilst Olorenshaw scored direct hits with napalm on the other half of the train. Both sections of the train caught fire and the box cars, after burning for some time, exploded violently. The remainder of the train was then strafed and the locomotive's boiler was seen to explode sending a cloud of steam some 400 feet into the air. For his leadership and skill during the attack, FLTLT Olorenshaw was awarded the American Air Medal.

No 77 Squadron still had a sizeable force of ground personnel at Iwakuni providing back up facilities for the squadrons operations.

However, to relieve 77 Squadron of this responsibility, No. 91 Wing was formed on 20 October and became operational on 1 November 1950. The Wing on formation comprised of: Headquarters No 91 (Composite) Wing, Headquarters No 77 (Fighter) Squadron, Headquarters No. 30 (Communications) Squadron, Headquarters No. 391 (Base) Squadron and Headquarters No. 491 (Maintenance) Squadron. The Wing was placed under the operational control of the Commander in Chief United Nations Korea and the administrative control of the Commander in Chief BCOF.

By the end of October it appeared that the war would soon be won. On 19 October the North Korean capital was captured by the advancing UN forces as they pushed towards the Yalu River, which forms the border between Korea and Manchuria. The Com-

munist Chinese, who until this time had been supplying the North Koreans with arms and equipment, entered the war in early November 1950, halting the UN forces before they could reach the border in strength.

77 Squadron first clashed with Chinese troops on 1 November when four of the squadron's Mustangs napalmed, rocketed and strafed a large number of Chinese troops who were holding up the advance of the 3rd Division Republic of Korea Army.

YONPO

To enable the squadron to keep as close to the front lines as possible, 77 Squadron moved north to the airfield at Yonpo, known as Konan North on 16 November.

As the Chinese and North Korean forces pushed the UN forces south, the Mustangs of 77 Squadron attacked the enemy transports and flew in close support of the embattled UN forces. For the first time since the start of the conflict 77 Squadron was called upon to support Australian troops who were making a counter attack against Chinese forces at Pakhon. The squadron's Mustangs flew constant attacks against swarms of enemy tanks and vehicles as they moved along the roads leading from Manchuria, inflicting heavy casualties.

On the 24 November General MacArthur ordered the UN forces onto the offensive once again, but the situation was hopeless. The 1st Division of the US Marines found themselves surrounded by seven enemy divisions, and for the first time in their history were, as their General put it, ordered to advance in another direction.

As the UN ground forces retreated back to South Korea all available aircraft moved to the airfield at Yonpo inside the Ham-bung - Hungnam defence perimeter. At Yonpo tension mounted as the enemy advanced ever closer to the airfield. All personnel were ordered to carry fire-arms and to prepare to defend the base. Bad weather was hampering operations at snow bound Yonpo, and the ground crews worked relentlessly in sub arctic conditions to keep the Mustangs airworthy. Finally word was received to abandon the airfield and on 3 December, the squadrons aircraft carried out their last mission from Yonpo completing it by landing at the squadrons new base at Pusan. The squadron's ground crews and their equipment were hurriedly evacuated from Yonpo by airlift and sea and transported to Pusan.



SGT Henry Bessell escaped this accident at Pusan on 3 January 1951 with a bruised shoulder, A68-791 however was written off. (RAAF)

PUSAN

From the airfield at Pusan, known locally as Dog Patch, 77 Squadron's aircraft struck hard at the enemy's supply lines destroying many trucks, railroads and bridges. The enemy struck back at the Mustangs with concentrated anti-aircraft fire and many aircraft returned to base with tell tale bullet holes. The squadron lost its sixth pilot on 22 December when SGT D. Ellis (A68-726) was shot down by ground fire whilst carrying out a reconnaissance mission near Pyongyang. A week later SQNLDR Cresswell had a lucky escape when a bullet passed through the canopy of his Mustang as he strafed an enemy village.

On 4 January 1951, the Chinese armies captured Seoul, the South Korean capital, which had now changed hands for the third time. 77 Squadron suffered a further casualty when SGT C. Stephens (A68-765) on 6 January crashed on flat ground near Munsan during an armed reconnaissance sortie. There was no sign of enemy activity in the area and the cause of the crash remains a mystery.

The squadron was assigned an important and hazardous mission on 19 January when it was ordered to attack the Chinese Communist Forces headquarters in Pyongyang. For the first time during the conflict the squadron would fly as a complete squadron using 12 Mustangs to carry out the attack. The squadron was divided into two sections, the first consisting of six aircraft armed with two 500lb G.P. bombs and four rockets, and the second comprising six aircraft armed with two napalm bombs and four rockets. The first section opened the attack by dive bombing the group of buildings scoring four direct hits, four near misses and four misses. The second section then attacked with both its napalm and rockets scoring four direct hits with napalm and numerous hits with the rockets which were fired in a salvo. The enemy put up a very heavy and accurate anti aircraft barrage which was quickly silenced by the first section who strafed the gun positions after having made their bombing run. Unfortunately, the enemy had already inflicted their damage on the attacking Mustangs with SGT C. Howe (A68-799) having the elevator of his aircraft damaged.

Immediately after his attack on the target FLTLT G. Harvey (A68-772) called up that his aircraft was losing power and that he was going to attempt to crash land. Harvey then executed a successful wheels up landing on an island in the frozen Taedong River just north west of the North Korean capital. The following day a large search was carried out by four of the squadron's Mustangs in the hope that Harvey may have by some change evaded capture and might still be hiding near his aircraft. The search failed to find trace of Harvey who had actually been taken prisoner soon after landing. FLTLT Harvey spent the rest of the war in appalling conditions in a Chinese P.O.W. camp being released on 28 August 1953. He later commanded 77 Squadron in Malaya flying Sabre jet fighters.

In mid January the UN retreat ended 25 miles south of Seoul and they began a slow push north to recapture the South Korean capital. On 29 January, 77 Squadron contributed twelve aircraft to a 40 aircraft formation tasked with destroying enemy bivouac areas and villages in the Yangpyong area. The attack left eight villages burning fiercely and killed scores of enemy troops. Another strike was carried out against enemy supply dumps near Chuchon

on 13 February resulting in the destruction of a large quantity of enemy supplies and vehicles.

The following day was a black one for the squadron with two pilots failing to return from an aborted close support mission. Bad weather had prevented a section of four Mustangs from contacting their Ground Controller and the decision was made to jettison their napalm and return to base. As they entered a cloud bank the section divided into two flights of two aircraft and soon after a call was heard over the radio, "I am spinning and am going to bail out." When the first flight broke through the cloud they found no sign of the other aircraft and it was assumed that WOFF S. Squires (A68-796) and FLTLT K. Matthews (A68-812) had suffered a mid-air collision. An exhaustive search was carried out the following day without result, and neither man was ever seen again.

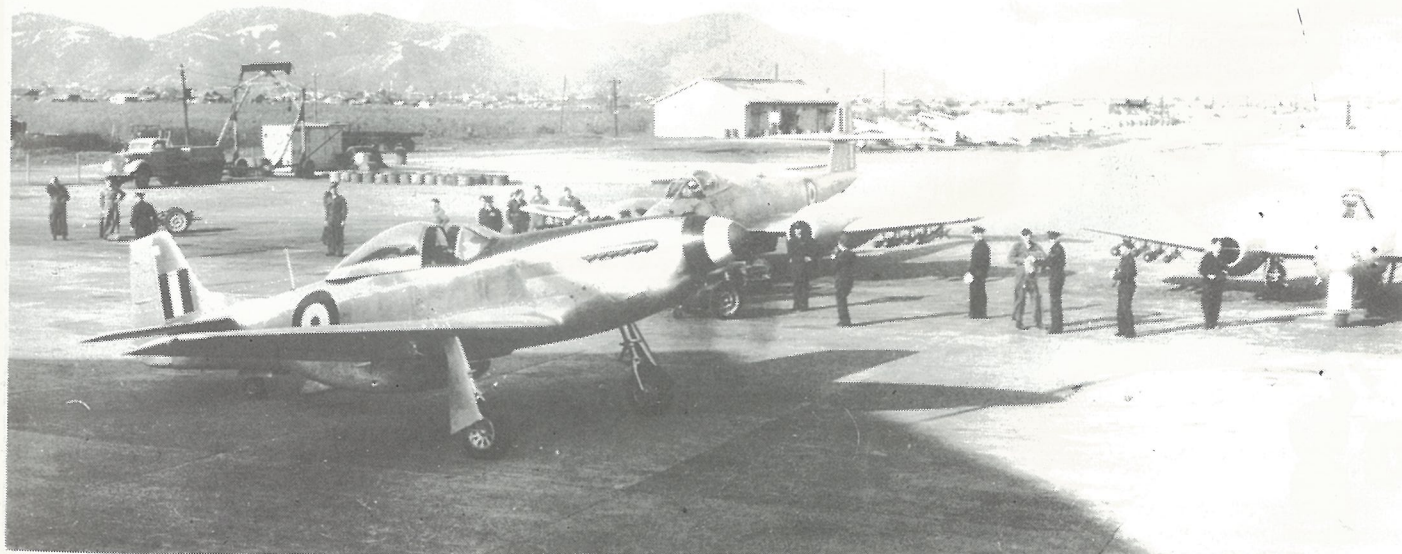
The squadron continued its run of bad luck when, on the 29 February, SGT K. Royal (A68-704) was killed as he attempted to crash land his Mustang after it lost oil pressure during a patrol.

Seoul was retaken by the UN forces on the 15 March 1951. 77 Squadron continued to give support to the advancing troops and on the day Seoul was retaken, the squadron attacked an enemy village north of Kimpo destroying twelve buildings. SGT Meggs (A68-737) suffered a loss of oil pressure during the attack and was forced to execute a wheels up landing at Kimpo airfield. Kimpo at this time was very close to the front line of fighting and Meggs had to be rescued from the airfield by helicopter.

The UN forces finally crossed the 38th Parallel for the second time on the last day of March.

The squadron suffered yet another casualty on 19 March 1951. Whilst carrying out an attack on a village near Wonsan, SGT H.Strange (A68-782) reported that he had been hit by flak and he was losing oil pressure fast. His flight leader, PLTOFF L. Klafter, ordered him to head east and bail out over Wonsan Bay. Strange headed out to sea and after jettisoning his canopy bailed out of his crippled Mustang. Klafter observed Strange vacating his aircraft and was horrified to see him plummet into the water, as his parachute failed to open. A helicopter from a nearby USN aircraft carrier was quickly on the scene and advised there was no sign of Strange.

On 23 March the squadron participated in the largest parachute operation of the Korean war, code named "Operation Tomahawk." Eight Mustangs from the squadron escorted 120 USAF transport aircraft over the Munsanni area and helped destroy any opposition from the enemy forces on the ground.



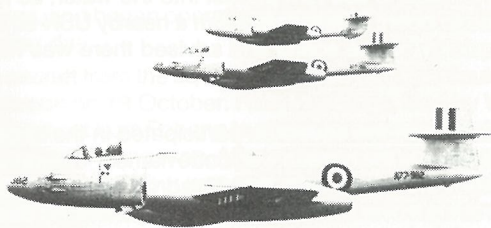
The last of the squadrons Mustangs departs the flight line at Iwakuni. (AWM)

The last few months had taken quite a toll on the squadron and it was with some relief that, on 4 April, the squadron received the news that it was to withdraw to Iwakuni and begin conversion onto the long awaited Gloster Meteor jet fighters. The squadron flew its last operational Mustang sortie on 6 April, when four of the squadron's aircraft had to abort an attack on a North Korean road due to bad weather. The squadron moved to Japan the following day and prepared to convert onto the new aircraft. Shortly after arriving in Japan the squadron suffered its last Mustang casualty when SGT R. Robson (A68-125) was killed in a flying accident at Iwakuni.

(77 Sqn).



Gloster Meteors on the deck of HMS Warrior 24 February 1951. The Mk7 Trainer in the picture, WA732, eventually became A77-305 and later A77-702 and is now kept by the RAAF Museum Pt Cook.



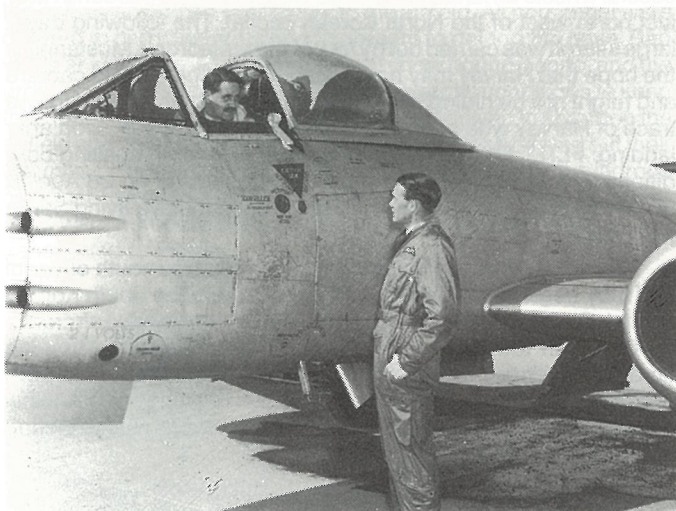
Two Mk8 and a single Mk7 Meteor fly in formation during a training flight over Japan. (RAAF)

THE GLOSTER METEOR MK8

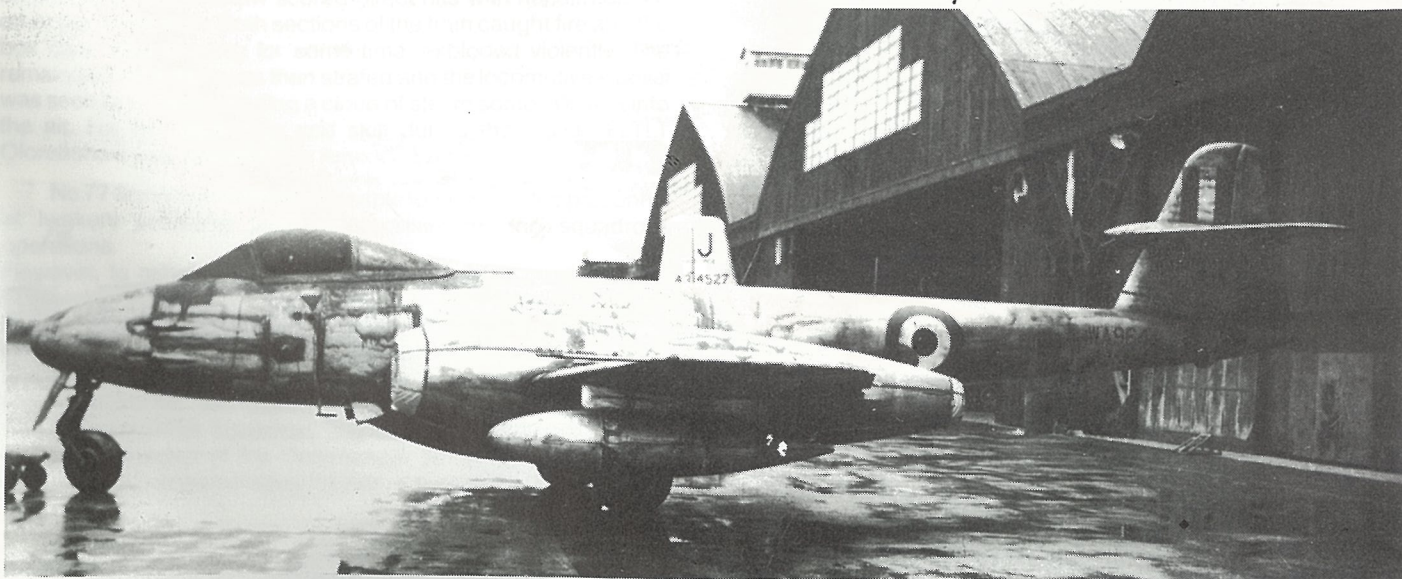
On 24 February 1951, the light aircraft carrier HMS Warrior arrived at Iwakuni with fifteen Gloster Meteor MK8 jet fighters and two Meteor MK7 two seat jet trainers destined for 77 squadron on her deck. After anchoring approximately one mile off shore, the aircraft were off loaded, transported to RAAF Station Iwakuni where an acceptance check was carried out and they were prepared for flight. Four experienced Royal Air Force Meteor pilots, led by FLTLT Max Scannell were posted to 77 Squadron to test fly the new aircraft and to convert the Australian pilots onto the type. The first RAAF pilot to convert to the new jet was SQNLDR Dick Cresswell, who had already completed a jet conversion course on the F80 Shooting Star with the USAF during January. The remaining twenty Meteor MK8 fighters arrived on the 23 March with one aircraft being lost enroute between England and Singapore.

77 Squadron's conversion to Meteors began in earnest on 5 May when a programme of instructional lectures began for both aircrew and ground crew. Due to a lack of two seat Meteor trainers, the few aircraft the squadron did possess were forced to fly constantly to keep up with the hectic pace of the conversion course.

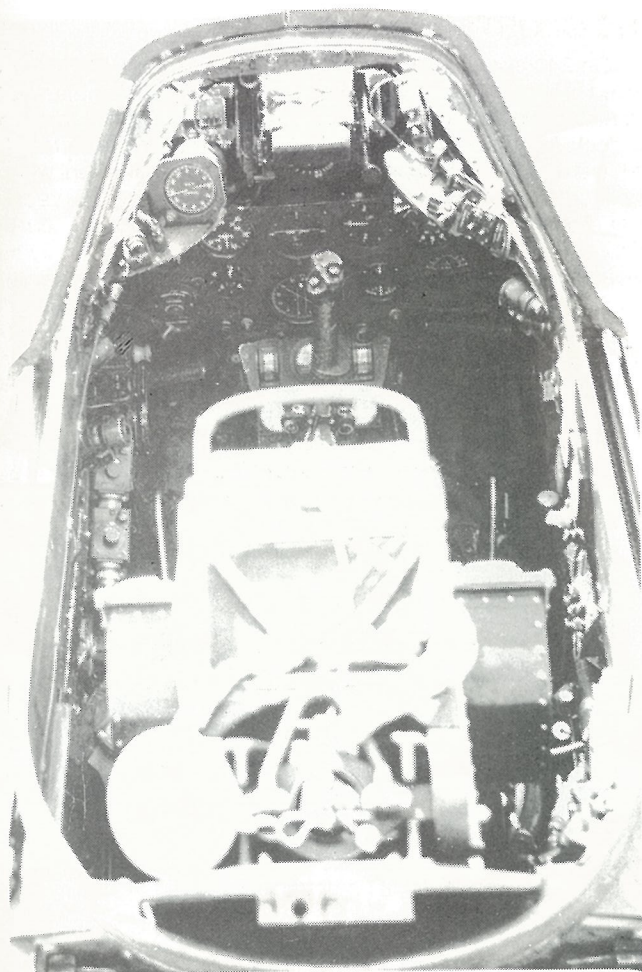
On 7 May the squadron lost its first Meteor when SGT Bessel (A77-735) became lost in bad weather and ran out of fuel off Iwakuni. Bessel managed to successfully ditch the Meteor in the sea and paddled ashore in his inflatable dingy. The wreckage of the aircraft, still basically in one piece, was raised by floating crane the following day and taken back to Iwakuni where it was scrapped.



FLTLT Max Scannell checking out SQNLDR Dick Cresswell in a Meteor during the conversion course. (77 Sqn).



Meteor Mk8 WA964 after arrival at Iwakuni, still covered with inhibitor. This aircraft became A77-17 and ended its days as a fire fighting trainer at Laverton in the early 1960's. (77 Sqn).



The cockpit of a Meteor Mk8 (RAAF)

In early May an F86 Sabre from the USAF was detached to Iwakuni to fly a series of performance comparison tests between itself and the Meteor in order to help determine as to which role the Meteor was best suited, Ground Attack or Interceptor. After two days of aircraft testing it was concluded that the Meteor had shown that it had a superior rate of climb and rate of turn, even though it was generally slower than the Sabre. Unfortunately the Meteor had also shown one major performance fault in that it lacked manoeuvrability at high altitude. An argument erupted between the Australians and the Americans as to how the new aircraft was to be employed with Cresswell and Scannell arguing that although the Meteor had obvious draw backs it should be used as an interceptor. After discussing the matter with US 5th Air Force Headquarters, it was decided to try out the Meteor as an interceptor and on 2 June the squadron was ordered back to Korea. The move was delayed however, due to the USAF insisting that the Meteors be fitted with a Radio Compass before being allowed to fly in Korea.

A freak accident on 14 June was to leave the squadron's engineering staff puzzled. SGT Stoney had just taken off in WA944 (the aircraft had yet to acquire an RAAF serial number) to conduct an acceptance test flight. A few minutes after take off ground crew members observed Stoney descending by parachute with the Meteor flying circles around him. The aircraft flew around him five times, at one stage coming to within 20 feet of him, before crashing into a hill side. The pilot landed safely but when quizzed about the reason for ejection, he claimed that he had not ejected from the aircraft but that the ejection seat had gone off on its own accord. One minute he had been leisurely flying along and a few seconds later he had found himself hanging from his parachute. The seat was found a few miles from the main wreckage but after careful inspection no reason for the 'automatic' ejection could be found.



The 77 Squadron flight line at Iwakuni during the wet season May 1951. (RAAF)



Engine repairs being carried out at Iwakuni shortly before the squadron departed for Korea. (RAAF)



77 Squadron setting up camp at Kimpo, the mud was a constant problem. (77 Sqn).

KIMPO

At the end of July 1951 the squadron returned to Korea and began operations from their new base at Kimpo north of Seoul. The move to Kimpo had been made in the middle of the Korean wet season and the area was a sea of mud, making living conditions most uncomfortable. The airfield was shared with the USAF 8th Fighter Wing who were responsible for providing the Australians with meals and base facilities.

The squadron flew its first operational jet mission on Sunday 10 July when 16 Meteors were tasked to fly a fighter sweep in the vicinity of the Yalu River. The squadron had to maintain 18 aircraft operational each morning and evening and the ground crews worked long hours to keep the 16 aircraft with two spares on line.



Pilots returning from a combat sortie over Korea. (AWM)

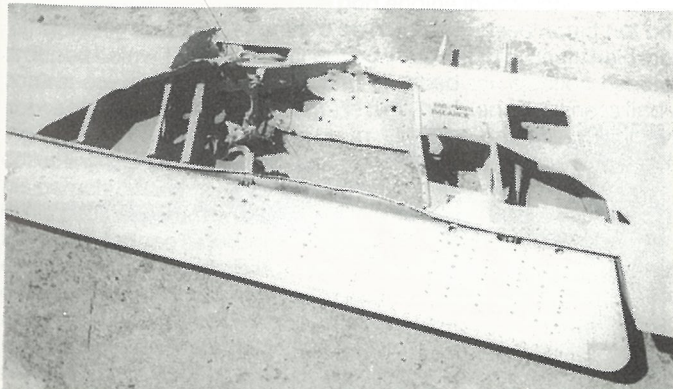
77 Squadron suffered its first casualties since converting onto jet aircraft on 22 August when two aircraft were involved in a mid-air collision. A section of twelve Meteors were returning from a fighter sweep and had just initiated the change from Battle formation to Line Astern when SGT R. Lamb (A77-354), a RAF exchange pilot, collided with SGT R. Mitchell (A77-128). Both aircraft crashed eight miles north of Kimpo, killing the two pilots.



SQNLDR Cresswell gives last minute instructions to pilots before taking off on a mission on August 18 1951. (RAAF)

The entry of China into the War resulted in a complete change in the status of the Communist's air power. The Chinese had introduced a high performance jet fighter to the theatre in the form of the Mig-15. The Mig had a performance equal to and in some cases better than the Sabre at high altitude, but suffered from a tendency to enter a spin if not manoeuvred carefully at medium altitudes. Against the Mig, the Meteor, if caught at altitude, did not stand a chance. Up until this point the fighter sweeps carried out by 77 Squadron had yet to confront the Mig-15 in combat and the squadron's pilots were starting to become restless at the lack of air opposition.

The first encounter with the communist jets finally came on 25 August, when eight aircraft, providing cover for a USAF RF80 reconnaissance jet, sighted four Migs on patrol. FLTLT Scannell fired at one of the enemy jets at extreme range but was unable to claim any hits, as the Migs flew back across the Yalu River where it was forbidden for UN aircraft to fly.



The damage sustained by the port aileron of A77-616 during air combat. (77 Sqn).



SQNLDR Dick Wilson walks from A77-616 after inspecting the damage to his aircraft. (77 Sqn).

Four days later the squadron had their second chance to fight it out with Mig-15's, however, this time the odds were stacked heavily against the Australians. Eight Meteors, led by SQNLDR Dick Wilson (the ex WWII CO of 76 Squadron and father of the present CO of 77 Squadron), were carrying out a routine fighter sweep near Chongju when they were attacked by over 30 Migs. SQNLDR Wilson put his aircraft into a dive and was able to position himself behind one of the enemy jets. He had just opened fire on the enemy aircraft when his Meteor (A77-616) was hit by cannon fire from both above and below. Wilson broke off the engagement and nursed his damaged Meteor home where it was found that his port aileron had been almost shot away and another round had entered the rear fuselage, ricocheted across the top of the radio compass and entered the rear main fuel tank approximately 20 inches from the top of the tank.



WOFF R. Guthrie in the cockpit of A77-721, the aircraft he was flying when he was shot down. (RAAF)

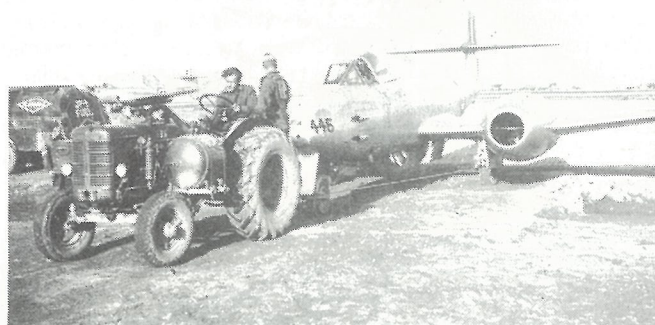
At the end of the battle it was also discovered that WOFF Guthrie (A77-721) was missing, although no one sighted him go down, an American flying in a Sabre at low level reported seeing an aircraft spiralling down on fire and a parachute descending. Guthrie was captured and interned as a POW for the next two years.

SQNLDR Wilson had another lucky escape on 9 September when his aircraft was hit by a 20 mm armour piercing round in the cockpit. Wilson had been attacking ground targets near Pyong-tang when his aircraft came under severe anti-aircraft fire and was hit. On return to Kimpo it was found that the round had entered the cockpit just below the windscreen before breaking up injuring Wilson in the arm and shoulder. Not surprisingly, the squadron Medical Officer had great trouble keeping him on the ground for the following four weeks!

The squadron, now under the command of WGCDR G. Steege had another inconclusive battle with enemy Migs on 26 September. A formation of twelve Meteors engaged a large number of Migs over Anju with the Migs diving through the Australian formation scoring hits on Meteor A77-949 before the pilot, FSGT E. Armitt, had a chance to break formation. As the dog-fight continued, two Migs dove once more through the Meteor formation and while the leader broke for the safety of Yalu River, his wing man broke in the opposite direction and into the Meteor's sights. FLTLT C. Thomas headed the Mig off as it tried to turn back towards the Yalu forcing it further south. Finally the Mig pilot, made his escape by turning into the sun, although it was considered doubtful that he had enough fuel to make it back to his base. During the flight, FLTLT Dawson, managed to fire two long bursts of cannon fire into one of the Mig's wings. Several pilots claimed that they saw wreckage and what was thought to be fuel streaming back from the Mig as Dawson's cannon rounds impacted into the enemy aircraft. Subsequently Dawson was credited with probably damaging the Mig, this being the squadron's first successful jet combat claim.

During this period the airfield at Kimpo received a number of nuisance raids from enemy light aircraft. The raids were normally carried out by a lone single engined aircraft such as a Polikarpov PO-2 biplane trainer armed with a couple of small fragmentation bombs. This type of raid was most common at night during a full moon period thus the raiders were nick named 'Bed Check Charlie'. During one such raid on 23 September 1951, Meteor A77-510, which had been parked near some USAF Sabres, received minor shrapnel damage when a bomb exploded nearby. On the average very little damage was caused by these raids.

On 1 November the squadron was awarded the Korean Presidential Unit Citation for "Exceptionally meritorious service and heroism" on behalf of the Republic of Korea. 7 days later it was also announced that SQNLDR Dick Wilson had been awarded the first British Distinguished Flying Cross of the Korean War.



Ground crew tow Meteor A77-446 to the maintenance area at Kimpo late in 1951. (RAAF)



FLGOFF Ken Blight 1951. (RAAF)



FLGOFF Bruce Gogerly after shooting down the squadrons first Mig. (RAAF)



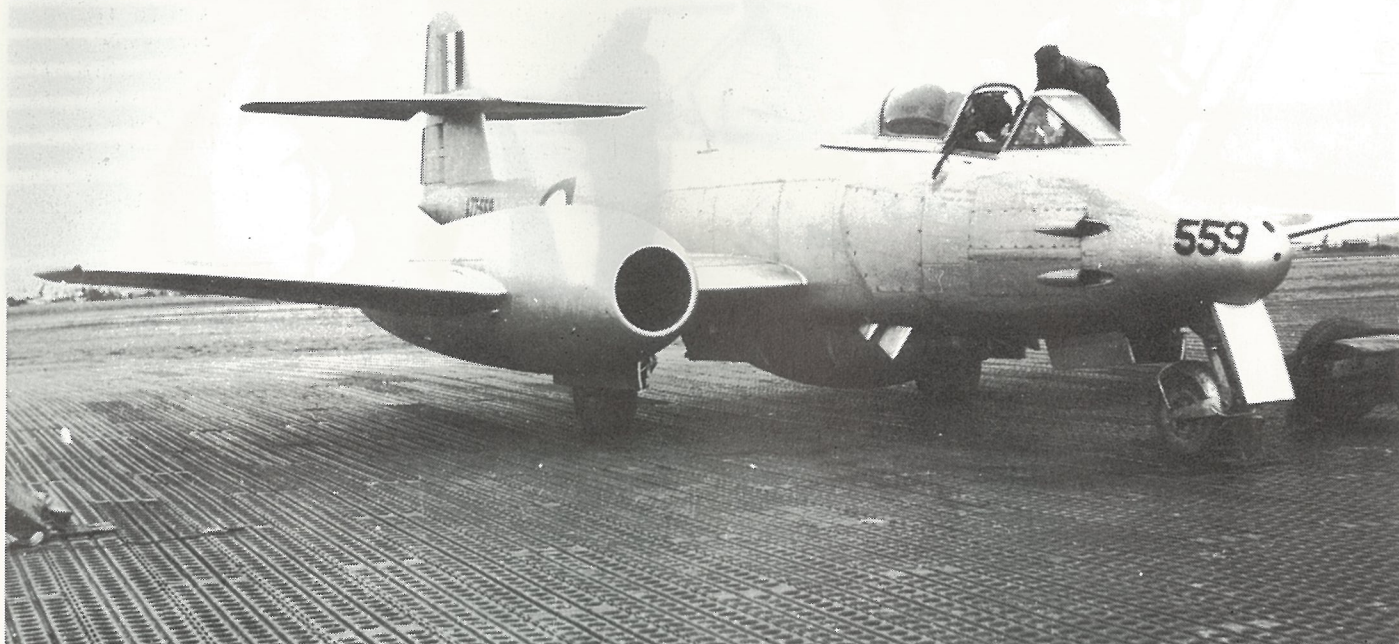
The crash site of A77-587. (77 Sqn).

77 Squadron finally achieved its first confirmed Mig-15 'Kill' on 1 December 1951 when twelve Meteors were engaged by over 50 Migs in an epic dog fight over Pyongyang. In the opening attack two Meteors were damaged with one, A77-559 flown by FSGT Bill Middlemiss, being forced to return to Kimpo. FLGOFF B. Gogerly (A77-17) latched onto the tail of one of the enemy jets and watched excitedly as cannon rounds from his Meteor sent pieces flying from the Migs fuselage, sending it crashing to the ground in a ball of flame. Several other Meteor pilots managed to get in shots at Migs, and another aircraft was seen to crash into the ground. The squadron was credited with the kill, as a whole, as in the confusion of the battle it was not sure as to who had shot it down.

On 11 November the squadron was returning from an aborted fighter sweep along 'Mig Alley' when SGT D. Robertson (A77-959) suddenly broke formation and collided with A77-587 piloted by FLGOFF K. Blight. Robertson's aircraft entered a spin and crashed deep inside enemy territory, with the pilot failing to bail out. Blight's Meteor also entered a spin but due to the pilot's quick reactions the aircraft was brought under control. On closer scrutiny, Blight found that four feet of his port wing had been torn off. It was only by flying with full left rudder and adjusting the power settings so that the starboard engine was at idle and the port engine was at maximum revs was he able to maintain level flight. The effort involved in trying to keep the damaged wing up and prevent the aircraft from entering another spin was considerable, and twice Blight thought it best to bail out. However, he was still too far behind enemy lines to ensure his survival and he continued on. On the second occasion Blight had got as far as jettisoning the cockpit canopy when the base Radio Controller at Kimpo bluffed him into believing he was nearly home and that he should keep going. The base eventually came in sight and Blight began to throttle back in preparation for a wheels up landing. Unfortunately every time the pilot eased back on the port engine the Meteor began to roll violently and tried to enter a spin, the air speed could not be dropped below 180 knots. Accepting the inevitable, Blight held the control column with his knee and grabbed the ejection handle above his head with both hands. He regained consciousness finding his legs flopping in the breeze, quickly collecting his wits he released himself from his seat and deployed his parachute. Blight returned to base unharmed except for a pain in his backside that he experienced whenever he sat down. Blight is acknowledged as being the first pilot to have made a successful ejection from a Martin Baker ejection seat under fully operational conditions. WOFF Guthrie could also claim as being the first to use an ejection seat operationally. Unfortunately due to his internment in a POW camp, there was no way to verify this fact, thus Ken Blight received the official acknowledgement. As for A77-587, its wreckage was found in a paddyfield with the body of a Korean farm labourer lying close by!



SGT Vance Drummond shortly before becoming a prisoner of war. WGCDR Drummond was killed in the crash of Mirage A3-77 off Newcastle 17 May 1967.



FSGT Bill Middlemiss being strapped into A77-559. (RAAF)

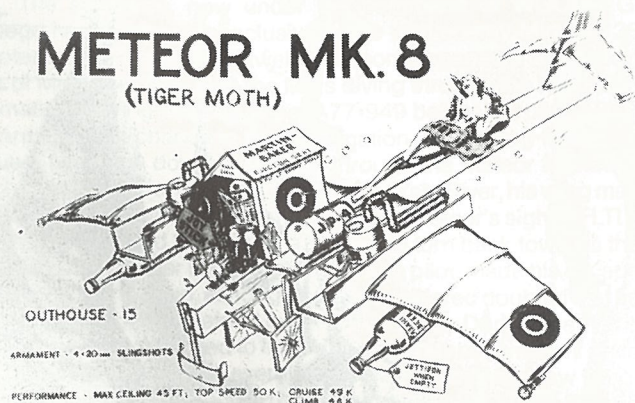
A radio check was called and all the Australian pilots answered in. However, ten minutes later when the order was given to break contact and head for home three Meteors were found to be missing and it is assumed they were taken by surprise as they turned for home. Of the three pilots, two were captured after having ejected from their aircraft; SGT B. Thompson (A77-29) and SGT V. Drummond (A77-251). The other pilot, FSGT E. Armitt (A77-949), was killed when his aircraft was shot down. The squadron had its first Mig kills, but had paid a high price.

With the arrival of a second USAF Sabre Wing to the area it was apparent that the role of the Meteor would soon be changed. The air battle of December 1, with the loss of three Meteors, showed the superiority of the Russian fighter and that it would be foolish to continue using the Meteor on the fighter sweeps into 'Mig Alley'. A song often sung in the squadron at the time summed up the situation aptly, "All I want for Christmas is my wings swept back". Thus in January 1952, 77 Squadron was assigned the role of area and airfield defence for both Kimpo and Suwon, leaving the Sabres to patrol the skies over North Korea.

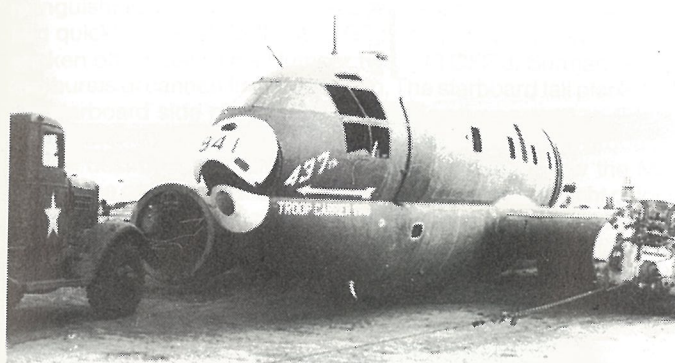


WgCDR Gordon Steege walks from his aircraft after a combat sortie late in 1951, the expression on his face says it all (RAAF).

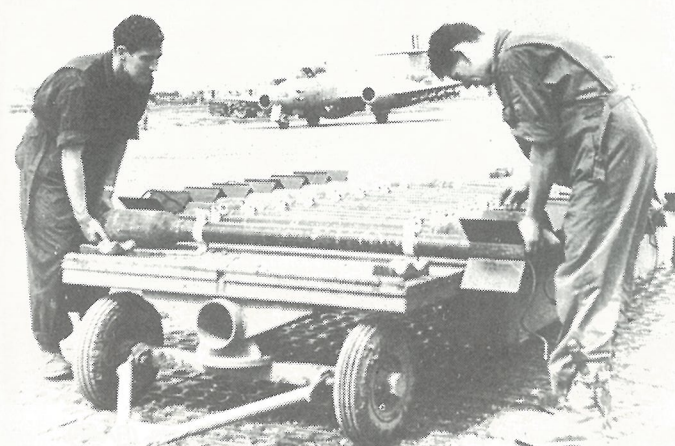
METEOR MK. 8 (TIGER MOTH)



The American view of the Meteor. (Unknown)



A crashed USAF C46 is dragged to the 77 Squadron flight line where it was converted by the squadron into a flight line hut. (77 Sqn).



Armourers prepare 60lb HE rockets for fittment to Meteors at Kimpo. (RAAF).

1952

During January, the squadron also adopted the role of ground attack and it was in this role that the Meteor was finally able to find its niche in the Korean conflict. The squadron flew its first ground attack sortie on the 8th of the month when four Meteors rocketed a water tower near a communist held town. Ground attack missions demanded that the Meteors be flown low over hostile territory and the accuracy of the enemy anti-aircraft weapons were soon realised when two of the four aircraft on that first mission were hit by light flak.

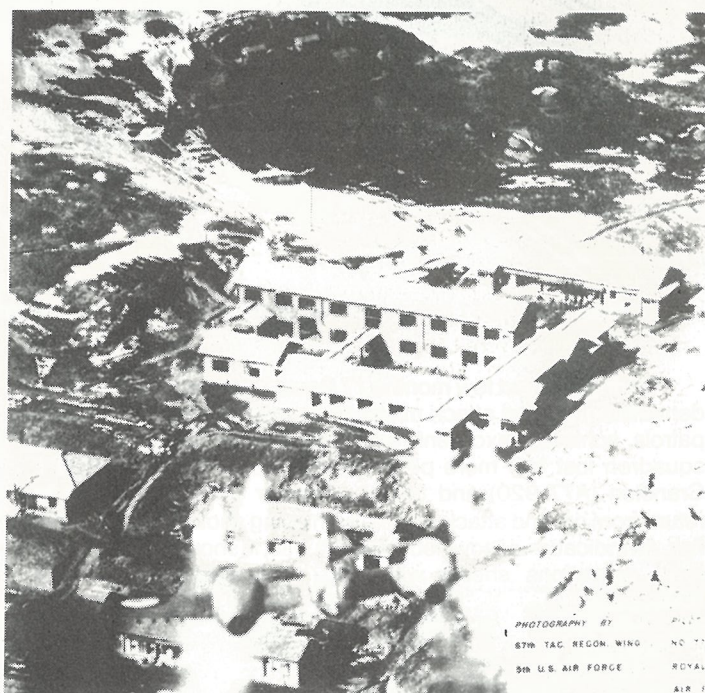
FLTLT V. Turner had a lucky escape from serious injury on 24 January when his aircraft A77-741, suffered an engine failure and crashed whilst turning to make its landing approach. Although the Meteor was totally written off, Turner managed to escape the wreckage with only minor injuries.



The wreck of A77-741 from which FLTLT Val Turner escaped with only minor injuries. (RAAF).

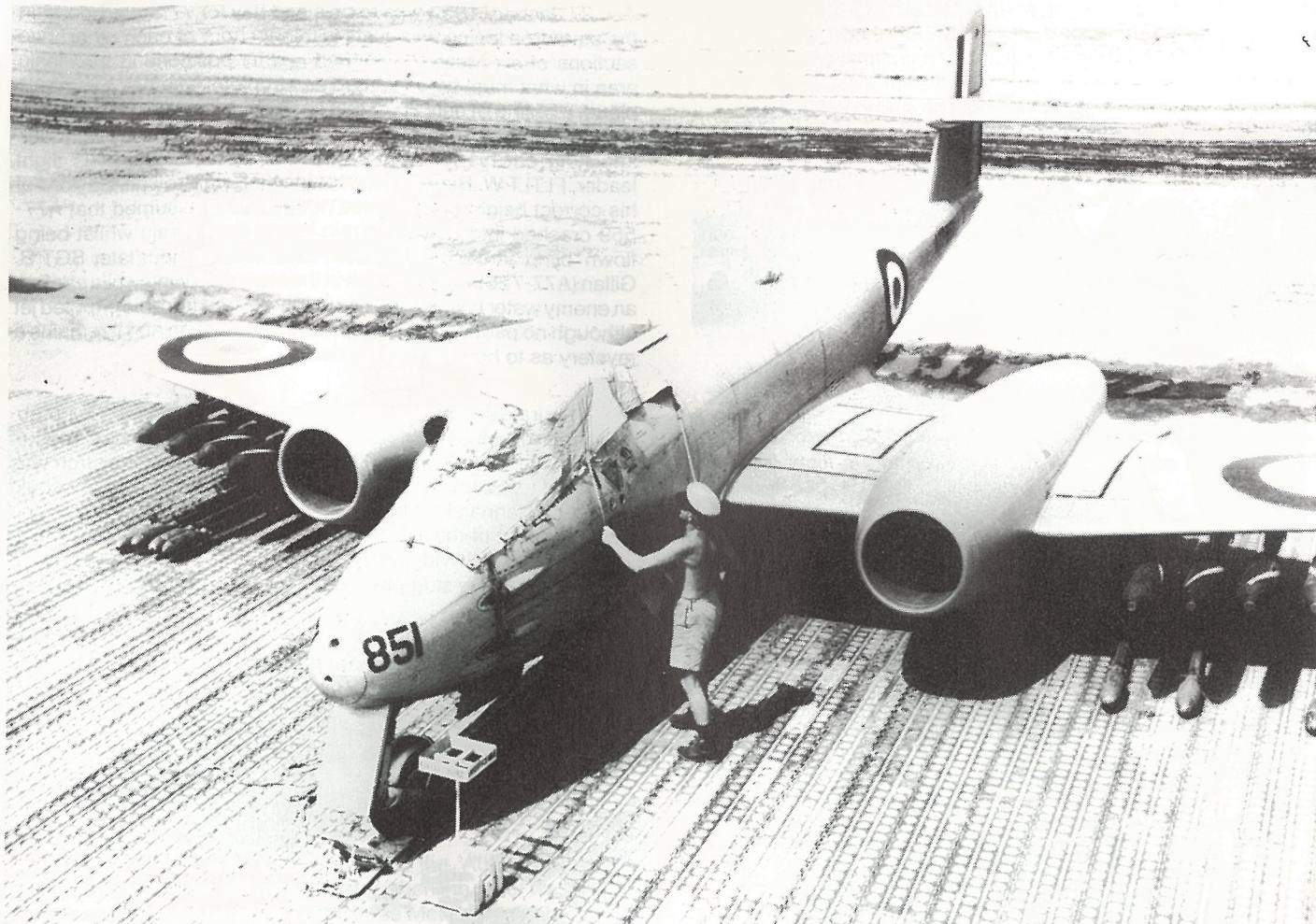
27 January 1952 was to be a sad day for 77 Squadron, with the squadron losing two pilots within an hour of each other. Two sections of six Meteors attacked enemy positions in the Haeju area in what must be described as atrocious weather; ten tenths cloud, a ceiling of only 2500 feet and light snow. During a strafing run, FLTLT M. Browne-Gaylord (A77-559) was hit by light flak knocking out his Air Speed Indicator and Altimeter. His flight leader, FLTLT W. Bennett attempted to inform Browne-Gaylord of his correct height but received no reply. It is assumed that A77-559 crashed into rugged terrain inland from Heaju whilst being flown 'blind' in the bad weather. Less than an hour later SGT B. Gillan (A77-726) was hit by flak in the starboard wing while strafing an enemy water tower. Gillan probably ejected from his crippled jet although no parachute was seen by his wing man and it remains a mystery as to how he met his death.

Accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire was becoming a major problem for the Australian pilots. On 6 February it claimed yet another Meteor, A77-616 flown by FLTLT J. Hannan. A large search was launched for Hannan but no sign of either he or the Meteor could be found. Hannan had been captured by the North Koreans and spent the rest of the war in a POW camp. One of the searching pilots, FLGOFF R. Wittman (A77-774) had a lucky escape when an enemy .25 calibre slug passed through the aircraft's seat without touching him.



WGCDR Ron Susans fires a salvo of four napalm rockets at a group of North Korean buildings on 8 February 1952. (AWM).

The RAAF pilots found that the accuracy of conventional bombing in the mountainous Korean terrain left something to be desired and had a definite preference for the air to ground rocket. During early 1952 Australian engineers perfected a design for an air to ground napalm rocket and the first examples arrived at 77 Squadron in February of that year. The Americans showed considerable interest in the new weapon and on 8 February, when the napalm rocket was first used in combat, the USAF provided an RF80 reconnaissance aircraft to record the results on film for later analysis. The squadron's new CO, WGCDR Ron Susans, led four Meteors armed with the new rockets in an attack on several buildings with 75 percent of the rockets scoring hits on the targets resulting in numerous fires. The new weapon was to prove extremely useful against enemy vehicle convoys and troop concentrations, and soon became the standard under wing weapon carried by RAAF Meteors, with each aircraft capable of carrying eight rockets.

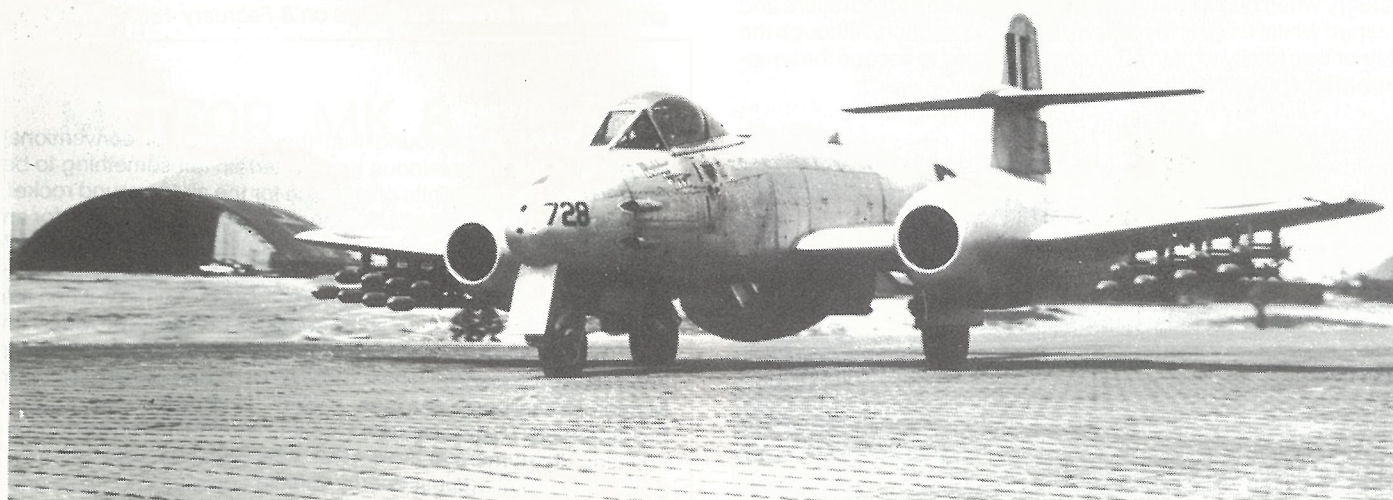


Meteor A77-851 being covered at the end of the days operations. The aircraft is armed with eight napalm rockets. (RAAF).

During the next few months 77 Squadron continued to fly the demanding ground attack missions as well as the area defence patrols, achieving excellent results despite the high losses. The squadron lost two more pilots during March with both SGT I. Cranston (A77-920) and SGT L. Cowper (A77-120) failing to return from ground attack sorties, both being shot down by enemy flak. An indication of how hectic March was, is shown in the squadron's operations sheets with 1007 individual sorties being flown.

The Communist ground forces soon began to feel the effects of the continuous attacks on their supply lines, and by early May began to send their Migs south in the hope of intercepting the raiders before they could reach their targets. Once more the Meteors were to clash with the Migs.

On 4 May a patrol of two Meteors sighted a flight of nine Mig-15's south-west of Pyongyang. The Migs immediately launched an attack, but on this occasion the odds lay with the Meteors. The



A77-728 taxiing with 16 HE rockets under its wings. Unfortunately these double tiered rocket rails were in short supply and were only fitted to a few aircraft. (RAAF)

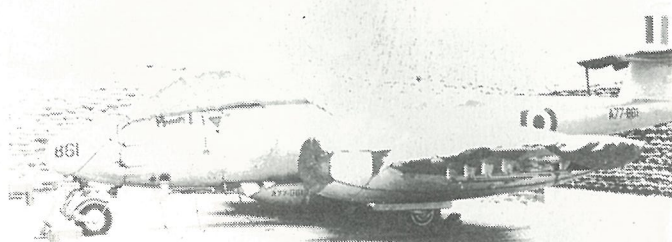
Migs were forced to fight at the Meteors low altitude, thus relinquishing the Migs high altitude performance advantage. A Mig quickly latched itself onto SGT E. Myers tail but was quickly shaken off, enabling his Number two, PLTOFF J. Surman, to fire two bursts of cannon fire into the Mig. The starboard tail plane and the starboard side of the Migs exhaust port was seen to disintegrate in a flash of flame and Surman was credited with probably having destroyed the aircraft as neither Australian saw the Mig impact the ground. Four days later, in the same area, a flight of four Meteors were intercepted by two Migs. Once again, the Meteors had a height advantage and PLTOFF Bill Simmonds was able to make a firing pass on one of the enemy jets. The Mig entered an uncontrollable spin and the pilot was seen to bail out over friendly territory, resulting in the squadron's ninth Mig claim since the beginning of the war.

The Mig pilots gained their revenge on the 2 October when FLG OFF O. Cruickshank, a RAF exchange pilot with the squadron, was shot down in a surprise attack. A flight of four Meteors had carried out a successful rocket strike and were returning to Kimpo when two Migs jumped them from the 8 o'clock position. SGT K. Murray received a 37mm hit in the port tail pipe during the Migs first pass and observed Cruickshank bailing out of A77-436 over Cho'do. Unfortunately Cruickshank's parachute failed to open and he fell into the sea with no chance of survival.

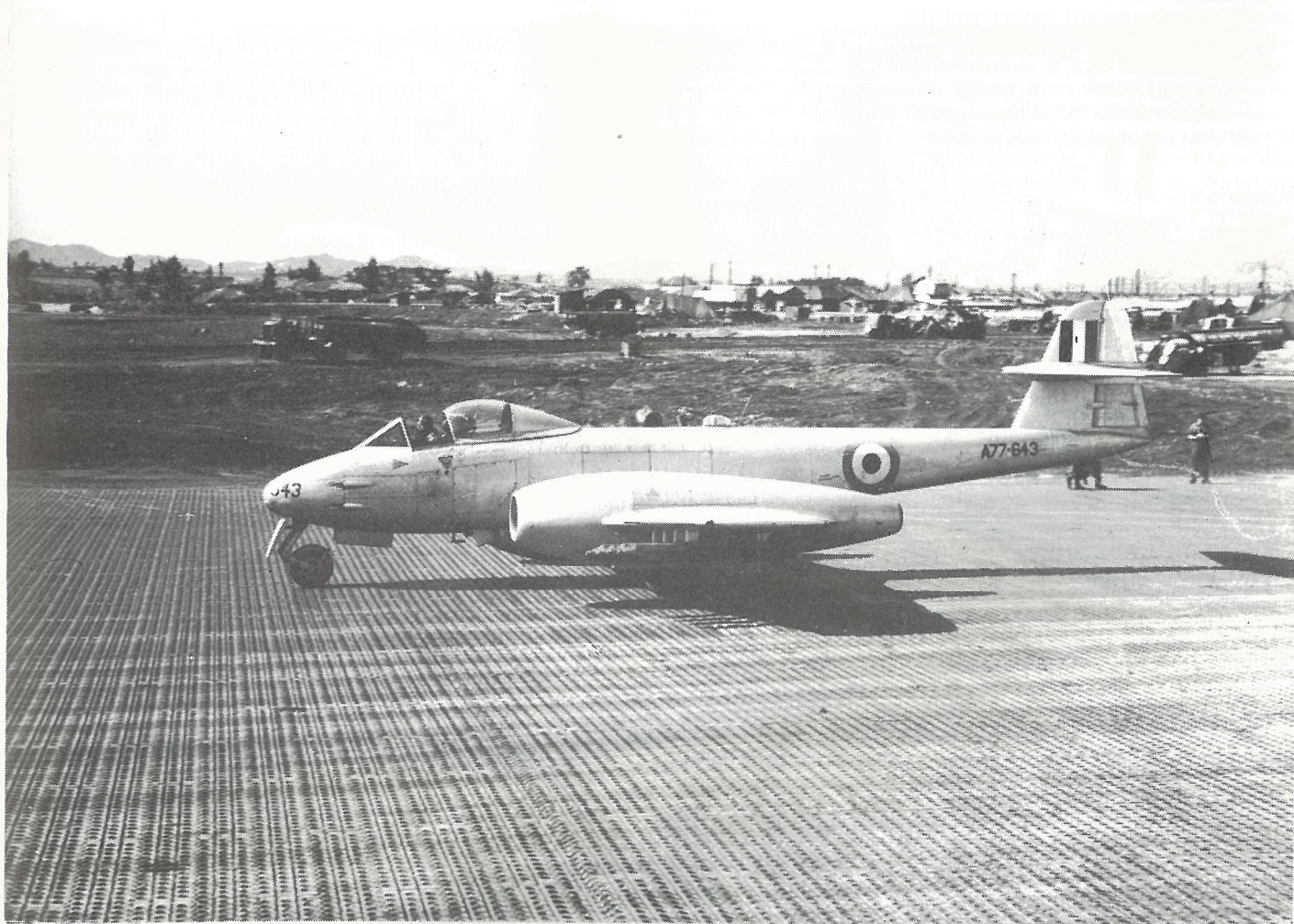
77 Squadron returned to the role of making fighter sweeps on 13 October and on that day set a record for any fighter unit of its size operating in Korea. Starting at dawn and finishing after dusk the squadron flew a total of 80 sorties in one day with only 22 serviceable aircraft.



FLTLT P. Middleton is marshalled onto the chocks by LAC Donald at the completion of a sortie. (RAAF)



A77-861 in the revetments at Kimpo during the bitter Korean winter. (RAAF)



WGCDR J. Kinnimont prepares to take off in A77-643 on a napalm rocket strike against enemy positions. (RAAF)

With the onset of the Korean winter the squadrons maintenance personnel once again found their task increasingly more difficult. The sub-zero temperatures meant that fitters had to work with their gloves on at all times, as removing them for more than a few moments would invariably lead to frost bite. This resulted in making delicate operations all but impossible. The thick snow had to be removed from the Meteors before dawn each morning and this proved to be a most unpopular duty. It is a credit to the fitters that even under these conditions the aircrew were still provided with enough serviceable aircraft to enable them to fly 688 sorties in December.



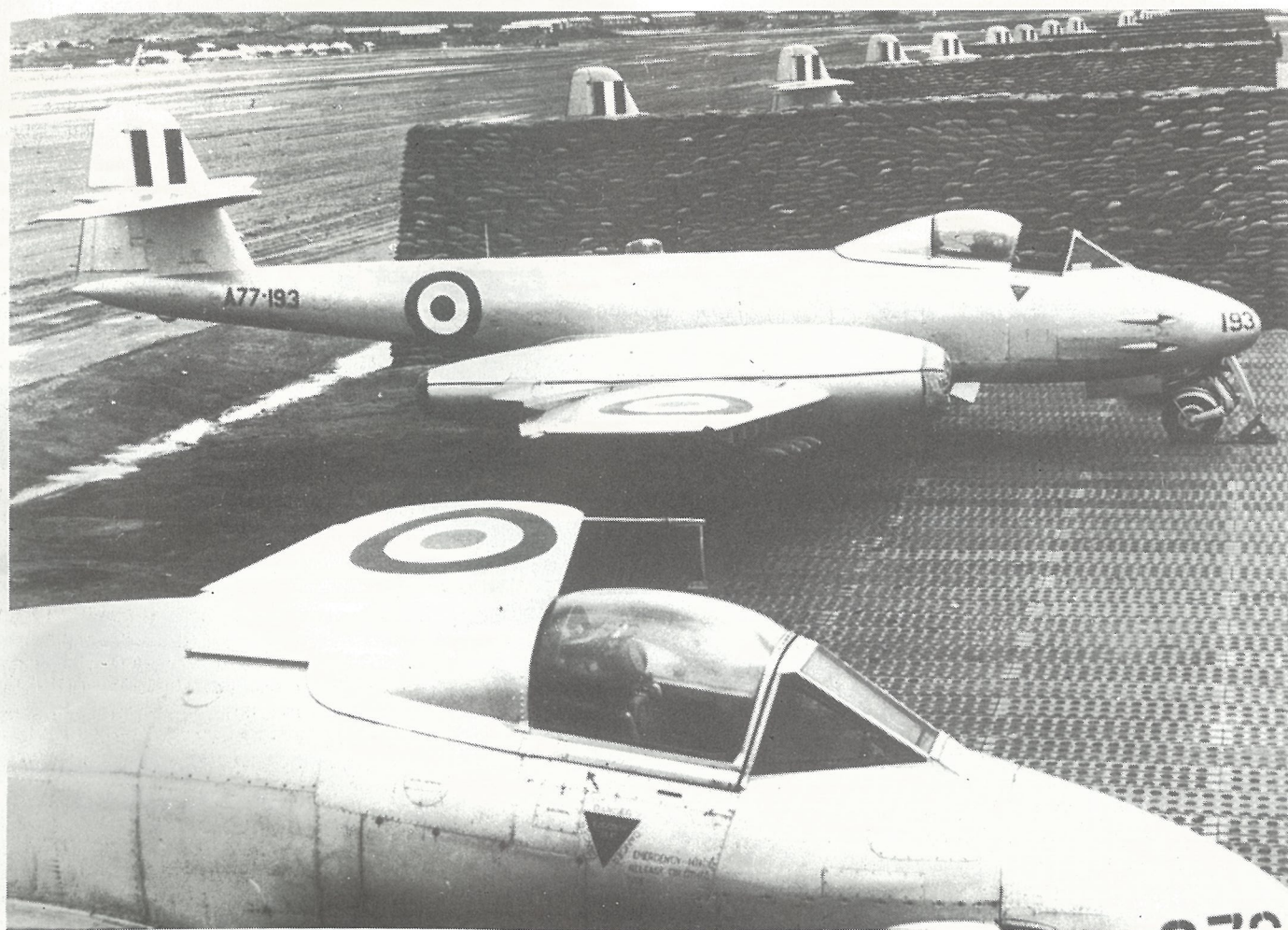
WGCDR John Hubble at the controls of his Meteor. (RAAF).

1953

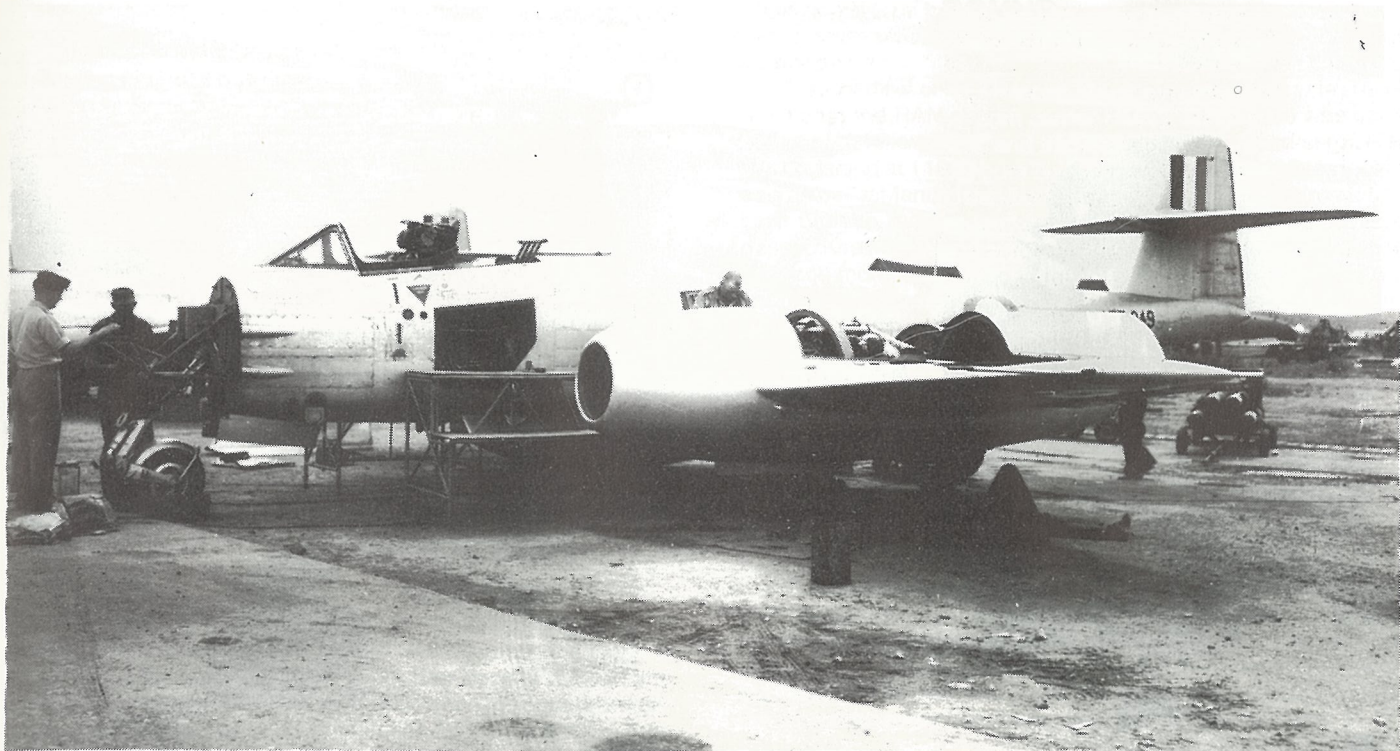
On 20 January 1953 WGCDR J. R. Kinnimont handed command of 77 Squadron to WGCDR J. W. Hubble AFC. Flying during the month was disrupted by continual bad weather although a few very successful strikes were carried out with a total of 50 enemy trucks and 48 buildings being destroyed. The squadron lost one pilot during the period with RAF pilot FLGOFF F. Booth (A77-15) failing to return from an attack on two trains hidden in railway tunnels.

The squadron carried out what was arguably its most successful and conclusive mission of the Korean War, when on 16 March, an enemy convoy consisting of approximately 150 trucks was devastated. The convoy was first sealed at both ends, preventing their escape. The Meteors then ran up and down the convoy length rocketing and strafing its constituents. The Australians, realising the enormity of the job at hand, requested USAF assistance and finally after six hours the convoy was left in tatters. 77 Squadron alone accounted for the destruction of at least 24 vehicles with the damaging of an additional 74. The Meteor's also strafed 35 troop billets, 10 supply stacks and two buildings with unobserved results. A message of congratulations was received that evening from the Commanding General, Far East Air Forces and the morale of the squadron soared to new heights.

Also during March the Meteors had their last contact with Mig-15's. On the 27th a flight of four Meteors on an armed reconnaissance mission spotted a Mig chasing two USAF F80 Shooting Star jets, with two more Migs appearing as the Meteors approached. SGT Dave Irlam (A77-446) received a major hit from one of the Mig-15's 37mm cannons and had to break contact to nurse his jet back to Kimpo. Meanwhile, SGT George Hale (A77-851), using the weapons he had at hand, fired a high explosive Air to Ground rocket between the two Migs before engaging them with his cannons. Hale was credited with having probably shot down one of the Migs, damaging another and definitely scaring the day-lights out of the two pilots he fired the rocket at.



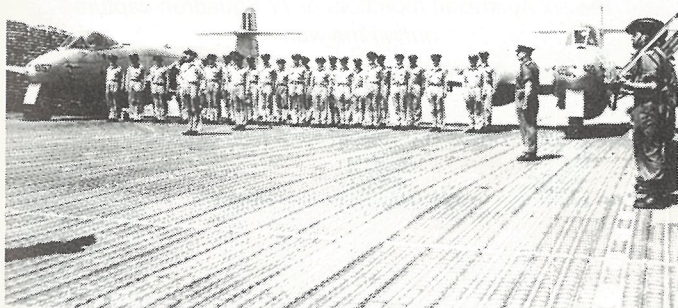
A77-193 in the revetments at Kimpo armed and ready for a sortie. (RAAF).



A major servicing being undertaken on A77-949 in the maintenance area at Kimpo. (AWM)

Unfortunately the excellent results achieved during March were nullified to some extent by the deaths of three well respected squadron pilots; SQNLDR D. Hillier, FLG OFF R. James (RAF) and SGT P. Chalmers, all shot down by anti aircraft fire. SGT Ken Murray was also posted back to Australia having set a record by flying a total of 333 sorties during his tour with the squadron.

Due to the effectiveness of the UN Air Forces attacks on the communist supply lines the enemy was forced to undertake most of its troop movements and resupplying under cover of darkness. During the northern Spring of 1953, 77 Squadron began to carry out night armed reconnaissance mission against enemy supply routes in the Pyongyang and Wonsan areas. These missions were normally carried out by a lone Meteor under the guidance of a ground controller, and although many attacks were made on enemy positions it was hard to judge their effectiveness due to the darkness. However, it was considered that the disruption to enemy communications caused by the presence of the Meteors made the project worthwhile.



CO's Parade, Kimpo 1953. (RAAF)

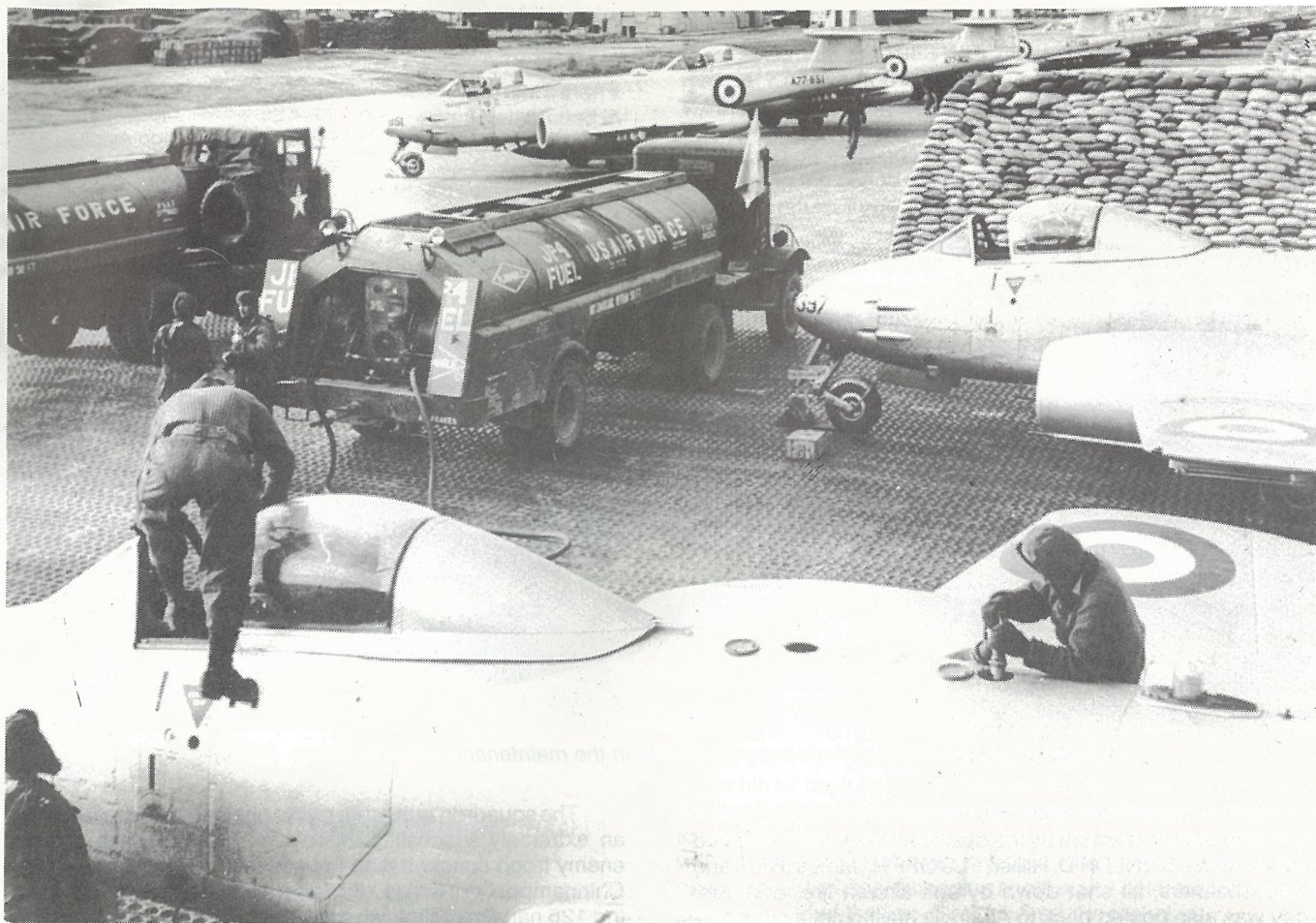
On 26 April WGCDR Dick Cresswell returned to the squadron on temporary flying duty on behalf of Air Force Headquarters. During his two week stay at Kimpo he flew on five combat sorties in the Meteors as well as numerous sorties with the USAF fighter units based there. WGCDR Cresswell stated that he was extremely impressed with the Meteors ground attack capabilities.

The squadron proved its mettle once again when it carried out an extremely successful Interdiction Rocket Strike against an enemy troop concentration housed in 51 buildings north east of Chinnampo. On 18 May 16 Meteors attacked the village expending 125 napalm rockets on the target area and, despite the heavy anti aircraft fire thrown against them, were able to totally destroy all the buildings with no loss to themselves. The squadron continued to fly Interdiction missions during the next two months but with the arrival of the Wet Season, the number of days where the weather effectively stopped flying increased dramatically. During June no less than twelve days flying was lost due to adverse weather resulting in only 462 sorties being flown compared to the May total of 800 sorties.

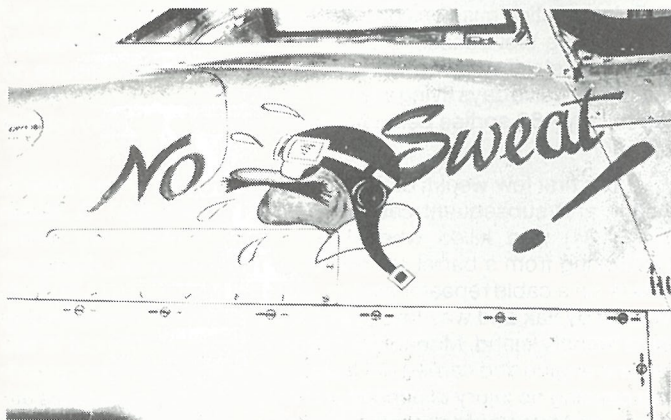
The first few weeks of June however brought an increase in action and subsequent casualties. On 11 June SGT D. Nolan (A77-134) was killed when his aircraft disintegrated whilst recovering from a barrel roll and dive. Two days later, during an attack on a cable repeater station, SGT Bill Monaghan (A77-415) was hit by flak and was forced to attempt a wheels down landing on a friendly island. Monaghan headed his crippled jet out to sea on one engine and carried out a very successful emergency landing causing no injury to himself and only minor damage to his aircraft. The Meteor was recovered, repaired and put back into the air again within a few days.

The squadron broke their own sortie record on 15 June when it flew a total of 88 sorties in the one day, accounting for 90 hours and five minutes of flying time. Most of this effort was expended on enemy troop concentrations with 224 rockets being fired destroying numerous vehicles, revetments and an enemy command post. The only 77 Squadron casualty sustained during the raid was SGT D. Pinkstone (A77-982). Pinkstone was hit by anti aircraft fire when attacking an enemy vehicle and was forced to bail out of his stricken jet. He parachuted to safety landing successfully in a nearby rice paddy. Other members of his flight saw Pinkstone fold up his parachute and run for the cover of some high ground near a small village. A rescue helicopter was called in but was forced away from the downed pilot by intense enemy ground fire leaving Pinkstone to be captured and interned as a prisoner of war.

During the past year the war on the ground had stagnated into a stalemate with neither side being able to gain the upper hand. The UN Air Forces had definite air superiority but this alone could not win the war, as the USAF was to again find out 15 years later in Vietnam. The Korean War was formally ended at 1001 hours on 27 July 1953 when delegates from both sides signed an armistice at Panmunjom, with a cease fire commencing shortly afterwards.



77 Squadron ground crew refuelling Meteors at the completion of a sortie. Note the cool weather clothing. (RAAF)



Nose art on A77-853. (RAAF)

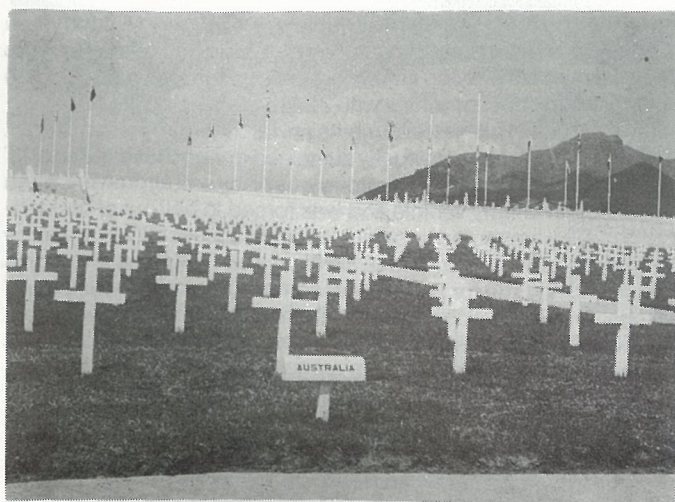


The six Australian members of 77 Squadron captured during the war.

Left to Right:

Gordon Harvey, Bruce Thompson, Don Pinkstone, Vance Drummond, Butch Hannan, W/OFF Ron Guthrie.

The photograph was taken on their release.



The war cemetery at Pusan. Most of the 77 Squadron personnel killed in the Korean War are buried here (77 Sqn).

The contribution made by 77 Squadron during the three years of the Korean War is totally out of proportion to that which might be expected from a unit of its size. During the war the squadron flew a total of 18872 sorties, comprising of 3872 Mustang and 15000 Meteor flights. The squadron had 38 personnel killed, all but two being due to an aircraft related incident, and seven pilots captured. The effect the squadron had on the enemy was devastating. The squadron was credited with destroying 3700 buildings, 1500 vehicles, 16 bridges, 20 locomotives, 65 railway carriages and an unknown number of enemy personnel.



The 77 Squadron camp site at Kunsan, south of Seoul. (RAAF)

HOMeward BOUND

The loading of 41 Meteors, squadron personnel and equipment onto the RAN aircraft carrier HMAS Vengeance was completed by 14 November and the ship departed Japan enroute to Manus Island at 1100 hours five days later. With HMAS Vengeance's arrival at Manus Island on 26 November, the squadron found itself back in familiar territory. The following day the ship also passed Kirawina Island enroute to Sydney and squadron personnel once more found time to reflect on the past, although only a handful of its members could claim to have served there with the squadron.

On 1 December the aircraft carrier anchored off Caloundra to take on customs officers and at 0700 hours two days later the vessel entered the Sydney heads. As the carrier made its way up Sydney harbour a formation of twelve Vampire jets from 2 OTU at Williamtown flew overhead in a double seven formation led by WGCDR R. C. Cresswell.

As soon as the squadron's personnel had disembarked they were transported to the Sydney Domain where they joined past members in a march through the streets of Sydney. The city population gave the 500 officers and men a warm reception, showering them with confetti and paper. so ended a trek which had kept the squadron away from home soil for over eleven years.



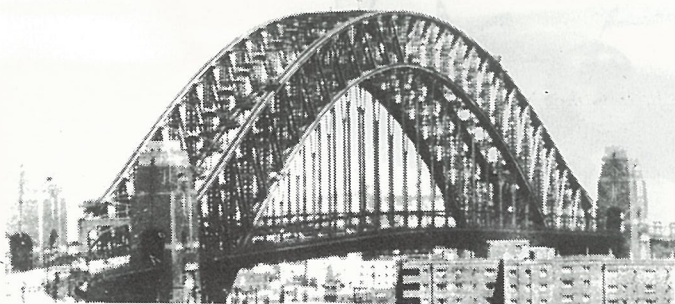
A77-702 is lowered onto the deck of HMAS Vengeance ready to begin the long journey home. (RAAF)

WILLIAMTOWN 1955 - 1956

Upon arrival back in Australia, 77 Squadron prepared to settle down in its new home at Williamtown NSW. As the Meteor fighters were unloaded from HMAS Vengeance they were sent to 2 Aircraft Depot at Richmond for reassembly and eventual service. The squadron initially received two Meteor MK 7 trainers and 16 MK 8 fighters from 2AD and began operations from the new home on 5 January 1955.



Gloster Meteors of 77 Squadron on the tarmac at Amberley during operation "Welcome Home" 15 February 1955 (RAAF)

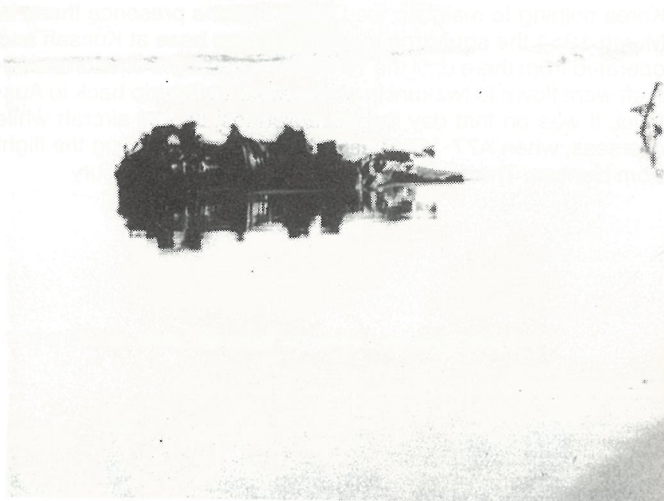


77 Squadron in double seven formation over Sydney 18 February 1955 (RAAF)

The first major operation to be launched at Williamtown by 77 Squadron was "Operation Welcome Home". Starting on 21 January the squadron proceeded on an around the country tour providing a "Double Seven" formation flypast at each capital city. The squadron proceeded to Canberra and on to Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Brisbane and ended the tour finally in Sydney. At each city the public turned out in their thousands to inspect the Meteors and greet the air and ground crews. In Hobart

alone, a crowd of 10,000 people came to the airport. On the return flight from Hobart to the mainland the population of the towns along Tasmania's north coast were treated to a low level flypast with each Meteor flying over a different town. The operation finally came to an end on 18 February when the squadron flew a formation of 16 Meteors over Sydney.

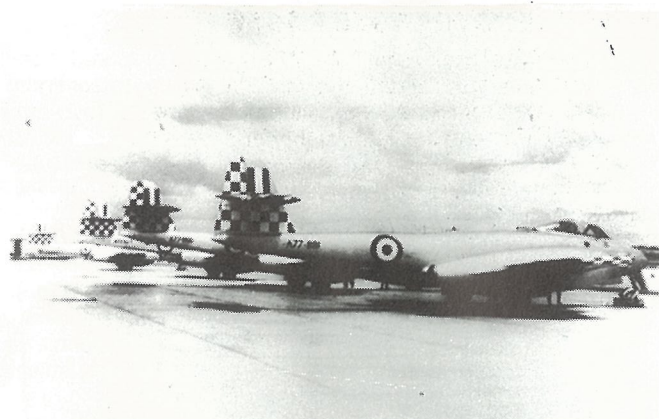
During April, 77 Squadron became an ancillary unit of the reorganised 78 Fighter Wing with 478 (Maintenance) Squadron assuming responsibility for Meteor maintenance, the other fighter squadron in the wing being 75 Squadron. The squadron continued with routine flying during the next few months and a Meteor conversion course was also run for some newly posted in pilots. The squadron suffered its first casualty upon returning to Australia on 20 June when FLG OFF E. Haywood crashed a Meteor MK7, A77-703, onto Stockton Beach shortly after takeoff. Haywood apparently had trouble retracting the undercarriage of his jet and while concentrating on this problem inadvertently lost control of his aircraft. Haywood was buried with full honours at Sandgate cemetery two days later.



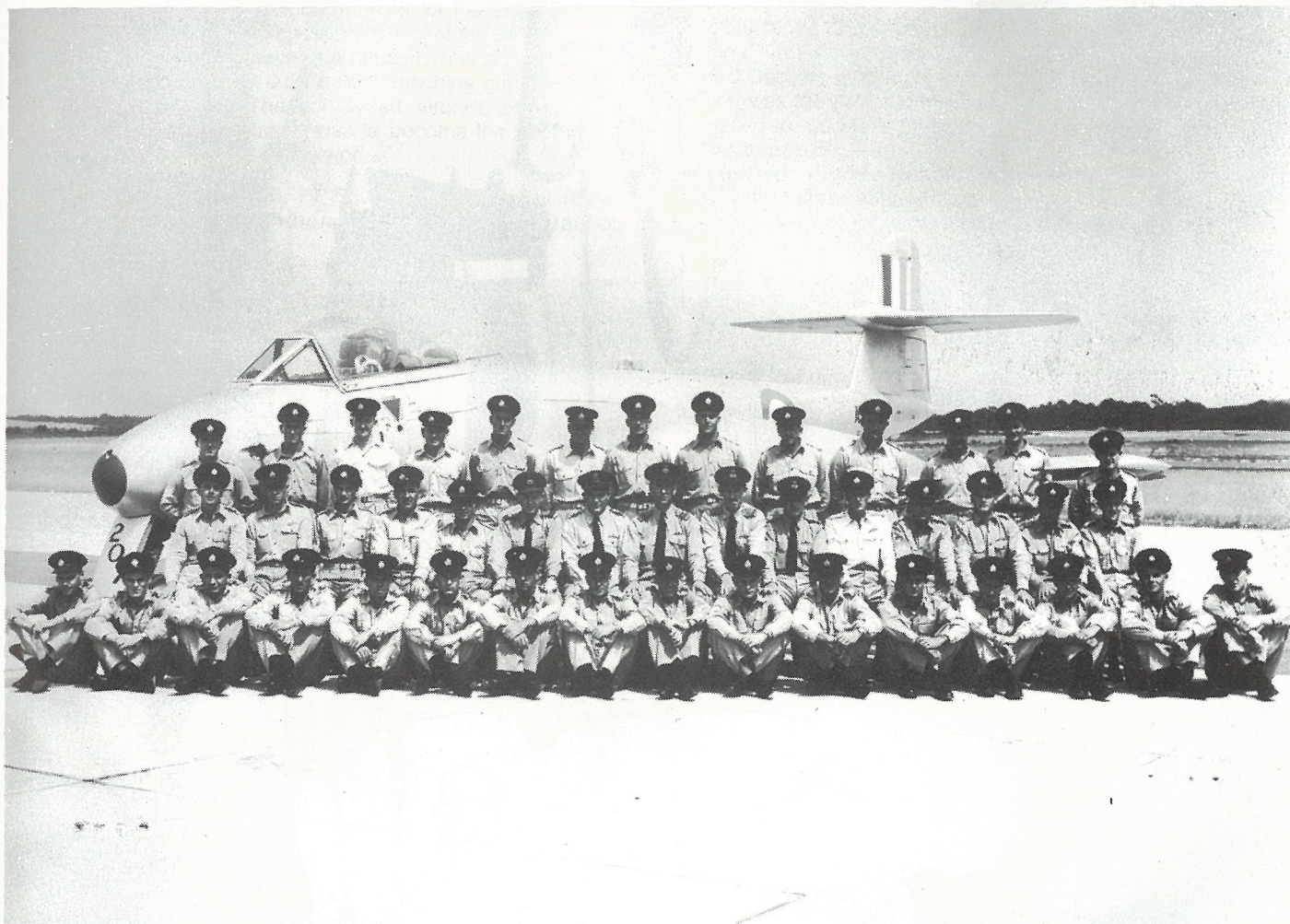
The wreckage of A77-703 on Stockton Beach near Newcastle 20 June 1955. (RAAF)

During August the squadron, under the leadership of SQNLDR R. Royston, formed its own aerobatic team. Known as the "Meteorites" the team gave their first public performance above the RAAF seaplane base at Rathmines on 22 September and during the next six months the team performed at Camden, Newcastle and at the Hobart Regatta.

The writing was on the wall however for the Meteor, and in early 1956 the squadron's pilots and ground crew began preparations to convert onto the Avon Sabre. 77 Squadron flew its last Meteor mission during August and all pilots not undertaking Sabre conversion were absorbed into 75 Squadron.



Meteors on the tarmac at Williamtown early in 1956. (RAAF)



77 Squadron personnel 30 November 1955

Left to Right

Back Row

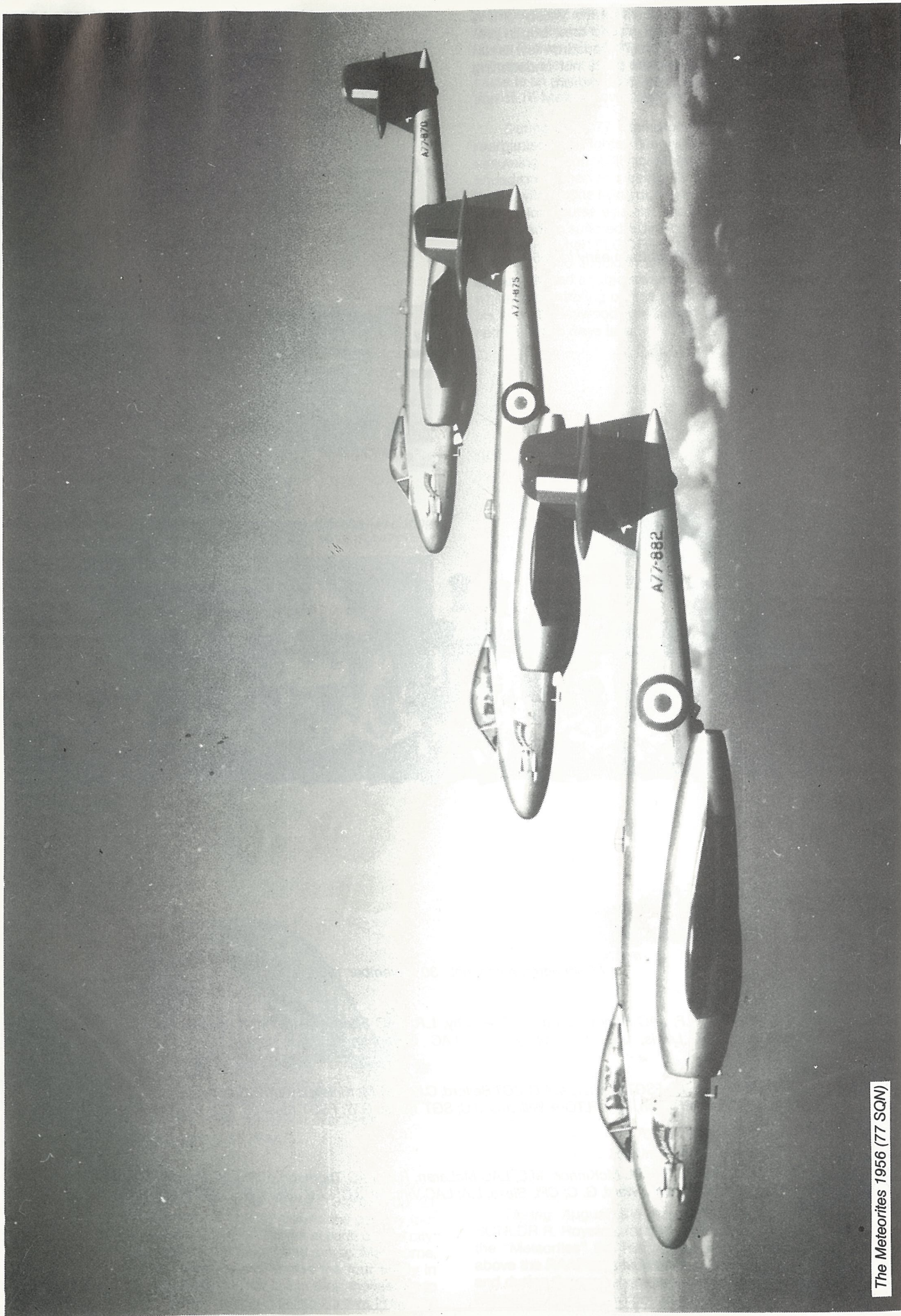
SGT Piggott, K.A; AC Rath, J.F; LAC Donovan, T.J; SGT Murphy, L.R; LAC Spence, B.J; FSGT Sheehy, M.B; SGT Clark, K.D; SGT McInerney, P.R; SGT Lewis, J.G; CPL Wray, C.G; LAC Callaghan, L; AC Hamer, G.H; SGT Galloway, J.G.

Centre Row

SGT Ward, T; FSGT McDonald, D.J; FSGT Sibthorpe, A.C; SGT Belford, C.K; SGT McKinlay, D; FLTLT Humperson, R; FLTLT Watkin, L.R; SQNLDR Royston, R.S; FLGOFF Allen, R.H; FLTOFF Williams, J.C; SGT Talbot, G.W; FSGT Meehan, T.D; FSGT Auckland, C.L; FSGT Baehnisch, D.K. SGT DuRoss, J.A.

Front Row

LAC Coombes, P; AC O'Hara, E.G; CPL McKinnon, M.E; LAC McLaren, R.G; LAC Thomson, K.B; LAC Palmer, N.D; AC Rice, L.J; CPL McKee, J.P; LAC Eddy, H.L; LAC Ward, G. C; CPL Blake, L.A; LAC Vincent, J.C; LAC Julius, S.L; LAC Martin, J.F; AC Ellis, S.J; AC Turnbull, A.M.



The Meteorites 1956 (77 SQN)

SABRE 1956 — 1968

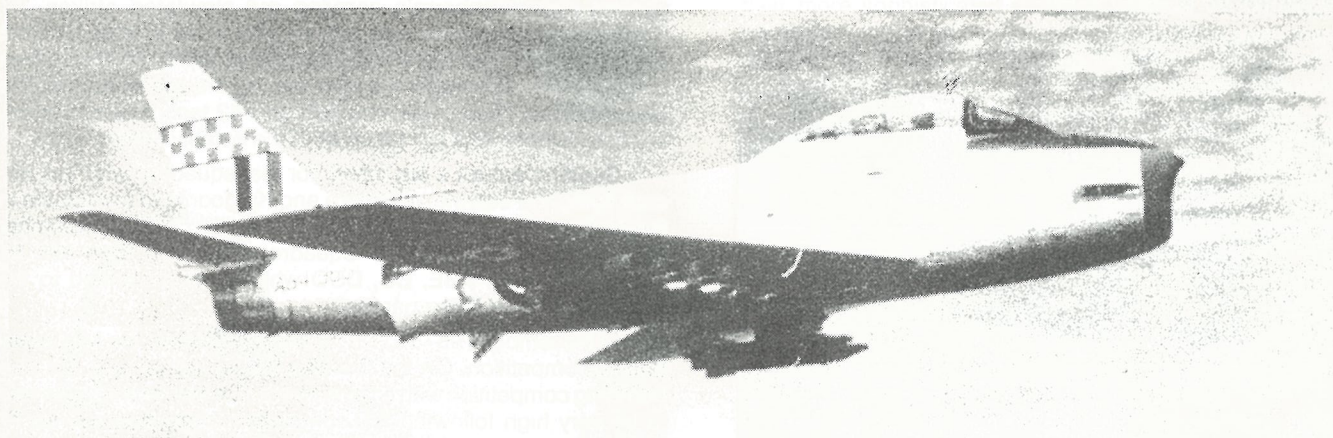
In early 1949 the RAAF began to look for a jet fighter replacement for the Mustang and DHA Vampire. The three aircraft that were then under consideration were the Grumman Panther, the proposed CAC large twin jet, and the Hawker P-1081. The Korean war had drastically reduced the time available for a decision to be made, so in 1951 it was decided that 77 Squadron was to be re-equipped with the Gloster Meteor as an interim measure.

In May of the same year, plans were finalised to proceed with a locally built and re-designed version of the North-American F-86F Sabre. During the re-designing of the aircraft it was decided to equip it with the Rolls Royce Avon engine with 7,500lbs thrust, as opposed to the general electric J47 with only 6,100lbs thrust. Some of the more major modifications included a nose intake with a greater surface area to provide more air for the larger engine, moving the engine servicing break point (where the aircraft is split to remove the engine), increased fuel capacity, revised cockpit layout, and replacing the six 0.50 calibre machine guns with two 30mm Aden cannons. The completed aircraft, occasionally referred to as the Avon-Sabre, was to become the best Sabre variant produced throughout the world.

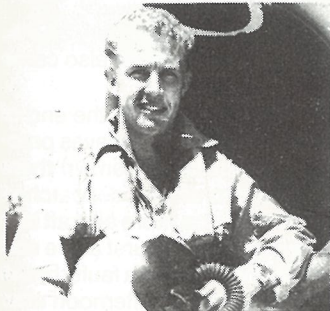
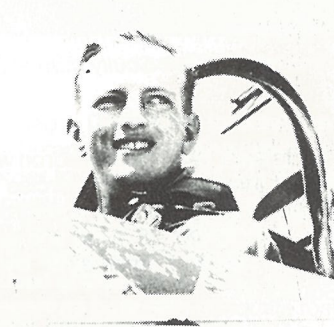
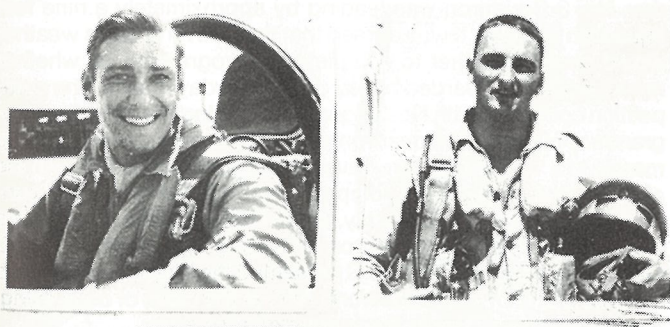
On 19 November 1956, 77 Squadron reformed at RAAF Williamtown re-equipped with the new Avon-Sabre. The CO at that

time, SQNLDR M. Holdworth AFC, commanding an establishment of eight aircrew, and 21 ground crew. On 20 November 1956, 77 Squadron commenced flying operations with four aircraft on line, but it was not until the 22nd however, that flying commenced in earnest, resulting in a day total of 21 Sabre sorties and two Vampire sorties. The first month of flying with the new Sabre resulted in considerable practice in air to air combat with the squadron settling into the new procedures involved with the Sabre. The Vampires that served several years with 77 Squadron, were primarily used in the instrument flying training role and as a dissimilar aircraft type in air to air combat training.

December 1956 saw the first damage inflicted to a Sabre when two aircraft received hail damage whilst engaged in low level intercepts. 77 Squadron was quickly recompensed however when a further three Sabre aircraft were delivered from Laverton on 10 December. One of the three aircraft was the first MK32, which was the prototype that all Sabre aircraft were eventually modified to. 69 Mark 32 Sabres which carried additional drop tanks, three rockets and, from 1960 onwards, the new Sidewinder missile, were eventually received by the RAAF. They were also the first of the Sabres to have the ISO Propyl Nitrate starting system, which was noted for using highly volatile fuel.



The CAC Avon Sabre (RAAF)



SQN Aircrew

Clockwise from Top Right

PLTOFF J. Turner, FLGOFF B. Weymouth, PLTOFF R. Bomball,
FLTLT A. W. Powell (RAAF)



SQN Aircrew

Clockwise from Top Right

FLTLT Tuckwell, FLGOFF O. G. Worth, PLTOFF Treadwell,
PLTOFF P. Bolin (RAAF)

1957

Squadron operations re-commenced late in January 1957 due to the airstrip being unserviceable. It was not until the 22nd that the squadron was back at work, commencing with a full programme of air to ground rocketry. This was the first time that the gunsight had been used in the full rocket function and the results were described as being very good.

On 25 January the first fighter sweep was conducted against No. 3 Squadron; however, on climbing to height, the No. 77 Squadron flight led by FLG OFF P. L. H. Coy was bounced, decidedly giving the advantage to No. 3 Squadron. Predictably at the debriefing, high claims of success came from both squadrons.

A few days later it was discovered there could be a serious fault with the Sabre when large pieces of rubber were discovered adhering to the low pressure fuel filter of an aircraft. This resulted in making an inspection of all aircraft operated by the squadron. By the end of February 1957 the squadron had 18 aircraft on line, three of which were the Mark 32 model enabling the squadron to increase its sortie rate markedly. To begin with, marked improvements occurred in the Sabre's rocketry capability, achieving an average of 58 feet.

On 28 February the squadron was able to fly 33 sorties, setting a new record for the Sabre. This was no mean feat considering that the squadron was operating with only half of the squadron establishment. As the Commanding Officer stated; "A high standard of efficiency is being maintained in the servicing output to meet the current flying commitment."



PLTOFF P. Scully carrying out a pre-flight check. (RAAF)

In April 1957 the squadron was scheduled for a Ground Controlled Intercept (GCI) exercise to be held in conjunction with 1CRU at Brookvale. All squadron pilots visited Brookvale along with the OC No. 78 Wing and three other Wing officers and witnessed several intercepts by Gloster Meteors of No. 22 Squadron.

The actual programme commenced on 3 April consisting entirely of 77 Squadron aircraft. A total of 24 sorties were flown with the standard of controlling being described as very poor. The average scramble time was 65 seconds from stand-by and two minutes 15 seconds from readiness. The poor standard of controlling persisted until 5 April before some improvement was noted. Also on the 5th, a small mishap occurred when a Deutz power cart became unserviceable and short circuited two aircraft, causing a fire. However, due to prompt action by nearby ground crew, the fire was quickly extinguished, resulting in minimal damage.

The exercise resumed on the 8th with Vampires from No. 20TU acting as the hostile force. It was noted at the end of the day's flying that controlling had improved markedly with the percentage of intercepts showing a great increase. On the 10th, an air of realism was added when Canberra's of No. 82 Wing carried out simulated bombing runs on targets in the Sydney area, with 77

Squadron playing the role of defending fighters. The controlling had improved to the point where 100% successful intercepts were made.

On the last day of the exercise, the Canberra's began developing tactics of their own, when several "raids" turned out to be diversionary with only two aircraft actually attacking. Both aircraft were intercepted, however one had managed to complete his bombing run due to extremely cunning tactics which prevented him from being detected until approximately 60 miles out from Sydney. At the de-briefing all pilots and controllers stated that it had been an exceptionally valuable exercise in view of the experience gained.

For several months the squadron flew at a high rate, in an effort to complete phase II training. This involved air to ground rocketry and gunnery, air to air cine and live gunnery, fighter sweeps against No. 3 Squadron, Ground controlled approaches, formation practice and reconnaissance. One item of particular noteworthiness occurred when SGT Jones set a new record in a Sabre on a ferry flight from Laverton to Williamstown in 44 minutes 25 seconds.

A growing dissatisfaction was being experienced with the Vampire however, as by the end of July, the aircraft had only flown three productive sorties. This resulted in many pilots not being able to maintain their instrument ratings as no check flights could be carried out.

On 7 August 1957, No. 78 Wing and three Citizen Air force (CAF) Squadrons under control of 1 CRU defended Sydney against eight Canberra's carrying out simulated strikes. 77 Squadron's contribution was only six aircraft but in three Combat Air Patrols (CAP's) and one scramble, the squadron attained seven of the 13 kills claimed for the exercise. By the end of August, the squadron had risen to eleven pilots and 42 technical personnel, but this number was still far short of the establishment figure.

September was a big month for the squadron with four aircraft flying to Perth via Woomera and Kalgoorlie to participate in the Air Force Week demonstrations. In addition, on 12 September 77 Squadron received The Squadron Standard from AM Sir Richard Williams KBE, CB, DSO which was presented to the squadron at a 78 Wing parade.

In November 1957 No. 77 Squadron entered the McCauley Shield Competition. On the first day the squadron won the dive bombing competition with an average of 124 feet. Morale was said to be very high following the completion of the first day as 77 Squadron was also ahead in the servicing and armament marks. However, on 12 November only half the rocketry programme could be completed due to poor weather. At the completion of the day, No. 3 Squadron was leading by approximately a nine feet squadron average. It was agreed that the following day's weather would decide whether to complete the programme or whether marks would be awarded based on second day results. The competition continued with No. 3 Squadron winning the rocketing programme, but No. 77 Squadron was able to reduce the winning margin to a 1.4 feet squadron average. 77 was also able to win the air to air cine phase of the competition, and the air to ground gunnery phase on the following day. On 15 November the results were announced, with 77 Squadron emerging victorious. The OC GPCPT B. A. Eaton, DSO, DFC presented the McCauley Shield to the CO, SQNLDR M. Holdsworth AFC at the close of days flying. The squadron's score in the various phases were:

Air - Air live 3.8%, Air - Air cine 76.5%, Air - Ground Gunnery 20.5%, Dive Bombing 124ft and Rocketry 61ft. The squadron also came out in front in the armament and servicing scores.

Squadron aircraft were greatly depleted towards the end of November when on the 25th, one aircraft out of three waves practising outlandings at Amberley were compelled to remain there due to unserviceabilities. On the 26th an aircraft was despatched to Amberley with a spare and whilst there, three more aircraft landed practising outlandings. This time one aircraft burst a tyre and another aircraft severely damaged a tyre and suffered a faulty brake unit. The three aircraft set off for Williamstown that afternoon after repairs but were soon forced back when severe weather conditions closed the airfield. The next day a Dakota from 86 Wing flew spares and ground crew to Amberley to service and despatch the aircraft to Williamstown, and after three days all five aircraft had returned to Williamstown.

The flying programme was suspended on 5 December and the ground crew turned their attention eagerly, and the aircrew not so eagerly, to the evasion and survival exercise which was commencing on the eighth. The aircrew participated in two days of survival training and on 10 December the ground crew were "let loose" as the enemy, with the object of capturing the aircrew. Naturally enough, the troops pursued this goal with great zeal, but at the end of the day the score stood at Aircrew — 12, Groundcrew — 0.

Determined to make-up for the previous day, the airmen hunted with a vengeance and their persistence was finally rewarded when FLGOFF C. L. Ackland and FLGOFF J. A. Treadwell were captured and despatched to GAN GAN interrogation centre. Unfortunately the wily FLGOFF Treadwell successfully escaped from the centre and managed to avoid all attempts at re-capture. At the end of the exercise the score stood at Aircrew — 10½ and Troops — 1½.

1958

FLTLT Boord, who was the Temporary CO following the departure of SQNLDR Holdsworth, died suddenly and was buried with full military honours at Beresfield crematorium on 16 January. FLTLT A. W. Powell was appointed Temporary CO of the squadron and on 14 April, the new CO, SQNLDR G. R. Harvey, DFC arrived to take up his new appointment, he had served previously with 77 Squadron in Korea as a flight commander.



SQNLDR Harvey

Routine flying was carried on until 25 March when the squadron received a MK33 Vampire to replace the old MK31 aircraft. In May the squadron set a record number of Sabre flying hours for Williamtown by flying 420 hours for the month.

Following such a successful month, June began by having a record low of one aircraft on line serviceable and only increasing this to three by the end of the first day's flying. This was attributed to the low squadron manning and the many unserviceable aircraft the squadron had on the ground. The situation did not improve by the second day when an Officer Commanding's parade followed by a Church parade disrupted the normal squadron programme. When the squadron was finally able to get some aircraft airborne for a gunnery programme, the first banner of the tug aircraft was shot off and a one in 30 gun stoppage rate allowed only two sorties to be flown against the second banner. The month's total was 282.1 flying hours, far short of 420 hours total from the previous month.

On 19 August 1958, the Officer Commanding informed the squadron that they would be going to Malaya and the squadron began preparations in readiness for the move. The Vampire left the squadron for Laverton permanently on 29 August resulting in the squadron only operating No. 2 OCU Vampires on loan.

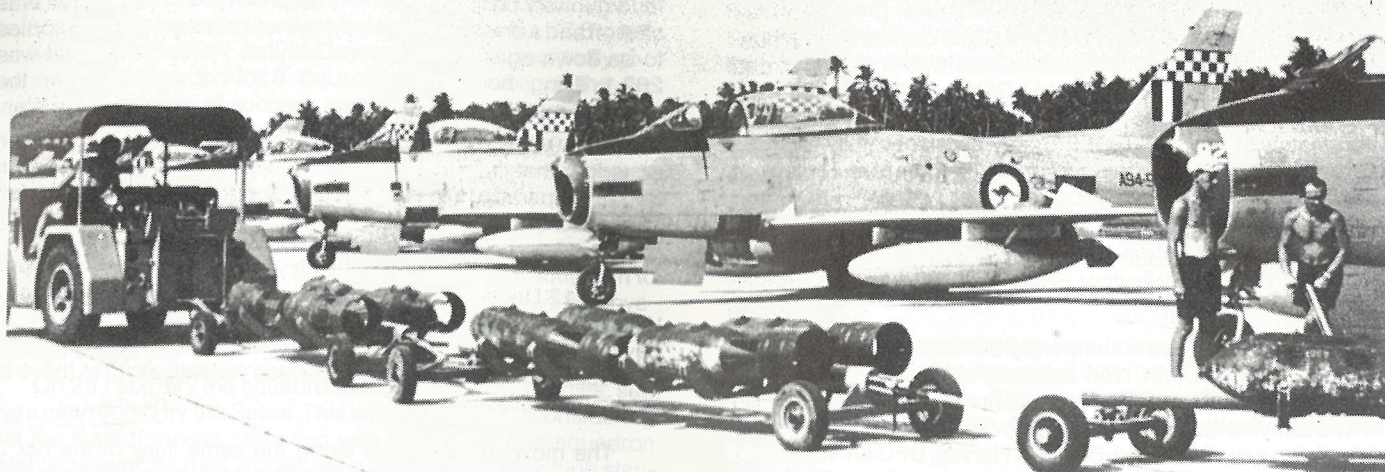
On 12 December 1958, 77 Squadron ceased operations at Williamtown anticipating the move to Butterworth. The next few days were spent packing the squadron in preparation, and on 17-18 December the aircraft left Williamtown via Richmond to move to the new Malaysian home.

The move was planned along the same lines of the No. 3 Squadron move in November 1958. The Sabres would be supported by Canberra aircraft from Amberley and Butterworth who, with their more sophisticated advance weather reconnaissance and navigation gear would act as pathfinders. Neptunes were also be stationed at various points along the proposed route of approximately 6000 statute miles to provide homing facilities and search and rescue (SAR) coverage if necessary. To move the squadron personnel and equipment, two of the new Hercules transport aircraft were tasked. It is interesting to note that in contrast it took seven Dakotas, the then backbone of the transport element of the RAAF, to move No. 3 Squadron the previous month. There was a large amount of foreign assistance from USAF 13th Air Force in Manila, Royal Netherlands Navy, Netherlands New Guinea Admin, Civil Aviation Bureau, and the Department of Communications at Hollandia associated with the 77 Squadron move.

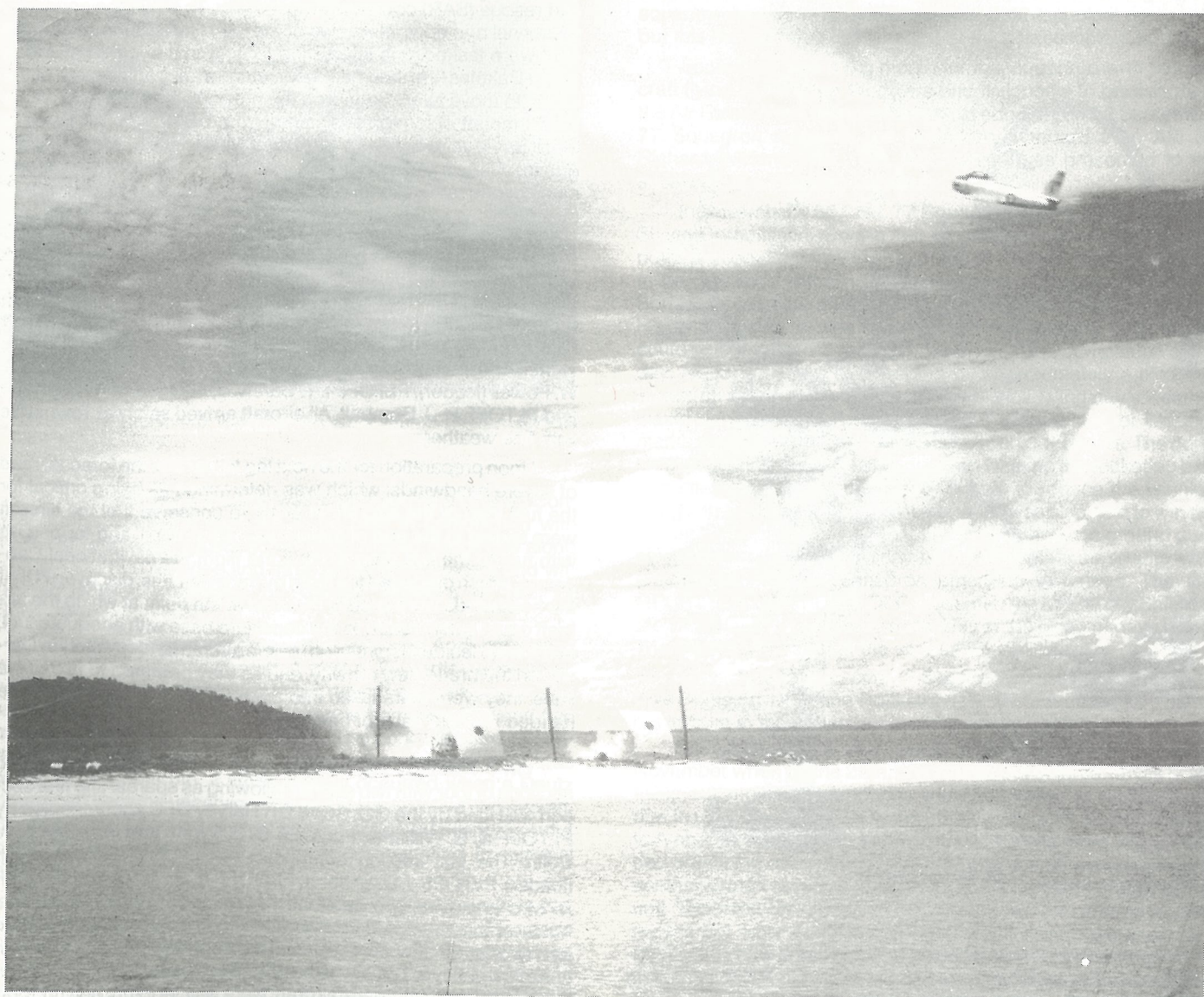
The squadron completed all pre-ferry flying commitments whilst at Richmond and on 5 February eight aircraft departed for Townsville on the first leg of the long trip. The first four aircraft departed at 0930 led by GPCAPT G. A. Cooper DFC, followed by PLTOFF M. F. Witman, FLGOFF K. T. Tuckwell and PLTOFF J. A. Turner. The second four departed at 0945 comprising of FLTLT A. W. Powell (leader), PLTOFF I. T. Carswell, FLGOFF P. W. Mahood and PLTOFF R. J. Bomball. All aircraft arrived safely at Townsville with fine weather.

Upon preparation for the next leg to Darwin, the forecast read of severe headwinds, which was determined as being critical for the fuel load of the aircraft. In order to conserve fuel the aircraft were taxied to the end of the runway, shut down, and topped up with fuel to the last drop. During the flight the navigational Canberras, which preceded the flight by thirty minutes, discovered that the headwinds were greatly reduced at the point at which the aircraft could safely return to the departure base with adequate fuel, and it was decided to press on. All the aircraft landed safely in Darwin on the brand new runway, and as they prepared to taxi to the lines, they were marshalled into open hangars instead and were handed icy-cold cans of beer on shutdown.

On 7 February the remaining aircraft left Richmond in two sections of four with two aircraft following as spares. The first section was lead by the CO, SQNLDR Harvey DFC accompanied by PLTOFF N. B. Williams, FLGOFF O. G. Worth and FLGOFF P. A. Bolin. The last section comprised of FLTLT L. B. Weymouth (leader), PLTOFF J. D. Shearer, FLGOFF E. R. Jones and PLTOFF A. M. Parer. The two sections had a good trip to Townsville, however the two spares were forced to divert to Amberley when one aircraft ran low on oxygen. On 8 February, the last two sections flew safely to Darwin where they were greeted with the amber fluid while the two spare aircraft were still lagging behind, only reaching Townsville.



77 Squadron lines in Butterworth. (RAAF)



Air to ground strike at Song Song range. (RAAF)

The next day, the first section led by CPCAPT G. A. Cooper DFC departed on the first overseas leg to Biak. At the same time the two spares arrived in Darwin. At Biak the aircrew could not complain about the quarters, as they stayed at the KLM Hotel. After a day of rest, the first section departed for Guiuan, and once they were re-fuelled from 44 gallon drums, departed for Labuan overflying Zamboonya on the way. Despite the rough airstrip at Labuan, all aircraft, with a great deal of care, managed to land safely. The second section departed Darwin on 11 February while the first section departed on the last leg to Butterworth, with both sections making it to their respective destinations safely. The first section was greeted upon arrival at Butterworth by AVM Hancock and the OC, AIRCDRE Parsons who congratulated them on their safe and faultless trip.

With a clear weather forecast showing, the second section departed Biak for Guiuan where, after a two hour stopover, they left for Labuan. Over North Borneo they encountered cloud cover which raised doubts about the availability of Labuan, but pressed on and where able to land safely.

The following day the third section departed Darwin for Biak, finding a contingent from the Royal Dutch Navy waiting for them, who arranged their entertainment for the evening. The second section also arrived in Butterworth from Labuan making a total of eight out of 16 aircraft safely home.

On the 14th, the third section departed for Guiuan, where upon their arrival they were given a quick "cooks tour" of the island. After this they left on the second stage for Labuan and arrived without incident.

The fourth section did not leave as planned on the 15th due to bad weather reports but on the 16th managed to complete the leg to Biak. From Biak, they flew to Guiuan and onto Labuan where they joined up with the third section. The following day all the remaining aircraft departed for Butterworth. The only thing to mar this final leg was when one aircraft experienced a slow feeding droptank and was low on fuel; however, all 77 Squadron aircraft managed to land safely bringing a highly successful end to the Sabre ferry.

The arrival of 77 Squadron at Butterworth brought the strength of the RAAF in the Far East to 1000 men comprising of No. 77 Squadron, No. 3 Squadron (also Sabres), No. 2 Squadron as well as the necessary mobile control and reporting units and support units. All these squadrons had become an important part of the air component of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve.

The rest of the month was spent in familiarisation flights over the area and briefings with the local controllers to discuss the different procedures. One thing the aircrew noticed immediately was the sensation of low flying in mountainous areas whilst being up to 5000 feet above sea level, as opposed to the flat terrain in the Williamstown area.

All flying for the Squadron was stopped for three days on 23 March owing to a defect in the tail unit of a Sabre. This necessitated the grounding of the whole fleet while the aircraft were examined and repairs carried out as required. The aircraft had only resumed flying for one day however, when the Squadron stood down for their first Easter in Malaya. This was something which many people had been looking forward to!

Squadron flying and maintenance continued routinely up until August, with the only noteworthy event being a visit to the Squadron by The Commander in Chief of the British Commonwealth Strategic Reserve, the Earl of Brendon.

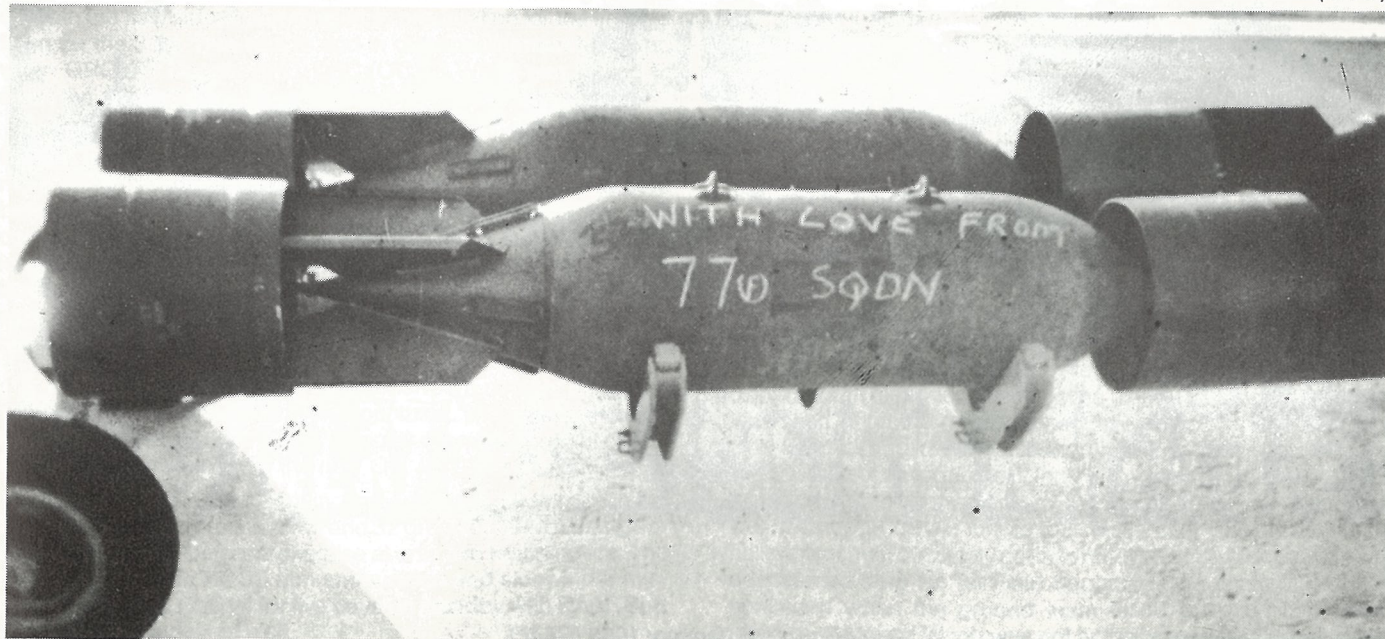
On 10 August however, an air defence exercise (ADEX) was cancelled due to a signal received stating that the Wing was placed on standby for a strike against Communist Terrorists. The aircraft were fitted with drop tanks and armed with two x 300lb MC bombs and 240 rounds of HE ammunition each. Six pilots were nominated to take part in this strike, FLTLT A. W. Powell, FLGOFF E. R. Jones, FLGOFF O. G. Worth, FLGOFF J. A. Treadwell, FLGOFF I. T. Carswell and PLTOFF R. J. Bomball, all of whom had completed the Auster marking course (FAC). The following day the Squadron was fully prepared and placed on a 24 hour standby. It was not until 12 August however that confirmation came through stating that the strike would take place on the 13th. At 1630 hours on that day, all six aircraft were launched on what was 77 Squadron's first operational Sabre mission.

The actual strike that the aircraft took part in was a wing strike, comprising of aircraft from both 77 and 3 Squadron. Up until this time, all operational strikes had been carried out by Canberra jet bombers from No. 2 Squadron in level flight, from an altitude higher than the Sabres. The fighter pilots however believed that a 30 degree angle dive bombing would be far more accurate and that the Sabres were best suited to the task, so the pilots and aircraft were put to the test.

The strike co-ordination was perfect, with all aircraft arriving and delivering their ordinance precisely on time and target. Unfortunately, in the words of one of the pilots, the only results were "several rubber trees severely damaged and thousands of monkeys scared fartless". All the aircraft recovered successfully to RAF Changi where they spent the night, before returning to Butterworth the next day.

On the 21st of the same month a potentially disastrous mishap occurred when a Sabre being flown by FLTLT Tuckwell suffered a birdstrike. His canopy was shattered and the remains struck just over his right eye. FLTLT Tuckwell was able to land the aircraft safely despite the severe damage caused to the aircraft's metal skin by the pieces of canopy.

*One of the bombs used on 77 SQNs first live Sabre strike.
(RAAF)*





77 Squadron flight line during the preparation for Firedog One LAC Tony Mumford in the foreground. (RAAF)

The situation settled down for a while and on 16 September the Squadron, in conjunction with 3 Squadron, trooped the Standards of their respective squadrons. The salute was taken by the Malaysian Minister for Defence, Tunku Abdul Razak, who was accompanied by the Australian High Commissioner, Mr. Critchley. Following the parade the Wing aerobatic team, led by FLTLT B. Weymouth with FLGOFF Dart (3 Squadron), FLGOFF M. Parer (77 Squadron) and FLGOFF D. Stenhouse (3 Squadron member and also future 77 Squadron Commanding Officer), performed a highly successful demonstration for the visiting dignitaries.

The month of October introduced several tactical innovations for the Squadron, which were tested on the first rocketry programme in Malaya at the Song Song range. The aircraft tested the new HVAR rockets which proved to be extremely accurate without the problems which beset the earlier type. The squadron also carried out low Angle Dive Bombing trials which, after initial troubles turned out to be a success, proving once again the versatility of the Sabre.

The following month a few squadron members took part in a Wing detachment to Manila. The aircraft departed Butterworth on 26 November with the CO, SQNLDR Harvey leading the first section of four aircraft. Six 77 Squadron aircrew went on the detachment, however only three Sabres were flown.

Upon arrival in Saigon, the aircrew were entertained by the South Vietnam Air Force before flying onto Clark Air Force Base in Manila. They were pleased to find, after arriving at Clark that all Squadron members were invited to various private homes to take part in the American Thanksgiving dinner celebrations.

The following two days were not as easy, with the groundcrew working long hours to modify the aircraft with smokepipes for the airshow on the 29th. The modification meant fitting a pipe from a sealed off leading edge fuel tank filled with oil, to feed into the tailpipe leaving a very distinct smoke trail. This ensured a very eye-catching effect which added to the already impressive display. The Philippines and Americans expressed their appreciation by entertaining the members at a ball as guests of the Philippines Civil Aeronautic Administration held at the Philippines Naval Officers' Club.

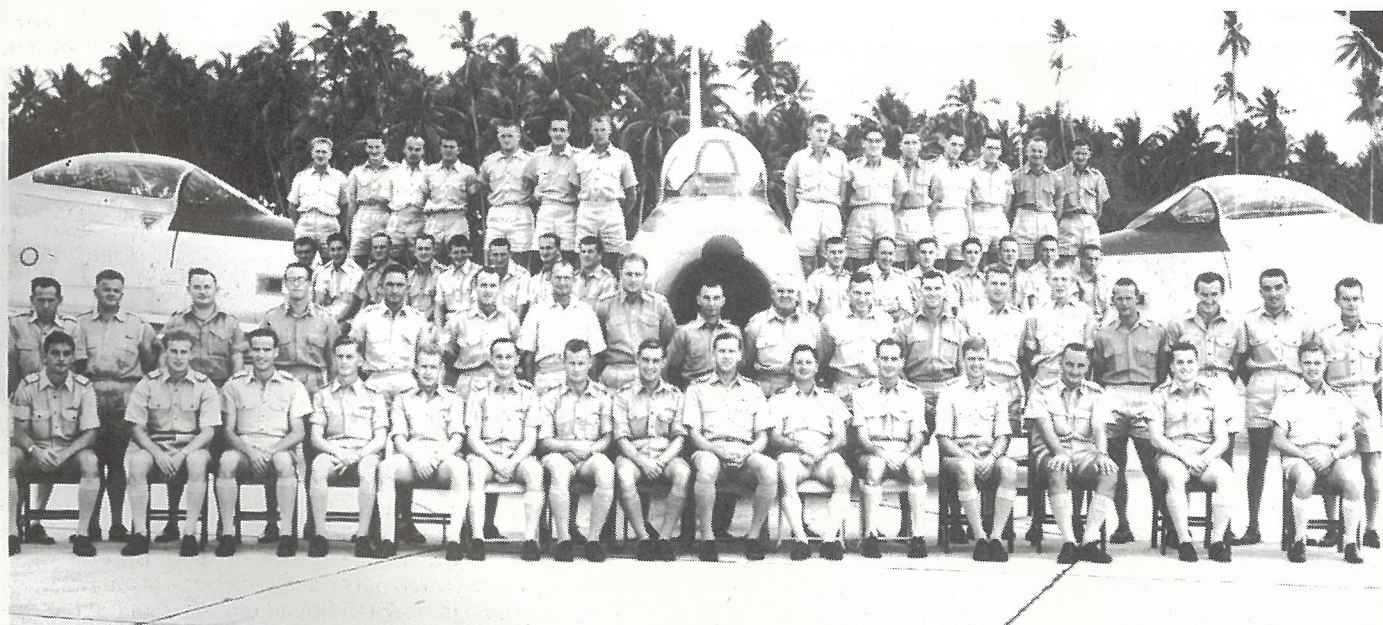
The following day all aircraft had to be demodified in preparation for Operation Joss Stick held in conjunction with 509th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. The following week was spent in familiarization flights and practice interceptions, to learn the local areas and get used to different controlling procedures. The exercise was described as being very successful with the squadron observing the American methods of operations. On the last day of flying, a quite spectacular dogfight developed between six Sabres, six F-86-D of the 509th and two F-86-F of the Philippine Air Force. It was a fitting way to say goodbye as the squadron departed the following day for Butterworth via Saigon.

For the most of December there was no rest for the squadron with only a break from 25-28 December for Christmas.

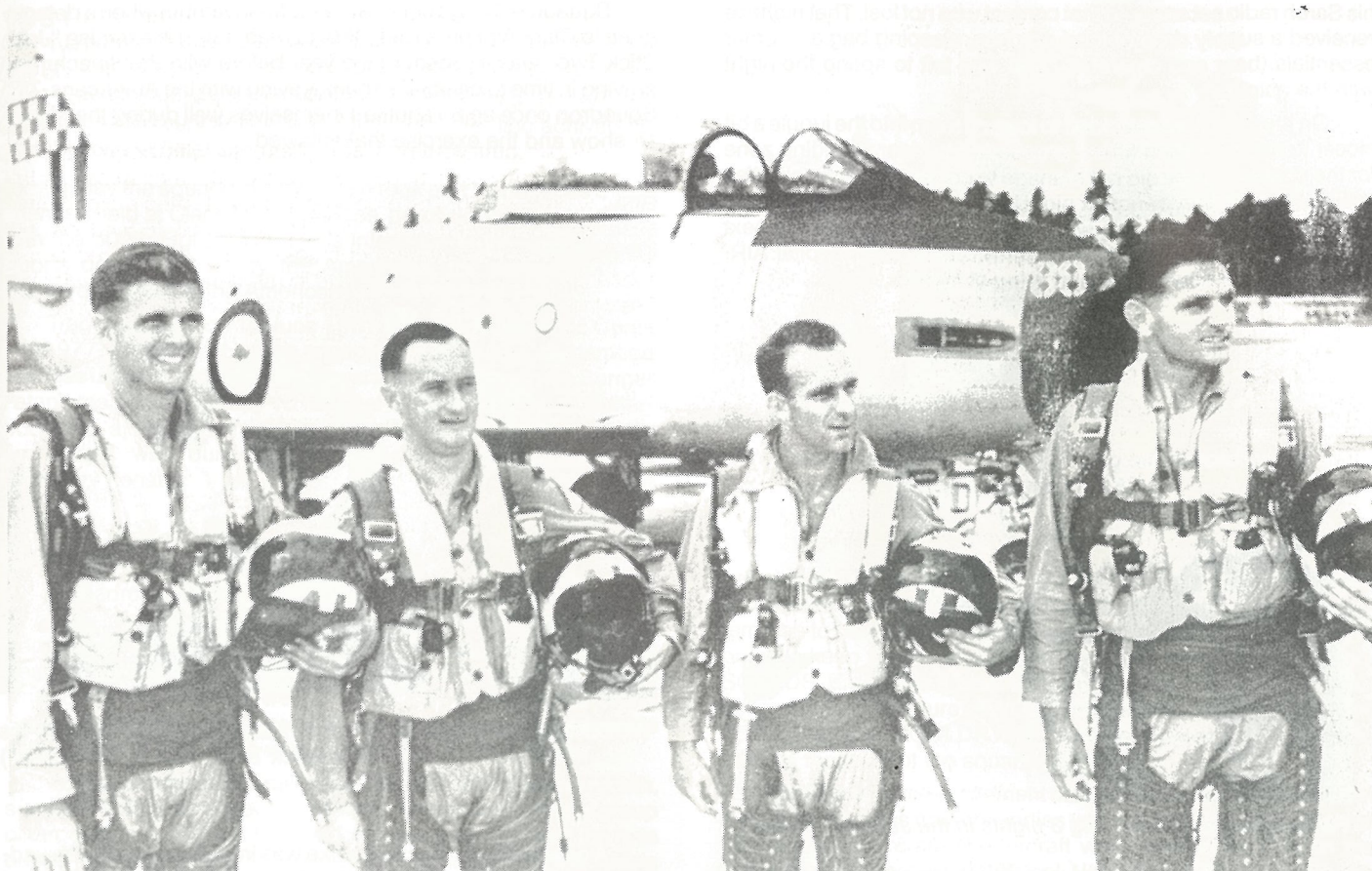
1960

On February 1960 WGCDR Hubble DSO, AFC arrived at the squadron to take up his duties as the new Commanding Officer.

FLGOFF Parer (A94-967) had a heart stopping moment in February when on VDF/GCA practice at 10,000 feet inverted his controls suddenly jammed. After several tense seconds of struggling with the controls they inexplicably freed themselves. He landed uneventfully and the aircraft was removed to the hangar where the control assembly was dismantled. It took several days for the groundcrew to discover that an unexploded rivet left in the wing centre section, became jammed between a cable and a pulley. This was reasoned to only occur at certain wing loadings which unfortunately for FLGOFF Parer he happened to discover whilst inverted.



77 Squadron January 1960 (RAAF)



77 Squadron's Flypast Team
Left to Right: FLGOFF Bach, FLTLT Mahood, FLGOFF Palmer, WGCdr Hubble (CO). (RAAF)

On 15 February 1960 the squadron performed an unusual duty by providing five Sabres to escort President Ngo Din Diem of Vietnam from Koita Bahru to Kuantan. The task was carried out, although it was made virtually impossible by heavy weather. Five further Sabres then escorted him to Kuala Lumpur airport where he was greeted by Yang Di-Pertuan Agong.

In March the squadron flew a record 410 hours, which was the highest since leaving Australia. 77 Squadron was also given diplomatic approval for the aircraft to fly over Thailand, and on the 29th began flying over other countries. The new route was Butterworth, Phuket, Kiri Kahn, Ban Dun Pattani and return to Butterworth.

There was also a great deal of familiarisation training carried out with the new sidewinder missile, in preparation for the first live firing on the 31st. This was to end in disappointment however, when GPCAPT Cooper AFC, DFC (OC 78 Wing) was forced to abort the mission when the target rocket refused to fire.

The Squadron in April again set a new precedent when they flew 38 hours and 50 minutes in one day. This was made all the more remarkable due to all the aircraft being grounded 72 hours before, due to an ejection seat modification. All ground crew were congratulated on the effort expended on getting the aircraft serviceable once the modification kits arrived from Australia. The modification was made to the canopy shattering device by ensuring an explosive bolt was fired through the canopy prior to the ejection seat leaving the aircraft.

FLGOFFs Williams and Parer achieved a notable milestone when they passed the 1000 flying hour mark. This was duly celebrated at the farewell of GPCAPT Cooper when they bought drinks for all, and also welcomed the new OC, CPCAPT Rose.

The Squadron once again demonstrated its versatility by being able to deploy four aircraft and 32 ground crew to Changi for a Mobility and Air Defence exercise at only two hours notice. The aircraft armed with He 30 mm ammunition and sidewinder missiles remained at Changi for five days on standby with RAAF Butterworth on standby as well.

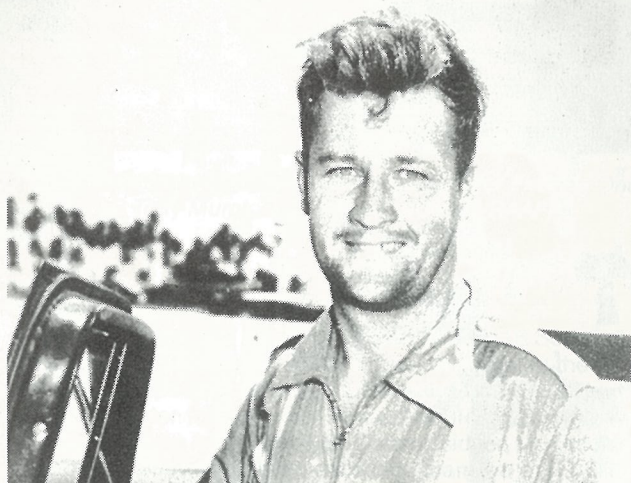
In June 1960 the Squadron took part in the second "firedog" operation which involved two operational strikes against Communist Terrorists. This was the Squadron's second attempt at a live strike, following the nil result of the first operation. This was once again a wing strike, however this time no operational weapons were carried.

The Squadron was required to begin at 0330 hours with the arming of aircraft and the first wave of 14 aircraft together with 14 aircraft from 3 Squadron to be airborne by 0630 hours. The strike was at Kuantan and the aircraft were divided into two elements. The plan was for one element to make several attack runs over the target as if on a bombing run, with the second element at altitude, going momentarily supersonic, with the idea being that the supersonic "boom" would be misinterpreted as the detonation of bombs. There was a slight hiccup when the strike leader's stopwatch stopped working which could have wreaked havoc with the co-ordination. However, with much talking between the two element leaders the desired results were achieved with great success. Unfortunately the ground element, which was a unit of Gurkhas from the British Army, failed to move in on time. It is thought that a dud round in the British Officer's gun caused the signal for action to be delayed, resulting in many of the terrorists escaping with only three being captured. A second attack was carried out at midday with no result.

On 22 July, FLTLT Worth (A94-976) and FLGOFF Bartrop (A94-961) encountered a mid-air collision at 42,000 feet, but fortunately both pilots were able to eject successfully. FLGOFF Bartrop's aircraft exploded after ejection whilst FLTLT Worth's aircraft was seen to hit the ground reasonably intact. FLGOFF Bartrop was located and rescued almost immediately, however FLTLT Worth was not as fortunate. It took quite a lengthy search by Sabres, Austers, Canberras and a Shackleton before his parachute was located in dense jungle four miles east of Bartrop. As the helicopter could not safely get in to recover him, a rescue team was despatched from No 94 Field Squadron. His spate of bad luck continued when the ground team failed to reach him before nightfall. Although Worth was not actually seen by the helicopter,

his Sarah radio set ensured that contact was not lost. That night he received a supply drop of food, torches, sleeping bag and other essentials (beer and cigarettes) and was left to spend the night with the animals.

On the 23rd it was decided to lower a team into the jungle a bit closer to him and upon arrival proceeded to clear a landing zone for the chopper. They did not manage to complete this by nightfall so FLTLT Worth spent another night in the jungle, but this time with some human company. He was successfully recovered the next day and was pronounced 100 per cent fit at the base hospital. AIR-CDRE Worth is now retired and living at Nabiac, NSW.



FLTLT Worth after spending 3 nights in the Jungle. (RAAF)

The beginning of August was cause for great celebration at the end of the Emergency with six aircraft taking part in a flypast over Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

The remainder of the month was no cause for celebration, with two more aircraft suffering inexplicable aileron jams, resulting in a total of four in the year. FLG OFF Parer also experienced a canopy opening in flight which then jammed, resulting in the ground crew having to free him from the cockpit. This was not the end of the bad run however, when on the 16th GPCAPT Rose suffered an oxygen failure above 10,000 feet. He consequently suffered hypoxia until he was able to complete a descent to below 10,000 feet. In addition due to a fatal crash in Australia, an examination was carried out into the cooling of the rear bearing and turbine in the engine. The findings showed that several aircraft were developing the cooling breakdown and many 77 Squadron aircraft were grounded pending engine changes.

Squadron flying continued up until November when a detachment to Clark Air Force Base was carried out. The exercise "Joss Stick Two" was a repeat of the year before with the detachment arriving in time to celebrate Thanksgiving with the Americans. The Squadron once again acquitted themselves well during the Manila air show and the exercise that followed.



WgCDR Hubble is greeted on his arrival by Col W. B. Harris for the start of Jostick Two. (RAAF)

A new method of tactical strike was introduced by the Squadron after being instructed by the Americans. It involved ground controlled flight until 30 miles from the target and then a 90° roll onto the target. Once below the cloud base visual sight corrections were carried out which was deemed highly successful. 77 Squadron also had some dissimilar aircraft combat practice with F100s from the 509th FIS. During one intercept sortie FLG OFF Curtis had several anxious moments trying to recover from a spin which occurred whilst setting up a scissor movement. During all the practice intercepts with the F100 and F102 it was generally felt that the Sabre held the upper hand, proving the worth of the CAC designed Avon-Sabre.

The remainder of December was spent preparing for the Scarf Trophy Air Gunnery Competition, with all the aircrew keen to better their scores to ensure their place on 77 team. On the completion of the competition, 77 Squadron came runnerup to No 60 (RAF) Squadron who had a score of 98 per cent.



77 Squadron Aircrew (RAAF)

1961

Two records were smashed in February 1961, when in one day of Air to Ground Gunnery 50 sorties were flown as well as 12 night sorties, comprising a grand total of 62 sorties. The ground crew were also very active as the armament section achieved an enviable one in 5421 stoppage rate in rounds fired.

In May the squadron once again took part in the "Joss Stick" exercise held at Clark Air Force Base, practising new techniques with the 509th Fighter Wing. It is interesting to note that on the Sports day organised by the Americans, the airmen from 77 Squadron defeated the Americans 4-2 in the grid-iron!

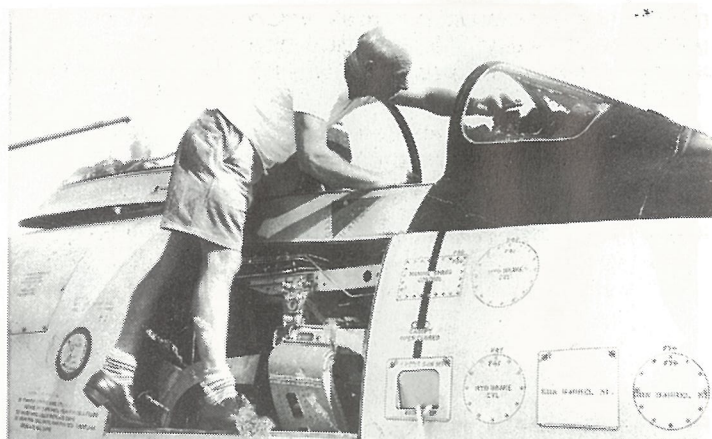
Tragedy struck on 16 June 1961 when FLG OFF M. V. Curtis (A94-977) was killed. He was engaged on an Army Co-operation exercise under the control of a Forward Air Controller in the Senger Pataniarea, approximately 15 nautical miles North East of Butterworth. His aircraft crashed into the United Patani Rubber Estate and Curtis was buried on 17 June in the Western Road Cemetary Penang.

1962

Squadron routine continued uninterrupted into the new year with only freakish bad weather and airstrip unservicabilities maring the otherwise normal squadron flying. A lot of excitement was generated on 15 January 1962, when a poisonous Viper snake was found in the wheel well of an aircraft. In the words of the Squadron historian however, "It was soon made unserviceable with the aid of a CO₂ fire extinguisher and a heavy ladder."

During a tactical reconnaissance mission the following month, some difficulty was encountered when attempting to find a group of target huts. It appears that persons unknown removed the huts during the night much to the consternation of the pilots involved!

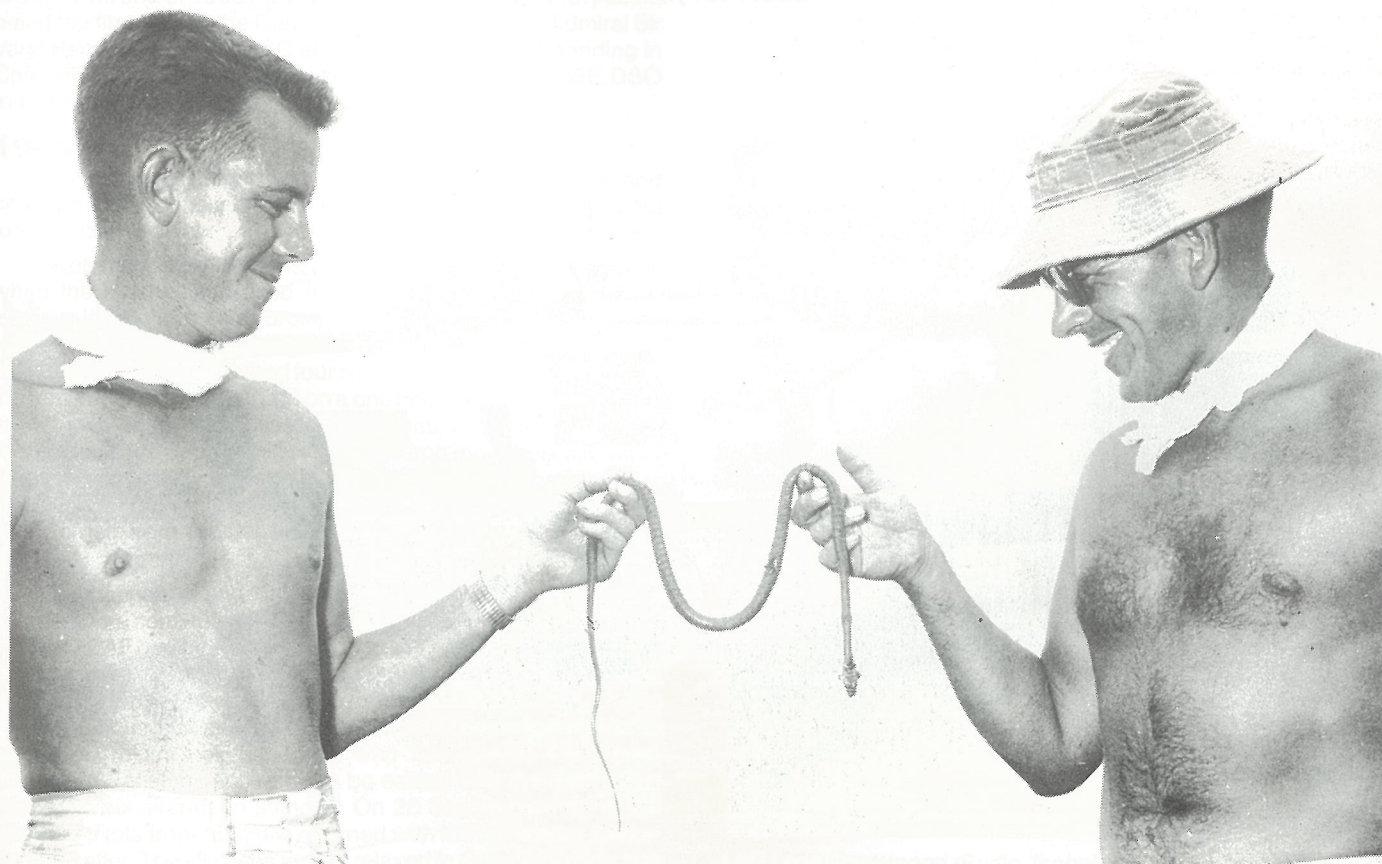
On 28 May a new squadron was born when eight aircraft from 77 Squadron formed No 79 Squadron at Ubon Thailand. The change in squadron identification was attributed to political reasons. The end result was a new 77 Squadron with ten aircraft, 30 airmen and eight pilots with a flying commitment of 175 hours



CPL Palmer (Instrument Fitter) carrying out checks on the gunsight camera. (RAAF)

per month. The newly formed 79 Squadron had eight aircraft, 40 airmen and ten aircrew. It was also decided that a rotational system was to be employed between all the squadrons of 78 Wing in order to keep the dependants of servicing members in Penang. SQNLDR E. J. Myers also took on the role of Temporary CO (following the departure of WGCDR Hubble to 79 Squadron) until 15 August, when SQNLDR R. E. Trebilco arrived at the squadron to take up the reins of the squadron as CO.

There was some excitement on 2 August when two aircraft on a long range cross country sorties were diverted to give chase to two unknown aircraft. The aircraft were spotted by GCI on the radar at approximately 20,000 feet, North East of the base. The two 77 Squadron aircraft were however "outpaced, outclimbed and out-thought" during the incident. The nearest they came to the "Bogeys" was 40 nautical miles at 25,000 feet with no visual contact. Ground Controllers lost contact with the "unknowns" at 44,000 feet doing .85 mach and still climbing. The identity of the aircraft was never known.



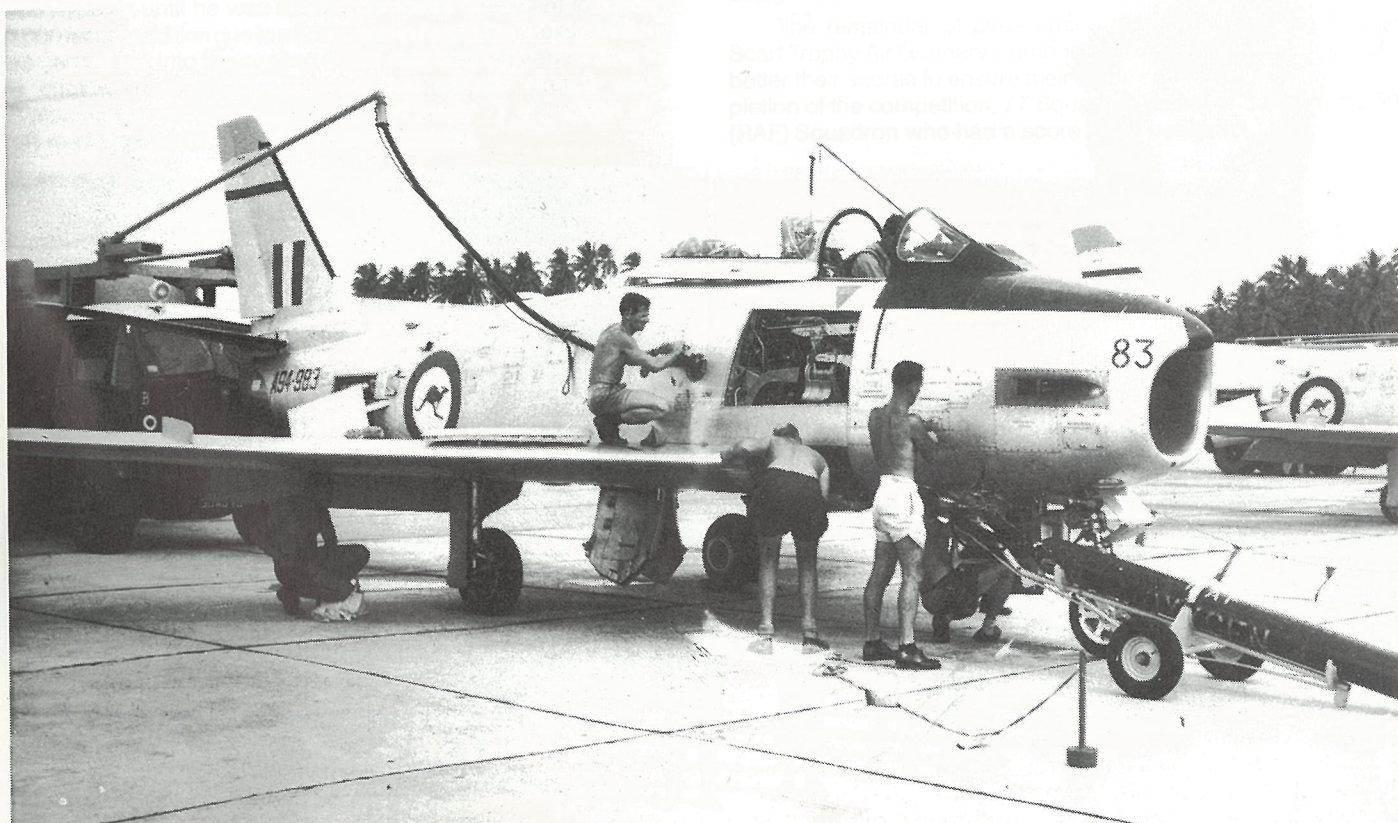
LAC'S Peterson and McMurrough holding the unserviceable Viper. (RAAF)



77 Squadron Aircrew Briefing

Standing are FLTLT Johnson and SQNLDR Trebilco

Seated Left to Right: Front to Back are FLGOFF Griffin and Palmer, PLTOFF Scott and Newton, FLGOFF Matthews and Viertel, FLGOFF K. Pyke. (RAAF)



SQNLDR Gogerly unstraps as ground crew refuel and replenish oxygen and ammunition.

(RAAF)

1963

The remainder of 1962 was predominantly routine with the squadron maintaining proficiency in all aspects of its operations. This continued up until 29 July when FLG OFF Griffin and PLT OFF Hunt had a mid-air collision during a cine with evasion sortie. Although the aircraft were recovered successfully, both sustained Cat four damage.



LAC "Dogga" Barker (Airframe Fitter). (RAAF)

On 1 August WGCDR Canon returned from Ubon replacing SQNLDR Tribilco as CO.

The following month saw the Federation of Malaysia born from the unification of four Commonwealth countries; Singapore, Malay, Sarawak and Sabah. The Indonesian government was very much opposed to this move and after see-sawing back and forwards on their stand on the issue, adopted a commitment of confrontation with the new Federation. It was their view that Sarawak and Sabah should unite with the Indonesians and this state of affairs was to continue right up until 1970.

Tensions immediately rose in the area with 3 Squadron and 77 Squadron maintaining alert aircraft. The tension tapered off towards the end of 1963 however, with the only noteworthy event being the first visit by the Commander in Chief, FEAF, Admiral Sir Varyl Begg, KCB, DSO, DSC and the Air Officer Commanding in Chief, FEAF, Air Marshall, Sir Hector Mcgreggor, KCB, CBE, DSO to inspect the squadron.

1964

The new year began with FLTLT Pyman giving chase and catching a RF101 near the Thai Border after being scrambled. No further action however, was taken.

September saw tensions in South East Asia rise markedly when the Indonesians used a Hercules aircraft to drop paratroopers into Johore. Riots broke out in Singapore and as tensions rose a state of National Emergency was declared. As a result, on 3 September 77 Squadron had four aircraft on five minutes alert and the remainder of the squadron on a one hour alert. All aircraft were armed with Sidewinder Missiles and guns, and were fitted with droptanks. On 7 September, No 3 Squadron moved six aircraft to Singapore to take up alert status, with the remainder coming under 77 Squadron's command. A further 15 aircraft and 52 groundcrew were ferried from Australia to maintain the seven day a week alert.

Combat patrols and familiarization flights for the new squadron members continue until 18 September when the Commander in Chief FEAF ordered the squadron to maintain a five minute alert continuously. This required 77 Squadron to maintain six aircraft for a morning patrol and one aircraft continuously airborne. On the 19th the 3 Squadron personnel attached to 77 Squadron moved to Changi to rejoin their squadron who had moved there from Singapore. Tensions appeared to be easing with the alert being relaxed to six aircraft on standby. On 28 September four of the attached pilots from Australia returned with the remainder following soon after. The alert was further relaxed in October to only two aircraft on standby.

The situation altered dramatically late in the month, when 90 Indonesians attempted to land at Malacca, resulting in 50 per cent either killed or captured. This necessitated in the squadron's alert status to be upgraded and to move to RAF Changi in order to maintain alert aircraft and patrol the Malacca Straits. The situation continued until the end of November, when tensions once again relaxed and the squadron returned to Butterworth. Consequently, 1964 had been a year of heightened unease for the squadron, which was typical of the whole South East Asia Region at that time.

1965

In February of the new year the squadron farewelled WGCDR Cannon and welcomed the new CO, WGCDR Reading.

Gradually the normal routine of the squadron life reasserted itself until 12 July, when 77 Squadron moved to Tengah to allow the runway at Butterworth to be resealed. Upon arrival the squadron was informed that the work could not proceed, so the squadron returned to Butterworth four days later. However, on 20 July the squadron packed once again and departed to Tengah.

The following month tensions yet again began to rise and alert states were again upgraded with the succession of Singapore from the Malaysian Federation.

On 9 September, a comical error occurred when, due to a switch setting error a droptank was dropped along with the desired 1,000 lb bomb onto China Rock Range!

Two days later the squadron returned to Butterworth due to completion of the runway repairs, but the game of musical runways was not yet over. On the 17th the squadron departed yet again from Butterworth for Tengah to take part in exercise "Guard-rail", returning on the 19th to Butterworth.

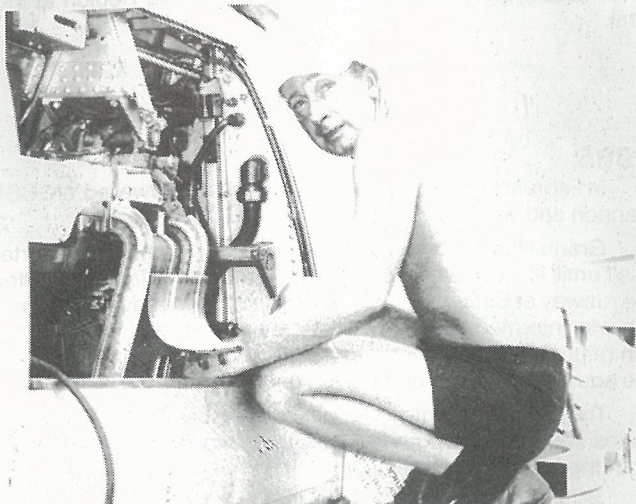
In October the squadron detached six aircraft to Labuan, Borneo to take over the alert from No 20 Squadron (RAF). While at Labuan, 77 Squadron carried out combat patrols as well as maintaining alert aircraft until 27 November when they were relieved by 3 Squadron.



LAC Leon Drummond (Radio Technician) assists SQNLDR G. Neil strap in. (RAAF)

1966

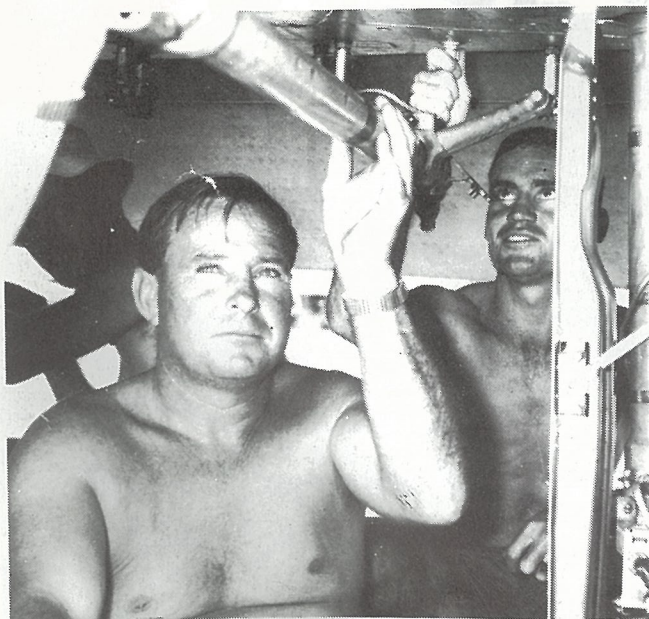
1966 was an exceptionally quiet year with nothing major occurring for either 77 Squadron or the Malaysian emergency. The squadron maintained routine operations by carrying out weapons practice and familiarization flights for the new pilots, as well as maintaining the fluctuating alert states. December saw the arrival of the new CO, WGCDR Martin to replace WGCDR Reading.



LAC Ken Edwards (Armament Fitter) carrying out checks. (RAAF)



77 Squadron Ground Crew at rest. (RAAF)



Front Tom Ellis (INSTFITT)
Rear Right Joe Cash (INSTFITT)
Rear Left Roger Bennett (AFFIT) (RAAF)

1967

February 1967 was a highlight however, when a squadron team of four pilots defeated 78 Wing staff pilots in an Air to Ground gunnery challenge, with their respective scores being 64 per cent average to 53 per cent average.

August was spent in preparation for the Malaysian Merdeka (Independence) Day celebration, which resulted in a ten Sabre formation and a ten Mirage formation (75 Squadron) flypast over George Town to open the air display. Four aircraft led by the CO, WGCDR Martin, also put on a simulated ground attack demonstration.

On 28 October No 78 Wing disbanded, which was acknowledged on 1 November by No 75 and No 77 Squadron aircraft joining together to form the number 78 in a flypast.

1968

The new year of 1968 began tragically for the squadron when it was learned that PLTOFF M. McGrath (A94-986), attached to No 79 Squadron Ubon, crashed when turning onto the base leg to land. He was killed immediately and his aircraft was totally destroyed.

On 19 March PLTOFF Cassebohm (A94-985) had a very lucky escape when his aircraft suffered a severe compressor stall shortly after take-off. After several unsuccessful attempts to clear the engine, PLTOFF Cassebohm elected to land in a paddy field. The touchdown was smooth, however during the roll a large drain tore off the undercarriage and port wing, with the aircraft stopping upright and bursting into flames. Unfortunately the canopy would not open all the way, but by virtue of much struggling the pilot was able to escape with only minor burns and back abrasions. Following this accident all Sabres were grounded for twenty days while an investigation tried to determine the cause. It was later learned that the compressor had failed, with many holes evident in the fuselage caused by the disintegrating compressor blades.



The burnt remains of the cockpit of A94-985. (RAAF)

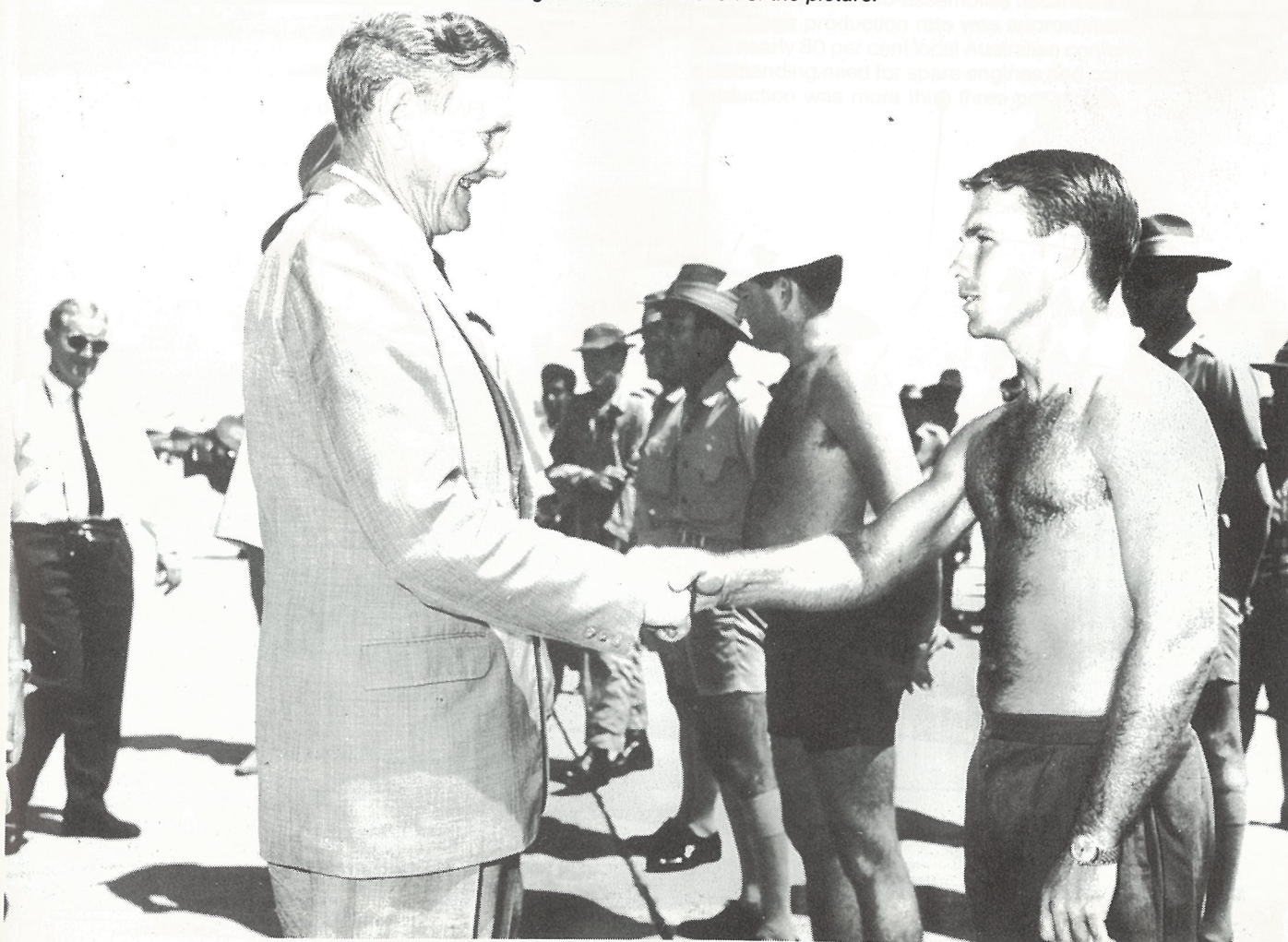


Remains of the under-carriage in relation to A94-985. (RAAF)



*Final resting place of PLTOFF Cassebohm's crashed Sabre
Note irrigation ditch to the left of the picture.

(RAAF)



*Prime Minister John Gorton meets Reg Richardson, an electrician of 77 Squadron.
Note the informal parade dress.

(RAAF)

On 13 June, the Prime Minister, Right Honourable John Gorton MP visited 77 Squadron. The Prime Minister was keenly interested in the squadron, as he was a former wartime pilot with the squadron. During the visit an informal get together was held where the Prime Minister was presented with a squadron plaque to commemorate his visit and his previous wartime experience.

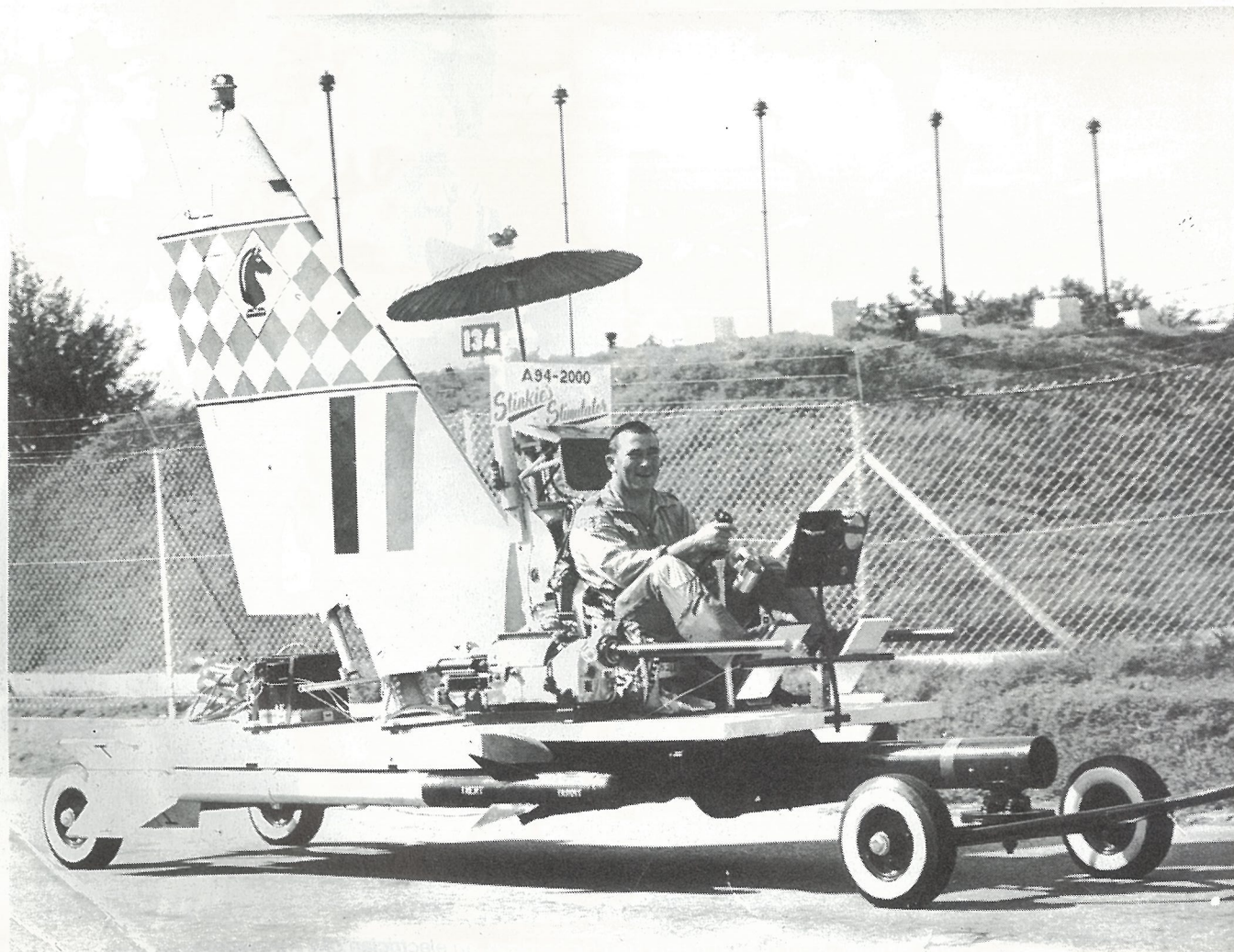
SQNLDR D. G. "Stinky" Stenhouse passed the 2,000 Sabre flying hour on 21 November 1968. He received the appropriate welcome and was presented with his own personal aircraft, A94-2000, more affectionately known as "Stinky's simulator."

Homeward Bound — Again

Squadron routine was carried out as usual until Christmas of 1968 when all eyes looked to returning back to Australia to re-equip with the supersonic Dassault Mirage 1110 fighter. The squadron performed only navigation exercises and general flying duties during the windup of activities in Butterworth, departing for Williamtown in early 1969.

SQNLDR D. G. "Stinky" Stenhouse being checked out in his new aircraft, presented to him on completion of his 2000th flying hour.

(RAAF)



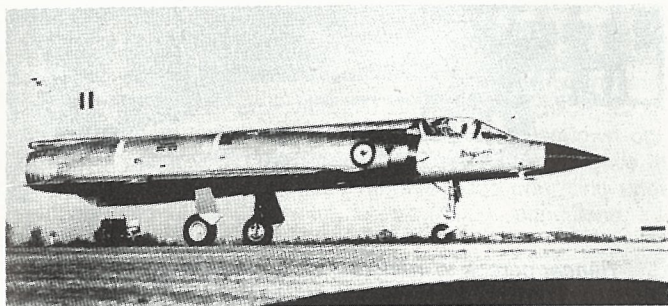
Stinky's simulator on its first sortie. (RAAF)

MIRAGE 1969 — 1986

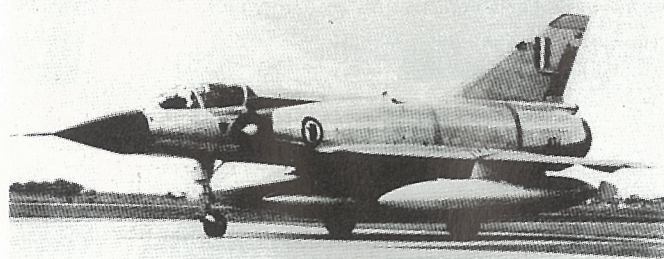
Mirage: Belle-De-La-France.

In the late 1950's the RAAF was looking for a successor to the hard worked AVON SABRE. A number of designs had been considered but the field was narrowed down to two contenders: the LOCKHEED F-104 STARFIGHTER and the GENERAL AVIONS MARCEL DASSAULTS (GAMD) MIRAGE III. ROLLS-ROYCE was also keen to increase their sales and along with GAMD the two companies combined their efforts to produce an AVON ENGINED MIRAGE. An AVON powered Mirage (CITY OF HOBART) was built, flown and assessed by RAAF Pilots, who were impressed with the AVON's extra power and low fuel consumption, but the French were keen to market an all French version and also pushed the ATAR Powered Mirage. In addition, the SNECMA company offered a very attractive package deal for their ATAR engine, and eventually the RAAF chose the full French option in preference to the AVON version and the STARFIGHTER F104.

The Government Aircraft Factory (GAF) was chosen as the major contractor to build the complete fuselage and handle the final assembly. The Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) was selected as a major sub-assembly producer and to build and supply the ATAR 9C engine for the RAAF.



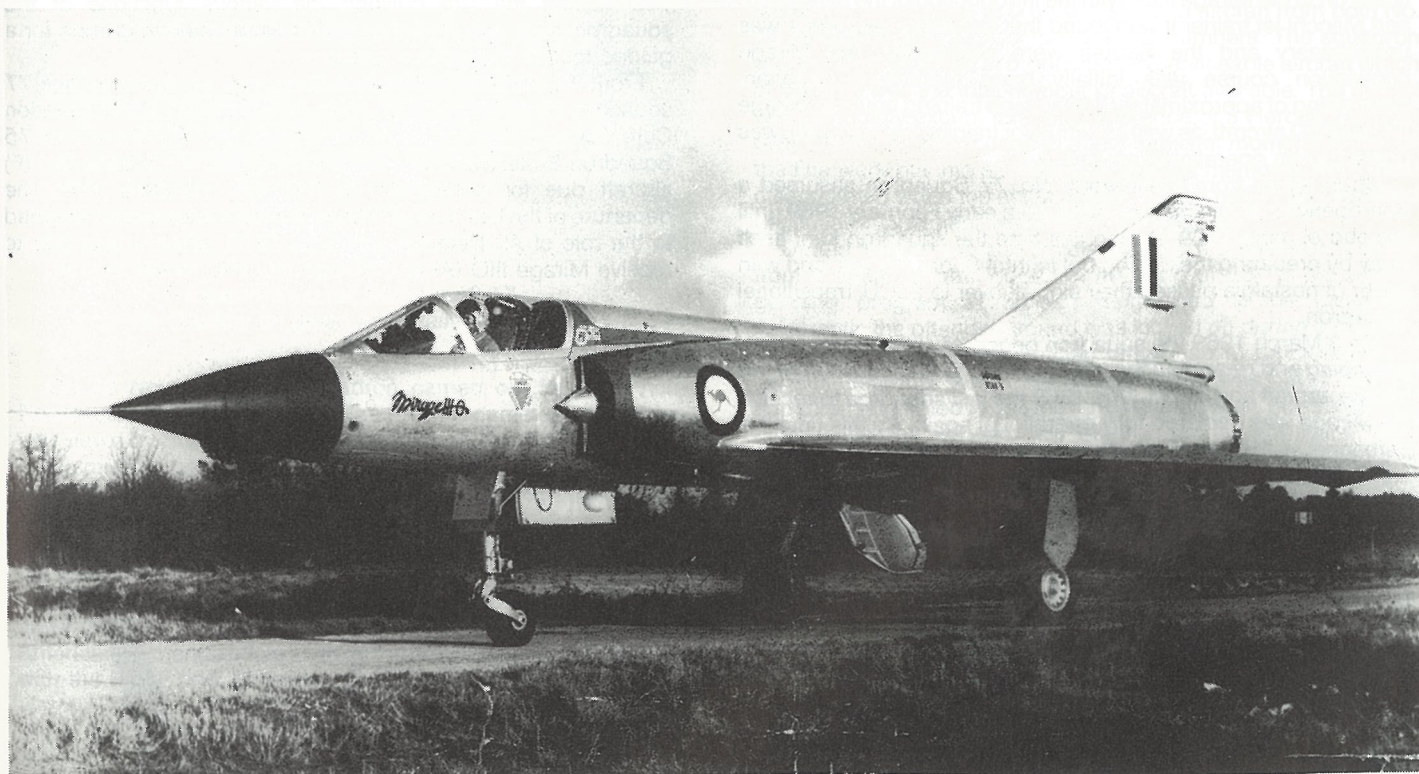
Avon powered city of Hobart. (RAAF)



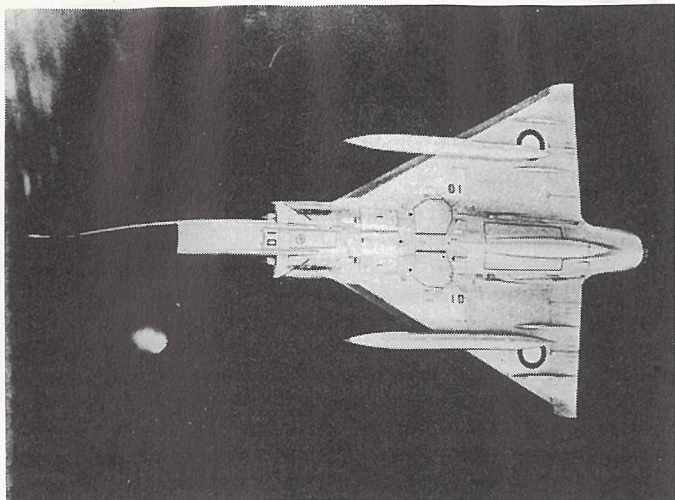
A3-01 fitted with three external fuel tanks. (RAAF)

The basic MIRAGE IIIE French designed aircraft received extensive modifications to meet the RAAF requirements. The Australian aircraft could not be designated Mirage IIIA since this designation was already being used, so the designation Mirage IIIO was used for all Australian single seat Mirage aircraft.

The initial order by the Australian Government was for thirty aircraft, which was later doubled with the option for forty extra aircraft also taken up. This resulted in the final total of 100 Mirage IIIO single seat aircraft, at the total cost of approximately \$260,000,000. The first two aircraft (A3-1 and A3-2) were built in France by GAMD for testing and various modifications. Both aircraft were later flown by Hercules aircraft to Australia with A3-1 making its first Australian flight on 11 January 1964. A3-3 was the first Australian assembled Mirage and first flew on 16 November 1963. From aircraft A3-9 onwards the quantity of French built components and sub-assemblies declined until early 1966 when the Mirage production rate was approximately three per month with nearly 80 per cent local Australian content. By this time, with a demanding need for spare engines and components, the ATAR production was more than three per month.



A3-3 on the tarmac at Avalon Vic. 16 December 1963. (RAAF)



A3-01 first Australian Mirage. (RAAF)

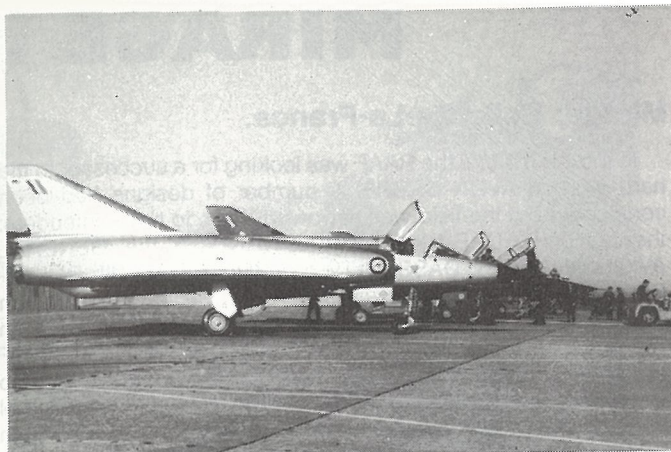
The first 48 aircraft were built as a straight interceptor and designated as Mirage IIIO (F), and the remaining 52 aircraft designated Mirage IIIO (A), were modified to additionally encompass a ground attack capability. This modification required the aircraft to be fitted with the improved radar CSF CYRANO 11B, Doppler Navigation/attack equipment and a Radar Altimeter. In June 1969 it was decided to modify the Mirage IIIO (F) to the Mirage IIIO (A) standard, and when completed these aircraft were re-designated Mirage IIIO (FA). As the RAAF assessed that the Mirage basic performance exceeded that of any aircraft in the region it was decided that the optional rocket engine SEPR 844 was not required and was never fitted to RAAF Mirage aircraft. As a result, a 550 Lt (121 Gal) fuel tank was fitted in the rocket bay instead.

In late 1964 the Australian Government approved the purchase of ten Mirage IIID two seat aircraft and in December 1970 a further six were ordered to bring the total number of Mirage IIID to sixteen, bringing the total Mirage complement up to 116 aircraft. Before the introduction of the Mirage IIID, aircraft pilots underwent fighter conversion in Vampire T35 trainers, the AVON SABRE and finally on to the Mirage IIIO. With the introduction of the Mirage IIID and Macchi jet trainer it was found that the Sabre sequence was unnecessary and the Sabres were withdrawn. The Mirage conversion course was initially three months in duration, comprising of approximately 100 Mirage training hours in Mirage IIIO and IIID aircraft, as well as simulator training before a pilot was posted to an operational squadron.

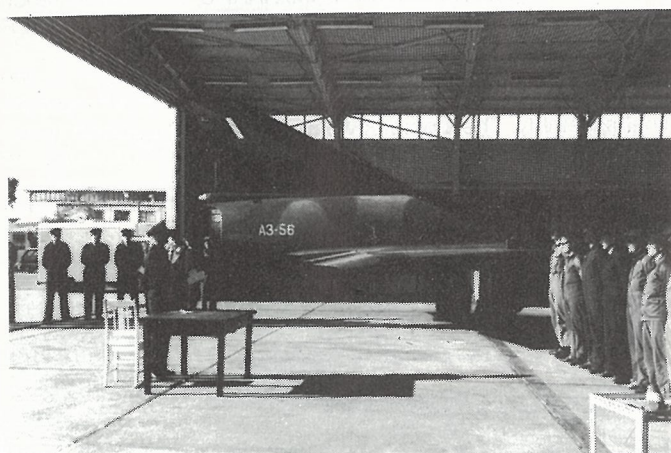
Upon return from Butterworth No. 77 Squadron assumed a non-operational role for the period from early February 1969 until the end of June 1969. During this time the squadron kept itself busy by preparing their aging but faithful Sabre Aircraft; and with an air of nostalgia passed their aircraft over to 20CU Transitional Squadron.

On 3 March 1969 the squadron began its arduous task of re-equipping and re-arming the squadron to the hi-tech world of the Mirage aircraft and by 30 June 1969 the last squadron to receive the Mirage was declared fully operational again. By this time the personnel in the squadron dwindled down to eight officers and some 102 airmen, but the establishment requirement at that time was double this number. On 30 June 1969 the Commanding Officer of No. 76 Squadron SQNLDR J.A. Treadwell arrived to become the Temporary Commanding Officer, while the Commanding Officer WGCdr W.H. Simmonds was attached to 20CU for No. 14 Mirage Conversion Course.

The members of No. 77 Squadron had the chance to launch their first Mirages at Williamtown on 7 July 1969. The pilots with the honour of being the first personnel to fly 77 Squadron Mirage aircraft were - FLTLT K.I. Semmler, FLGOFF T.P. Body, and FLGOFF N.J. Ford. The squadron achieved the first monthly Mirage flying rate of 102 sorties, totalling 137 hours and 40 minutes with a limited number of pilots and aircraft. 77 Squadron slowly gained more knowledge and confidence handling the new aircraft and both the flying rate and turnaround times lessened with the flying rate improving to an acceptable level.



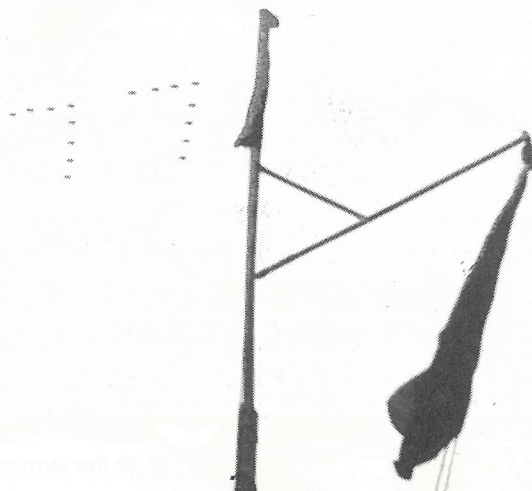
Flight line 7 July 1969. (RAAF)



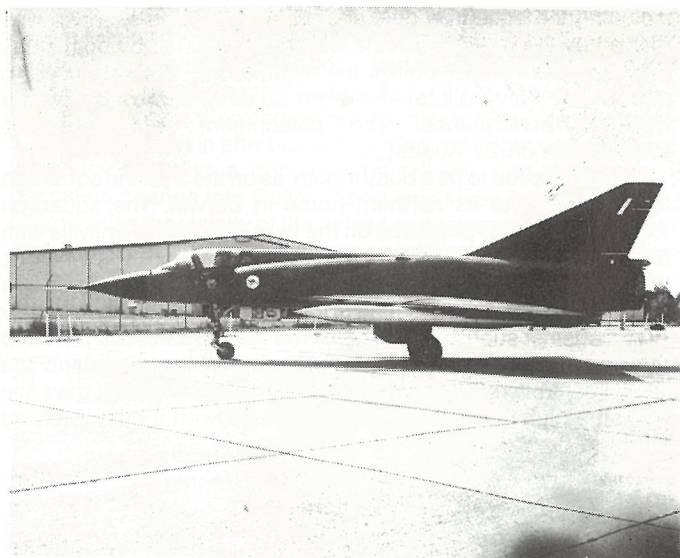
Hangar parade to mark first day of Mirage flying. (RAAF)

The squadron's first open day with the new aircraft was held on the 27th August 1969. At an informal gathering of approximately 130 visitors the CO outlined the various functions of the squadron, after which all the visitors were taken in groups for a guided tour of the various sections.

From 16 until 30 September there was no flying as five 77 squadron pilots were attached to 76 Squadron for "Operation Cure", which was the ferry of Mirage IIIO (A) aircraft to 75 Squadron Butterworth and the returning with the Mirage IIIO (F) aircraft due for conversion to IIIO (FA) standard. With the departure of the last Mirage IIIO (A) aircraft the squadron reverted to the role of Air Defence until July 1970, when it was due to receive Mirage IIIO (A) and Mirage IIIO (FA) model aircraft.

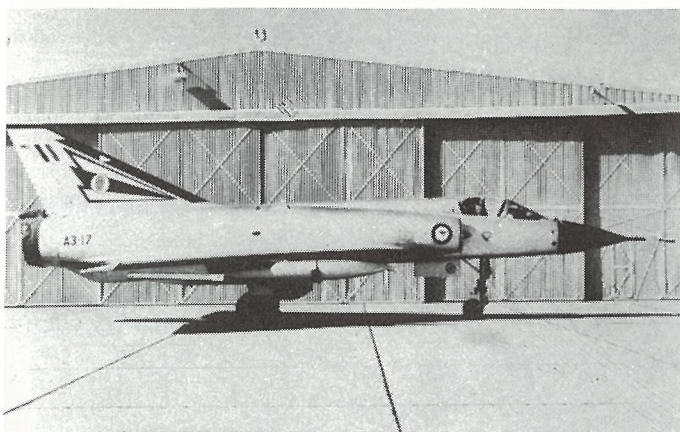


First 77 Squadron Mirage formation flypast 1 September 1969. (RAAF)



*A3—73 77 Squadron Tarmac 1969.
Original Mirage 1110(F) aircraft. (RAAF)*

On 20 October 1969, the squadron departed on its first deployment away from Williamtown with the Mirage aircraft deploying to Darwin via Townsville for Exercise Stubborn Mule. The detachment was lead by the Temporary Commanding Officer SQNLDR Treadwell and consisted of six pilots, two engineering officers and 102 airmen. The exercise was held with No. 2 Control Reporting Unit (2CRU) to provide controller training for CRU personnel and valuable area familiarization for the aircrew. The squadron re-deployed back to Williamtown on 7 November, after a highly successful exercise, which gave the squadron valuable experience in mobility and operating under semi-operational Air Defence Exercise (ADEX) conditions.



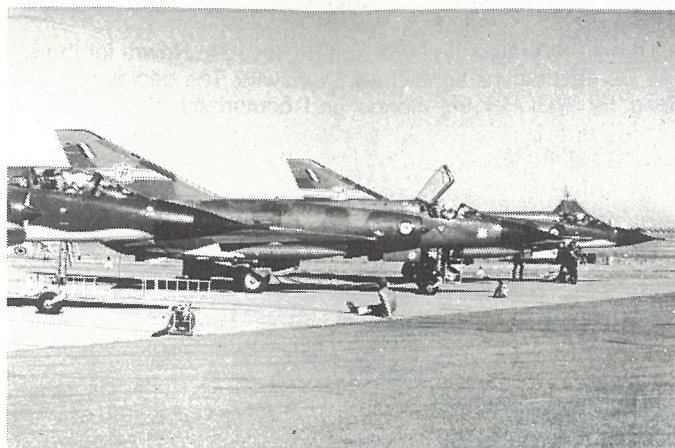
*Experimental tail flash on A3-17
Note Grumpy on green white tail flash. (RAAF)*

On 28 November, the squadron carried out its first Photo Reconnaissance Mission using the KA56 B camera; this mission was flown by SQNLDR Treadwell in aircraft A3-79. The success of the mission heralded the start of the Photo - Reconnaissance role that 77 Squadron was to carry out until the mid 1980's when the role was taken over by RF-111C aircraft. In a year of beginnings, the first week in December saw the squadron carry out their first HE Bombing Program at Evans Head bombing area. December also signified the arrival to 77 Squadron of CAPT Peter Fleishchacker of the USAF who became the first of many American exchange pilots to enjoy the pleasures of flying Mirages with the RAAF and 77 Squadron in particular.

1970

On the 4 January 1970, WGCDR W.H. (Bill) Simmonds took over as Commanding Officer of 77 Squadron as the first permanent CO of Mirage aircraft with 77 Squadron.

The Squadron had its first recall on 21 January 1970 to prepare the aircraft and ground support equipment for the forthcoming exercise. On 27 January, a 77 Squadron detachment of eight aircraft lead by the CO, departed Williamtown on route to Tindal via Townsville for Exercise Castor Oil. During this period the squadron carried out many simulated strikes against Darwin city and airstrip. After a very successful and valuable exercise the Squadron redeployed on 6 February. On 27 February, the squadron deployed with five aircraft and sixty personnel to Townsville for Exercise Second Stab, which consisted of NAVEX sorties and close air support flights.



Exercise Caster Oil Tindal February, 1970 (RAAF)

On 10 April, Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Highnesses the Duke of Edinburgh and Princess Anne paid a visit to RAAF Williamtown on their way to a civic reception in the City of Newcastle. Many local dignitaries were present at the Royal arrival, and most base personnel assembled to catch a brief glimpse. After the Royal lightening visit the squadron began their first series of practices for several flypasts planned for the Royal visitors, with WGCDR Simmonds leading the formation over Canberra on practice runs on 20 and 21 April involving 16 aircraft and three spares. To perform the full flying commitment the squadron was forced to borrow pilots and aircraft from both No. 76 Squadron and 2 OCU to make the numbers. The squadron ground crew excelled in producing ten serviceable aircraft which at the time was the total number of aircraft available. The flypast went smoothly except for the appearance of a Hercules aircraft over Canberra, which caused a few stressful moments! After all the fine work put into all the rehearsals the members were most disappointed when the actual Royal Flypast had to be cancelled because of inclement weather on 23 April.

During mid April, due to the discovery of a 30mm ADEN round from a Sabre aircraft lodged in the wing of A3-72, the week's gunning program at Saltash range had to be cancelled. Apparently the offending round was kicked off during a gunnery detail and consequently Saltash range had to be closed for a general clean up. Whilst the Saltash range was out of use the squadron attempted to use the range at Singleton, but due to high crosswinds the Forward Air Control aircraft (Winjeels) were grounded which prevented weapons detail. As both ranges were closed the squadron carried out two versus two air combat tactics in readiness for the forthcoming ADEX.

On 26 May the squadron took part in ADEX SIERRA. This was the first full ADEX for the squadron since being re-equipped with Mirages. 77 Squadron defended Williamtown against the "Intruders" and "Maruders" from 50TU Williamtown (Sabres) and aircraft from Amberley. The squadron felt it was a successful exercise according to the high kill rate, but lack of practice showed in the slow scramble times. After the ADEX, the squadron aircraft used the MK82 500lb practice bombs at Evan's Head Range for the first time. Although there were a few problems in the beginning, the bomb was judged by all concerned as a good practice bomb. After some fairly low scores using the MK82 it was discovered that the initial sight settings from ARDU were incorrect, and once the problem was sorted out the scores improved markedly.

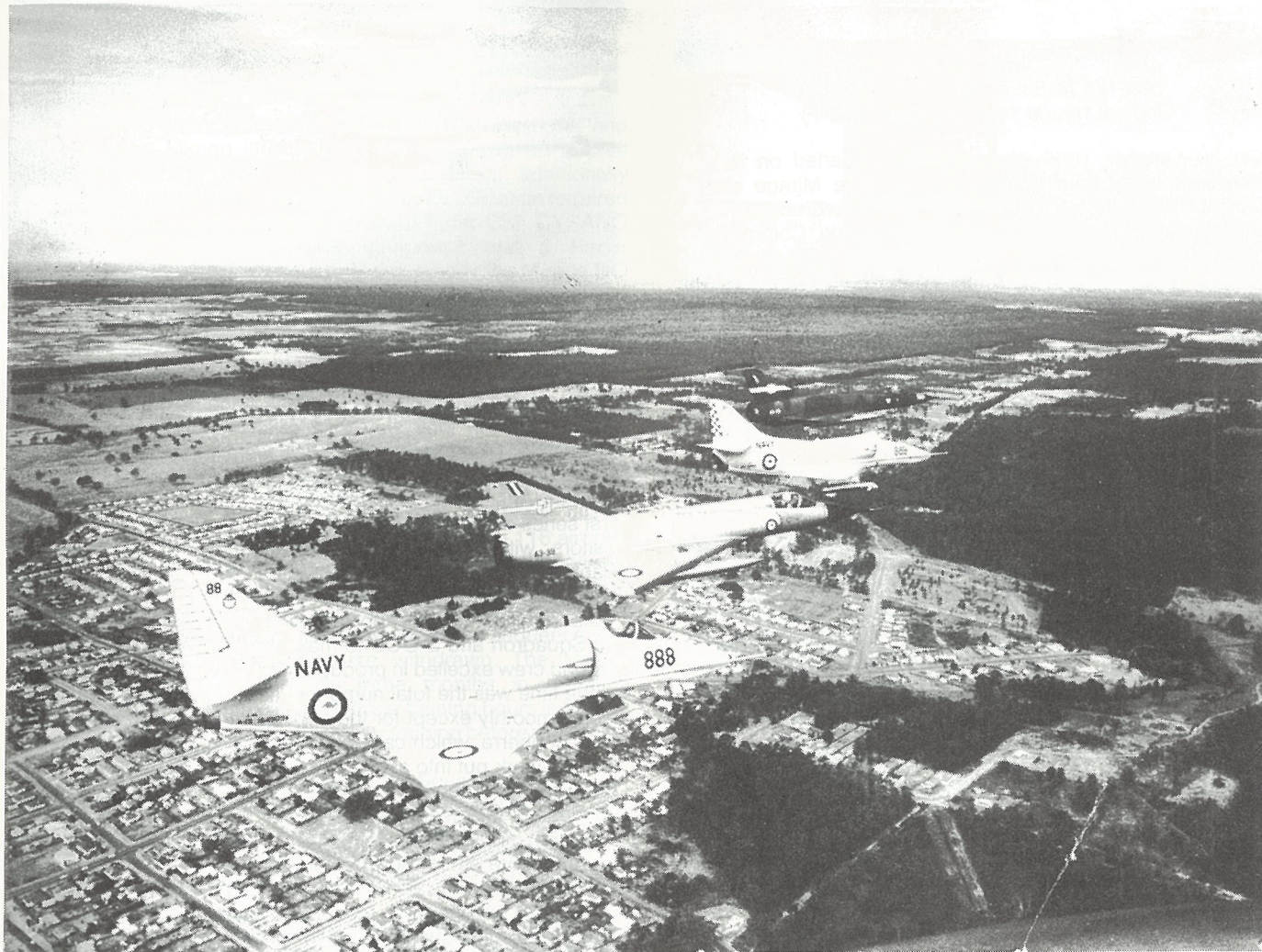
From 13 July the squadron commenced the first live Air to Air programme on the banner. The aircrew at the time described this programme as the "Sport of Kings". After the initial aircraft and radar problems the programme settled down and some good consistent shooting resulted. This programme was interrupted in late July for some Navy Co-operation with HMAS Perth, which towed a splash target which was used by the squadron for practice bombing and strafing runs.

Earlier in the month, the squadron flew tactics against the Sabre aircraft from 50TU. This proved to be a very worthwhile and enjoyable exercise, particularly as the Mirage was competing against a different aircraft type. The aging Sabres proved to be worthy opponents however, with the unofficial scores being 31 kills each.

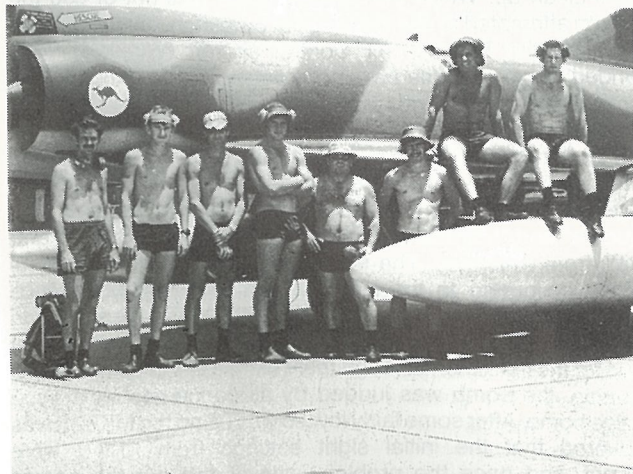
From 17 August the squadron deployed to Nowra for the first Air Combat tactics against A4 Skyhawks. The deployment was lead by WGCdr Simmonds and comprised of four aircraft,

including the squadron dual aircraft, A3-104. The exercise was marred by the weather but the experience gained by both sides was very worthwhile. During the exercise A3-104 was used to carry many Navy pilots who were suitably impressed by the Mirage's performance. The detachment re-deployed to Williamtown on 21 August.

August proved to be a busy month, as on the 31st the squadron again headed to its northern home in Darwin. The squadron experienced a few problems on the ferry flight via Townsville with the second wave of four aircraft remaining overnight in Townsville. When all eight aircraft finally arrived in Darwin the pilots flew a very concentrated programme of intercepts culminating in a baby ADEX against supersonic targets. The results achieved reflected the teamwork that had developed between the pilots and the 2CRU controllers. The squadron's ground crew efforts gave the aircraft a high serviceability rate which allowed the target flying hours to be passed with little difficulty.



Formation with A4 Skyhawks over Nowra August 1970. (RAAF)



Ground crew September 1971. (RAAF)

The Deltas

With November 1970 came the welcome news that No. 77 Squadron had been selected by the Department of Air to form an aerobatic team to "Wave the Flag" around the country during the RAAF's Golden Jubilee celebrations. After some shuffling around within the squadron, FLGOFF J. Archer and FLGOFF N. Ford came across from the PR Flight and were replaced by FLGOFF S. Low and CAPT P. Fleischacker. Early in November initial practices consisted of straight hands formation working up through wing overs to loops and barrel rolls. When most of the bugs were ironed out, additional members were added to the team. The team consisted of SQNLDR Grayson - Leader, FLGOFF Archer - No 2, FLTLT Robson - No 3, PLTOFF Allen - No 4, and FLGOFF Ford - No 5. FLGOFF C. Mirow was also involved in the Delta's, but did not participate in the initial practices due to a FAC commitment at Shoal Water Bay.

The leader, SQNLDR Grayson, who had been a member of the Sabre Marksmen Team, evolved the sequence to be flown by the team. The sequence chosen consisted of a Vic loop with a 90° roll to the right on exit, a wing over right followed by a steep turn left. A change to card is then carried out on entry to a loop, going on into a slow steep turn in afterburners. A wing over right with a change to goose leads to a goose barrel roll left, and then another formation change into Delta. After a final steep turn in Delta, the team leaves the vicinity of the airfield and returned for a horizontal bomb burst finale. Eventually, two co-ordinated solo aircraft were incorporated to fill any gaps during the main display. After many arguments and suggestions the members settled on a name for the team, and the "DELTAS" were born.



*The "Deltas" aircrew 1971.
from left WGCdr W. Simmonds, SQNLDR B. Grayson, FLGOFF J. Archer, SQNLDR H. Collets, FLGOFF A. Allen, FLGOFF C. Mirow, FLTLT D. Robson, FLGOFF N. Ford. (RAAF)*

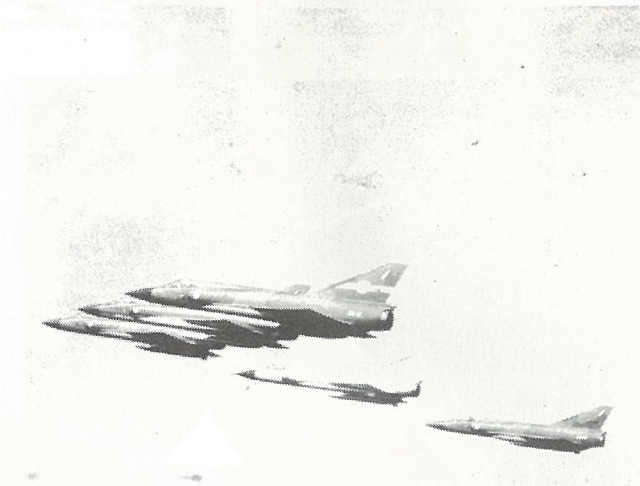
The first official display for the Deltas was a fly past at Canberra on 20 November. Led by WGCdr Simmonds the Delta's flew an immaculate goose formation over the Department of Defence which caused many accusations of polluting Canberra's air with the new aircraft smoke modification. The team spent the first few days of December trying for the ever elusive perfection, but the poor weather laid waste to all good plans. Nevertheless, the team departed into the gloom bound for Avalon and a display for an Academy Graduation at Point Cook, but the appalling weather precluded any aerobatics. However, the base personnel were impressed with a display of steep turns and various formations that the Delta's were able to perform.

1971

The new year opened with various delays to flying as the resurfacing of the runway at Williamtown was behind schedule and the weather proved unsuitable for flying. To make matters worse, on 26 January a Sabre crashed on the Williamtown strip

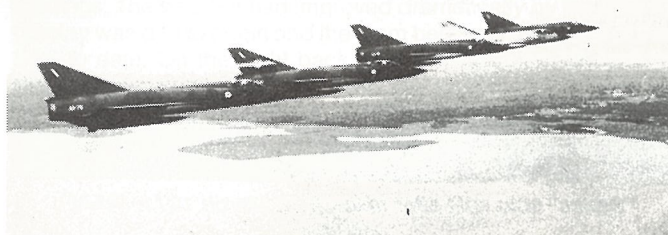
necessitating a diversion to Richmond. Unfortunately Richmond was not ready for the diverting aircraft and it took six hours to turn around four Mirages, resulting in a return to base after stand down.

February brought a change of luck and the Deltas aerobatic sequences were progressing well with the formation pilots gaining more confidence, although a major problem to overcome was achieving perfect and consistent timing for the crossover manoeuvres. The solo pilots began to co-ordinate their sequence with the team leader, when finally by the end of the month the complete aerobatic sequence was being rehearsed.

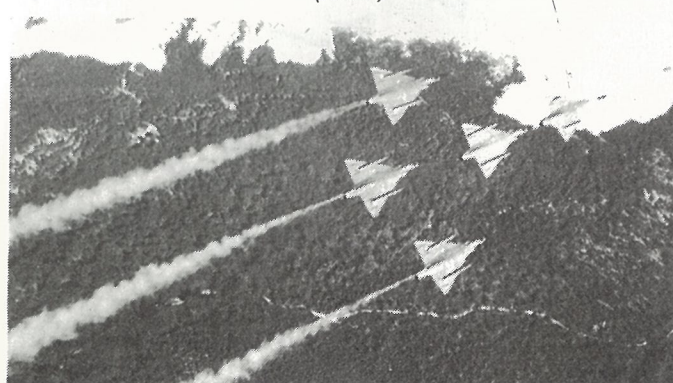


*"Deltas" practice over Williamtown 2 March 1971.
(RAAF)*

Although the flying side of the team was progressing well, almost every project associated with the aerobatic team had for various reasons come to grief. The team brochure that had been planned was disapproved by the Department of Air, and the coloured smoke had to be discarded due to high cost and the unavailability of a suitable smoke dispenser. The next problem to arise was that only two aircraft with the semi gloss paint scheme were available for the displays, which necessitated them to be flown by the solo pilots. To make matters worse the tailored flying suits designed for the team were a couple of months overdue, and not one suitable photograph had been taken due to all the problems that had occurred.

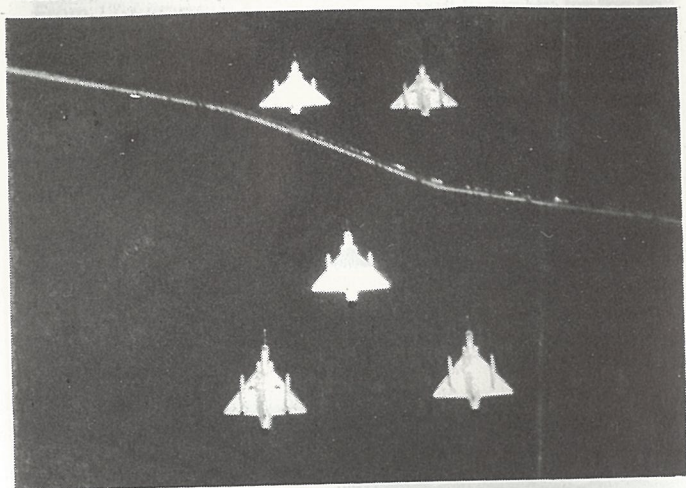


*"Deltas" practice formation over Williamtown
2 March 1971.
(RAAF)*

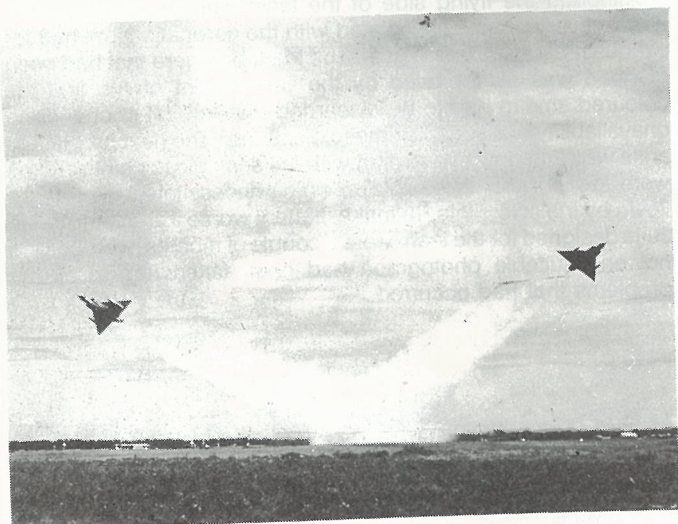


*"Deltas" goose roll over Williamtown 2 March 1971.
(RAAF)*

The morning of 11 March 1971 was the big day that all had been waiting for when the Deltas one to five and solo one and two taxied out as a formation of seven, flew the complete display sequence and taxied back in as a seven. At last 77 Squadron had an aerobatic team, but it was also very special in other ways. It was the only team in the world to use the Mirage, and at the time it was one of only three current aerobatic teams in the world using high performance fighters (ours being unmodified except for smoke.) The team also had two solo aircraft which meant many additional timing problems, but had the advantage of having something in front of the crowd at all times. From 11 March the display began to look quite polished with two practices a day through the complete routine including two modified routines in case of bad weather.



"Deltas" carrying out a loop over Williamtown 2 March 1971. (RAAF)



"Deltas" solo split after take-off 12 March 1971. (RAAF)



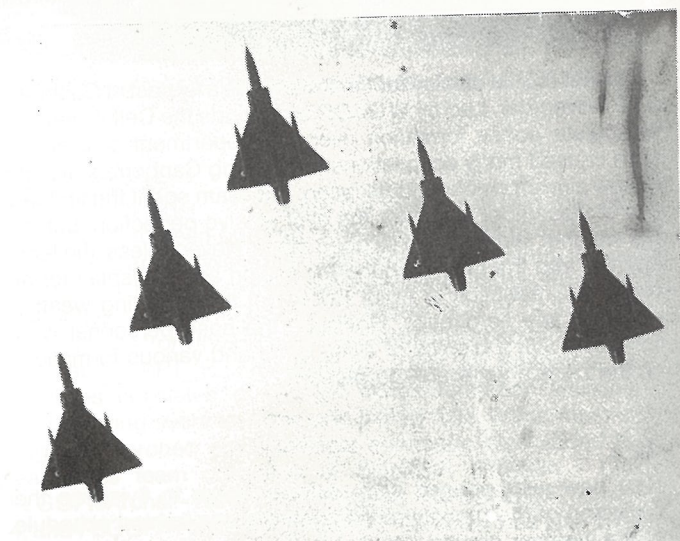
"Deltas" formation with solo crossover 1971. (RAAF)

The first Deltas airshow occurred on 16 March, when the Deltas put on a show for friends and relatives of squadron personnel on the squadron open day. The display team consisted of the following members: Team Manager and spare pilot - SQNLDR Hugh Collits, Team Leader - SQNLDR Grayson, No 2 - FLTLT John Archer, No 3 - FLGOFF Chris Mirow, No 4 - FLTLT Alf Allen, No 5 - FLTLT Nick Ford, Solo 1 - WGCDR Bill Simmonds, and Solo 2 - FLTLT Robson. A commentary was provided by SQNLDR Collits using a portable public address system. A good time was had by all, and after the display a chicken and champagne party was held to suitably celebrate the Deltas world premier.

On 21 March the CO WGCDR Simmonds with SQNLDR Grayson, SQNLDR Collits and FLTLT Robson travelled to Richmond for timing practices with the other aircraft involved in the Jubilee Displays, after which they proceeded to Pearce in an Orion. Delta 4 FLGOFF Alf Allen also had to join the Orion passengers to Pearce when he unsuccessfully tried aerobatics in his MGB sports car, but fortunately for the team and himself his wounds healed in time for the display.



"Deltas" crossovers WGCDR Simmonds and FLTLT Robson in solo aircraft Pearce 1971. (RAAF)



"Deltas" part of modified airshow Perth 1971. (RAAF)

On 23 March ten 77 Squadron and four 76 Squadron aircraft flew to Pearce via Alice Springs. Their arrival coincided with the arrival of cyclone "Mavis", and due to the poor weather there was a constant debate as to whether the show would go on. The rain remained and the Pearce display, with His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh as the official guest, was carried out below 800 feet cloud base and limited visibility due to rain. The formation of five took off but could only carry out steep turns and different formations due to the weather.

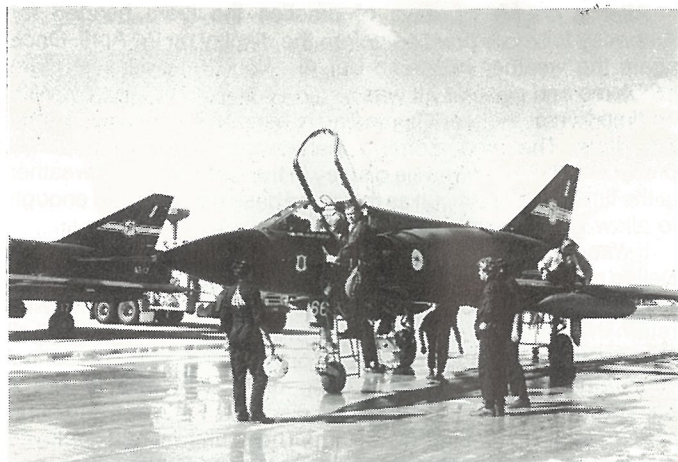
The following day the 14 Mirages took off for Alice Springs. Cyclone Mavis also left the area but the trip back to Williamtown was in blue sky the whole way. With no rest for the wicked, the squadron headed off for Richmond on the next leg of the trip and on 31 March a full rehearsal was carried out, as there was no opportunity on the day of the display for any practice. The team left Richmond on 1 April for two days of practice in Canberra. On 3 April the Canberra weather was ideal for the display. The crowds turned up in their thousands and the hills around were also topped with spectators. The display went extremely well and the team was almost embarrassed by their smoke trails. After their first full Jubilee Display the Deltas received many very favourable comments particularly from the ex-KNUCKS at Staff College, and were especially thrilled with the loud applause as they walked back through the crowd. After an early start the next day, the team headed for Richmond for display number three. The weather was not as kind as the day before with some scattered cloud getting in the way. The display went ahead before an enormous crowd but generally was not as good as the Canberra display. When the team returned to Williamtown for a well earned Easter break it only flew two displays to obtain some coloured air to air photos.



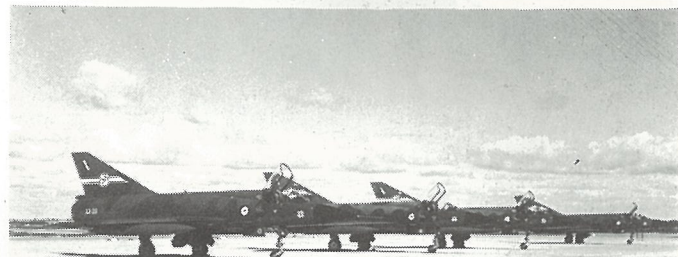
"Deltas" goose roll over Richmond 4 April 1971. (RAAF)



*"Deltas" modified start to Laverton Airshow.
18 April 1971. (RAAF)*



*"Deltas" SQNLDR Bruce Grayson at Tullermarine.
18 April 1971. (RAAF)*



"Deltas" on tarmac at Tullermarine 18 April 1971. (RAAF)

The team flew to Edinburgh, S.A. on 14 April for a further display, but poor weather interfered in transit and during the actual performance. Immediately after the display the team departed for Tullermarine and arrived in very bad weather believing that perhaps "Mavis" had arrived from the west. On the Laverton Airshow the following day the display had to be modified as the team could not use the Laverton strip for take-off and landings. The weather had improved dramatically by the time the display was due to begin and the team believed it was one of their best to date. On the flight back to Williamtown on 19 April the team rendezvoused with a Vulcan B2 aircraft of the RAF 617 (Dambuster) Squadron off the coast at Nowra and escorted him on a flypast over Sydney.



*RAF 617 SQN (Dambusters) Vulcan B2 Bomber 19 April 1971.
(RAAF)*

After a couple of days of practice the team headed for Amberley for more practice before the display on 24 April. Once again the weather interfered but the cloud only caused slight problems and generally it was regarded as a good display. With no time to rest the team immediately headed for Townsville after the show. The next morning there was only time for partial practice with the Townsville display in the afternoon. The weather at the time proved difficult as the cloud base was just high enough to allow the full sequence.

It was with deep regret that most of the people involved in the Deltas realised that it was all over. After celebrating that night the team headed back to Williamtown for a well earned rest and on its return the squadron received much praise for their efforts from all over Australia. The effort on the part of the maintenance personnel was remarkable and it had been quite satisfying to see a squadron work so well. The Deltas disbanded after a flying effort of 331 sorties for 328.4 hours flying. The squadron had deployed a minimum of 11 Mirages to seven different locations and performed before a total estimated audience of 750,000 people. Despite early difficulties, particularly aircraft availability and unsuitable weather conditions, the seven aircraft team carried out their task with distinction.



"Deltas" horizontal bomb burst final 1971. (RAAF)

Operations Normal

May 1971 brought a welcome relief from the pressure of the previous months. After some light tactic sorties against 50TU Sabres and a flypast lead by SQNLDR Jim Treadwell over Newcastle to commemorate Coral Sea Week, the CO stood the squadron down in the final two weeks of the month as compensation for the lack of time off and the general hard work put into the aerobatic tour.

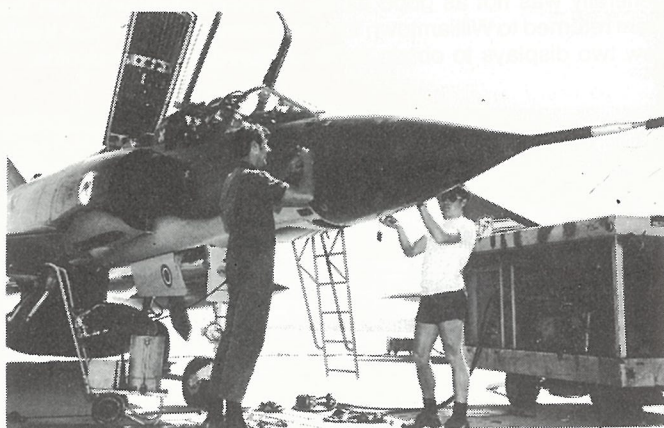
During June a squadron detachment was deployed to both East Sale and Amberley so that the training programme could be broadened to conduct strikes on both Dutson and Evans Head ranges with aircraft carrying MK82 high drag 500lb bombs. On completion of the strike the aircraft were recovered to East Sale and Amberley and were serviced prior to their return to Williamtown.

On 2 July an unfortunate accident occurred when a MK82 bomb was accidentally released and cratered the southern end of an old RAAF aerodrome one mile north of Evans Head township. The 500lb bomb contained a 20lb explosive charge which cratered an area ten feet by three feet deep. The explosion and smoke terrified many residents of Air Force Beach and the nearby caravan park as the bomb landed only 200 yards from the caravan park and a group of homes. The following three aircraft jettisoned their bombs out to sea and avoiding the township

returned to Amberley. The subsequent Court of Inquiry recommended changes to be made to the armament "switchery" to avoid this type of accident in the future.

On 12 July the squadron carried out FAC controlled strikes on Singleton Range employing both low and high angle attacks. The aircraft were equipped for the first time with the SUU bomb carrier and BDU-25lb practice bomb. By the end of the month the squadron was in full swing preparing both aircraft and flyaway kits for the forthcoming Townsville deployment. On 26 July the CO, WGCDR Simmonds, led a flight of nine aircraft to Townsville for a three week detachment, leaving SQNDR Treadwell as Temporary Commanding Officer. The deployment commenced with low level radar navigation sorties, all designed to give the pilots maximum navigational training. Included in the nine aircraft was the squadron dual which flew regularly with 10 Squadron and 77 Squadron ground crew. The detachment continued to run smoothly and with ideal weather and a high serviceability rate the planned 12 sorties a day were exceeded. Later during the exercise the radar navigation flights were modified to include a split strike on a preselected target.

On 4 August sorties were conducted to Cairns and Charters Towers with a five aircraft flypast at Cairns. This was highlighted on the ABC TV that evening with a newsreel segment. "Operating in the local area on exercise is number 77 Squadron from Williamtown Airforce Base. This squadron is equipped with Mirage Fighter Aircraft recently superseded by the Phantom bomber ..."



CPL G. Chapman and AC P. Stone servicing a radar unit. Townsville August 1971. (RAAF)



CPL Farmer launching FLTLT J. Smith (FCI) Townsville August 1971. (RAAF)

Upon return the squadron commenced an air-to-air gunnery programme but incurred a few problems with the jettison system on the Canberra, resulting in the first few banners being towed by the Sabres. However, by the 18 August the Canberra's were handling all the commitments. On the evening of 21 September the squadron was involved in ADEX X-RAY against F4-E Phantom aircraft from Amberley. 12 sorties were flown resulting in 18 of the 20 raids being intercepted, a most rewarding score.

The early part of October saw the squadron involved with the US Navy, assisting the USS O'Callaghan in conducting a number of intercepts. On 11 October the squadron deployed to Darwin for exercise Tin Kettle with 14 aircraft and 16 pilots. During this

period intercepts were flown for area re-familiarization and re-categorisation of controllers for 2CRU. As a diversion, for the first time for many years the squadron flew some fighter escort missions for the F4-E of 82 Wing, with the interceptors also being provided by the squadron. C Flight also flew reconnaissance missions in conjunction with the F4-E's providing them with photographic record of their strikes on some of the remote islands of Northern Australia. The squadron redeployed to Williamtown via Townsville on 29 October.



*John Hodgkinson DFC after and exciting flight in a Mirage
Left to Right WGCdr Bill Simmonds, AIRCDRE Mick Mather,
Mr. Hodgkinson. November 1971 (RAAF)*

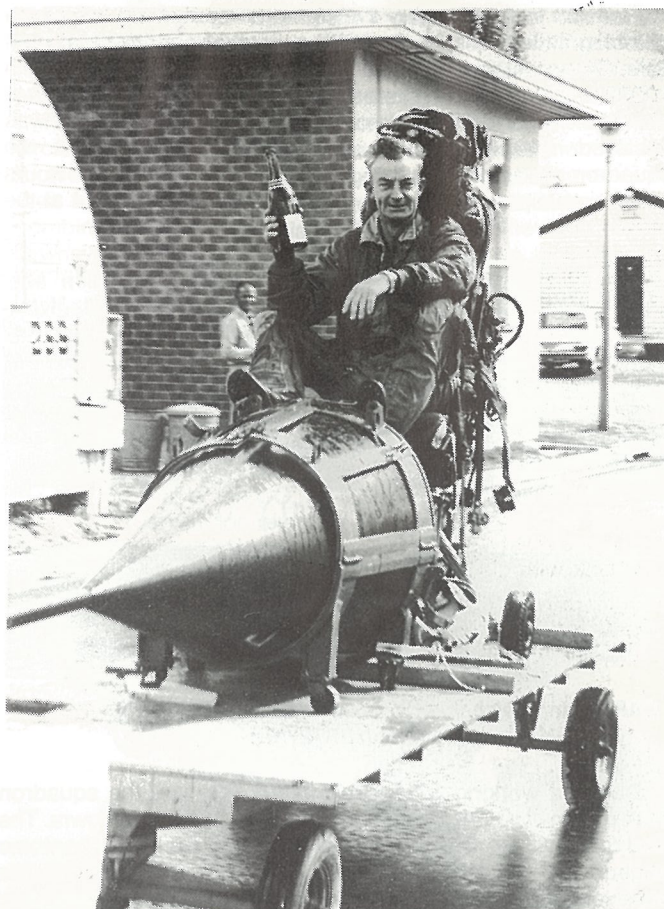
During November, the squadron hosted a visit for Mr John Hodgkinson who visited the squadron on invitation from the OC of Williamtown, Air Commodore Mick Mather DFC, AFC, as Mr Hodgkinson (from Orange NSW) was a foundation member of 77 Squadron. Mr Hodgkinson served with 77 Squadron in the Darwin area and New Guinea until January 1944 and then joined 3 Squadron in the Middle East. While flying a Mustang on operations over Italy he was shot down and became a prisoner of war in Germany for three months. He reached the rank of Flight Lieutenant and was awarded the DFC. During his stay he was taken for a flight in a Mirage by the CO, WGCdr Bill Simmonds, and became one of the comparatively few civilians to go up and fly a supersonic Mirage Jet Fighter, possibly the first at 77 Squadron. During his hour flight he reached a height of 45,000ft and reached speeds in excess of 1,000 miles per hour. For approximately ten minutes he tried flying the jet and found it surprisingly easy to handle in rolls, loops and turns. John described the flight as "out of this world" and a far cry from the war days when he flew Kittyhawks and Mustangs.

In November, SQNLDR Jim Treadwell flew his 1000th Mirage hour, the first for the squadron. On 4 December the squadron fired off its allocation of three live sidewinder missiles. Firings were at 30000ft, 15000ft and 1500ft with all three missiles scoring direct hits on their targets.

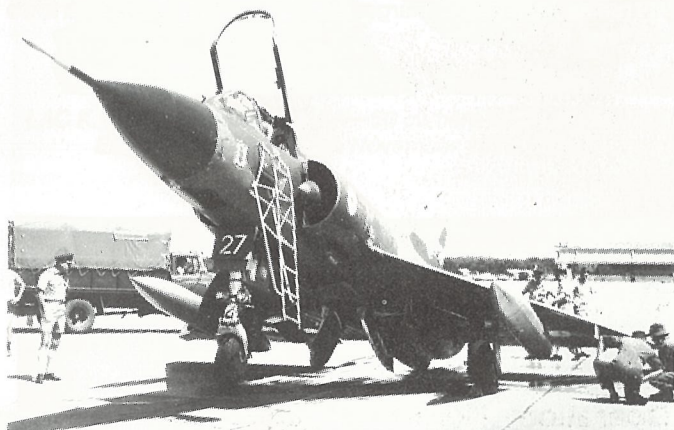
The Christmas period saw a complete change over of squadron executive staff with new appointees taking over the positions of Commanding Officer, three Flight Commander positions and Senior Engineering Officer. WGCdr R.W. Bradford arrived and took over as Commanding Officer from WGCdr W.H. Simmonds who was posted to Headquarters Williamtown to the position of AIR 1. Also during this time the squadron pilot strength was increased to 18 pilots which was necessary to fly all the allocated flying hours for the rest of the financial year.

1972

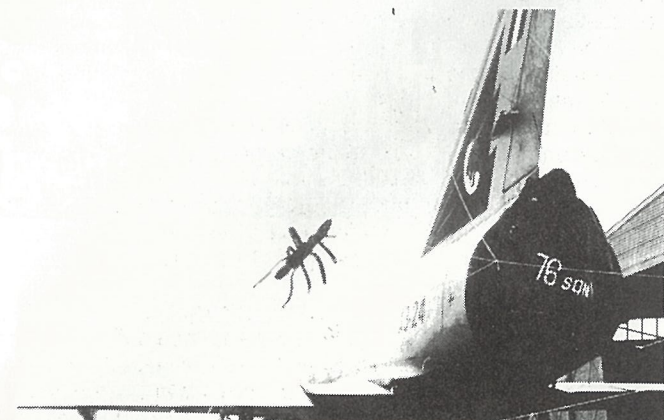
The squadron's 1972 flying year began on a shaky note when FLGOFF Bob Chaplin on start up in A3-27 had a main undercarriage malfunction. After start up the main undercarriage unlocked and came forward causing the aircraft to sit on its tail.



*SQNLDR Jim Treadwell became the squadron's first 1000 hours
Mirage pilot. (RAAF)*



*First sortie of 1972. FLGOFF Bob Chaplin has an under carriage
malfunction during engine start. (RAAF)*



*Spiders web constructed by 77 ground crew on 76 SQN Mirage A3-
24. 20 February 1972.*

*The aircraft was six weeks overdue for a "E" servicing and it
was sitting around gathering dust. (RAAF)*

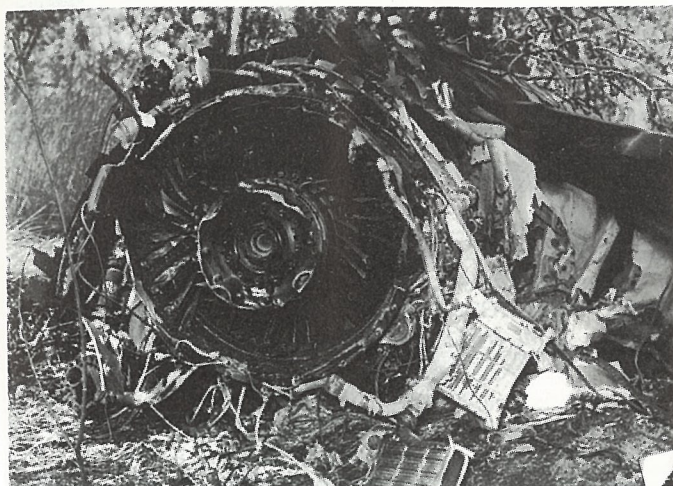
From 23 to 25 February the squadron carried out HE 500lb bombing strikes despite fluctuating weather conditions at East Sale. On occasions the cloud base dictated level bombing from 1000ft at 500 knots with interesting results, but due to the weather conditions around East Sale only 50% of the planned effort was achieved. Despite the dissappointing bombing detail the squadron still achieved a flying rate of 402 sorties for 479 hours which was a record effort for the squadron with Mirages at the time.



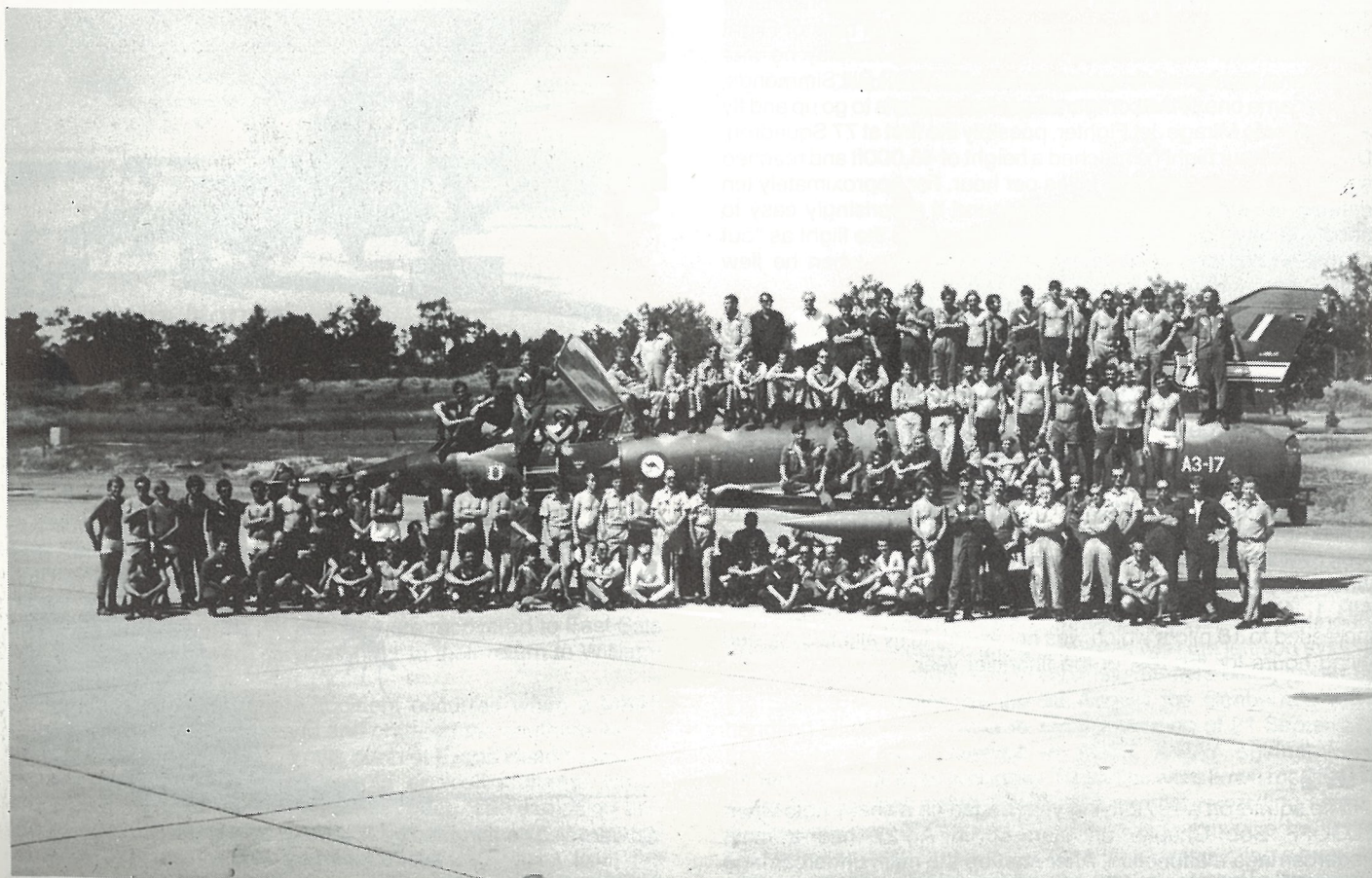
CAPT Peter Fleishacker's (USAF) final flight with the squadron 24 March 1972. (RAAF)

During a working weekend from 18 February the squadron took part in JUC 83, a joint Navy/RAAF exercise off Nowra. The exercise involved flying escort missions for the F4-E Phantoms engaged in strikes on a naval force off Jervis Bay. Valuable experience was gained in escort tactics, although the defending A4 Skyhawks put up only a token effort. Two formations of battle fours were used in 2NN trail and this formation layout proved highly effective against the attacking Skyhawks. This exercise was run as a prelude to a larger exercise JUC 85 which was to be held later in the year.

On 26 April the CO WGCDR Bradford led a deployment of 12 aircraft to Darwin for exercise Top Limit. The aircraft departed in three sections of four aircraft with one hour separation. Some aircraft saw a lot of action however, as on 27 April during radar navigation sorties using 374 gallon drop tanks, FLT LT Raymond Perry's aircraft A3-74 struck a large flock of birds at 1400ft. The engine compressor stalled and after jettisoning the drop tanks FLT LT Perry attempted to clear the stall to no avail. After these attempts proved ineffective he ejected successfully at approximately 800ft above ground level. The aircraft was destroyed when it crashed into scrub and swamp land nine miles east of Darwin at 1345 hours. After two days in hospital under observation, FLT LT Perry was discharged, fit for flying duties. FLT LT Raymond Perry became the first 77 Squadron pilot to successfully eject from a Mirage aircraft and A3-74 was the first Mirage aircraft lost by the squadron. WGCDR Simmonds and SQNLDR Stenhouse flew two squadron aircraft from Williamtown to make up the strength after the loss of the aircraft.



Wreckage of A3—74 27 April 1972. (RAAF)



Detachment personel Exercise Top Limit May 1972. (RAAF)



Phantom and Mirage aircraft during Exercise Top Limit May 1972. (RAAF)

Exercise Top Limit was carried out from 9 - 15 May 1972. On 4 May the first pair of Vulcan Bombers arrived from England and were intercepted by FLGOFF Mirow and Brown, and with the two Vulcans the two Mirages formed up and flew over Darwin in formation. The exercise consisted of 13 Mirages of 77 Squadron, 12 Phantoms, (1 and 6 Squadrons, Amberley) four Vulcans from the RAF (Waddington, England) six Skyhawks from 75 Squadron, (RNZAF) and six Canberra's (2 Squadron, Amberley). All the squadrons operated out of Darwin except 75 Squadron and 2 Squadron which were based at RAAF Tindal.

The object of the exercise was for 77 Squadron to defend RAAF Darwin and Darwin city from attacks launched by the strike squadron's with 153 sorties for a total of 125 hours being flown. These sorties were, in general, of two types. A scramble take off for an interception under 2 CRU control or a scramble for a CAP Mission. Two additional aircraft arrived from 76 Squadron on 11 May to increase the interceptor force at the disposal of the Air Defence Commander. By the end of the exercise the squadron was credited with 88 Phantom kills, 27 Vulcan, 18 Skyhawk and 16 Canberra kills, resulting in a grand total of 161 kills.

Early in July the squadron commenced high level supersonic climbing intercepts. These missions were flown in the supersonic area along the Central Coast of NSW with speeds up to Mach 1.1. After intercept missions on the night of 5 July all supersonic flying over land was cancelled because of sonic boom complaints from the citizens of the outer northern suburbs of Sydney.

Also during the early part of July the squadron flew missions against HMAS Perth off the coast. The flying programme consisted mainly of intercepts as directed by Navy controllers on HMAS Perth.



Richmond tarmac during July 1972 fuel strikes. (RAAF)

However, on 12 July the squadron had to cease flying due to a strike at the oil refineries in eastern Australia. Consequently, the squadron deployed eight aircraft to Richmond on the 17th to use the uninterrupted fuel supplies available there. This exercise was to no avail as the next day all Mirages were grounded after an incident in Butterworth involving disintegration of a spacer in the compressor stages of an engine. The squadron members returned to Williamtown leaving the eight Mirages at Richmond. After investigation, five of the eight aircraft at Richmond were cleared to fly and four returned to Williamtown, while the other three remained requiring engine changes. After the engine changes were carried out the remaining aircraft returned to Williamtown on 3 August. By 4 August following the settlement of the national oil dispute and the fuel problems normal flying was

resumed. The flying hours for the month of August totalled 326; well short of the 400 planned because of the after effects of the fuel strike and the scarcity of serviceable replacement engines.

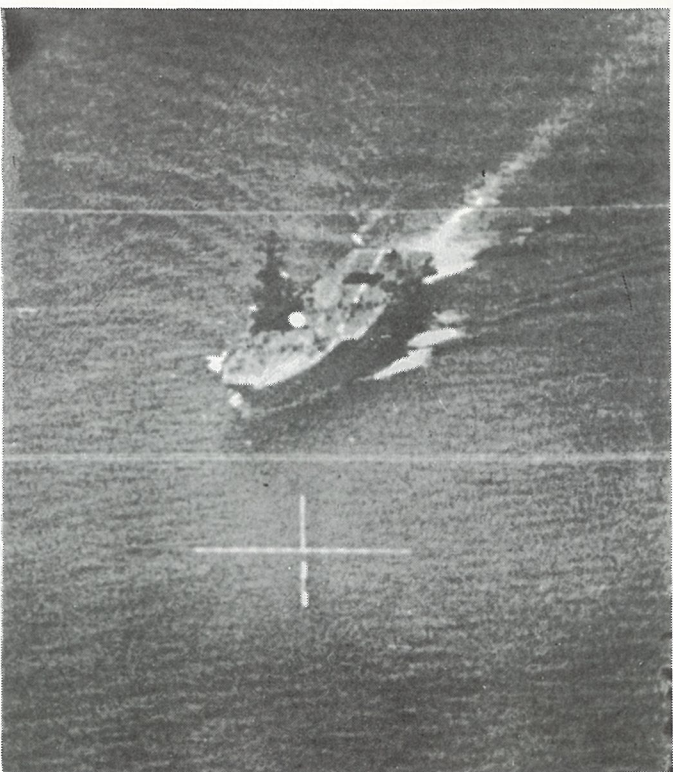
From 11 September - 20 October the squadron deployed nine aircraft including the dual, to Townsville. The detachment was led by the CO, WGCDR Bradford, and the programme consisted of area familiarisation. From 12 September the squadron began bombing strikes on Cordelia Rock, situated off the coast north of Townsville. HE/HES 500lb bombs were used on all strikes, and the missions comprised of two's and four's flying a radar navigation route ending with strikes on the rock. On the 19th while on a strike mission, one wing drop tank fell from FLGOFF Bob Chaplin's aircraft during the navigation phase of the mission. The tank was subsequently recovered in numerous pieces, however the aircraft was undamaged.

Early in September FLTLT Geoff Kubank had the distinction to fly photo reconnaissance mission No 77-777.

On 6 November the CO, WGCDR Bradford led a detail of 12 aircraft to Darwin for exercise Double Scotch. The exercise primarily consisted of intercept missions under 2CRU (Night Cliff) control and some navigation and photo reconnaissance missions. The exercise broadened to include high level climbing and snap up intercepts and two on one in trail stern attacks.



LAC K. Rowlands loading a KA-56 camera to the PR aircraft. Exercise Double Scotch November 1972. (RAAF)



HMAS Melbourne about to be severely rattled by the CO. Exercise Rattle the Can November 1972. (RAAF)

On the 17th WGCDR Simmonds and Colonel Pepos (French Air Attache) arrived and flew area familiarisation missions in the dual, and on that afternoon the squadron carried out exercise Rattle The Can as part of exercise Double Scotch. The exercise was a series of strikes against HMAS Melbourne and HMAS Perth. The squadron attacked in two waves of seven aircraft, with the first wave comprising three strike aircraft and four CAP aircraft, and the second wave consisting of seven aircraft without any cover. HMAS Melbourne was defended by A4 Skyhawks, but they were unable to effectively intercept the strike Mirages. The Navy claimed some TAR TAR missile kills and 77 Squadron claimed several Skyhawks downed. These missions provided good experience for the aircrew, both attackers and defenders, with exorbitant claims being made by both sides. The squadron redeployed to Williamtown on 1 December 1972.

Before Christmas stand-down the squadron carried out live firings of three sidewinder missiles. The three missiles were fired at Target rockets launched by another of the aircraft in the section, but of the three fired only one missile hit the target rocket. The two missiles that failed to hit were fired slightly outside the correct release parameters.

1973

The new year commenced with a reasonable flying rate, but was severely restricted late in the month due to a strike by fuel tanker drivers in NSW. As the strike was restricted to NSW, the squadron was put on standby to deploy to Townsville on 31 January 1973. However, the strike ended on the 30th and Operational Command cancelled the deployment.

Plagued with problems, in the following month the squadron flying plans were again interrupted, this time by the weather. Initially the temperature rose to above 40 degrees celcius and flying had to be cancelled at noon each day. When the temperature dropped the rains came and the planned bombing sorties to East Sale had to be called off as Dutson Range had to be closed. To compound matters the squadron had access to only one engine rollback stand. Consequently engine change delays increased and split shifts had to be introduced to fully utilise the single stand.

On 12 February 1973 command of the squadron again changed hands when WGCDR R.V.A. Johnston ADC arrived to replace WGCDR Bradford who was posted to Singapore. During February the squadron was tasked to provide a five aircraft



WGCDR "Brick" Bradford's final flight 8 February, 1973. Sharing the toast is the new CO WGCDR Ron Johnston. (RAAF)

formation display team and one solo aerobatic aircraft for displays at Amberley, Townsville, Richmond and Williamtown later in the year. Training commenced and practice was originally carried out with three aircraft. The formation team comprised of the following members: Leader - SQNLDR John Jacobsen, No 2 - FLTLT Barry Turner, No 3 - FLTLT John Sexton, No 4 - FLTLT Jack Smith, No 5 - FLTLT Dave Bowden, and Solo - SQNLDR Kev Bricknell.

On 15 March 77 Squadron launched 11 aircraft for a flypast over the RAAF's 50th Anniversary Memorial in Canberra during the dedication parade before his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh. The diamond nine formation (with two airborne spares) was led over the memorial precisely on time by SQNLDR Kev Bricknell.

On the 27th nine aircraft with supporting ground crew deployed to Amberley for the first full rehearsal of the air display programme. The display team was unable to deploy to Townsville as planned on 29 March due to marginal weather at Townsville, but arrived the following day. The formation team and solo participated in the first anniversary air display at Townsville on 31 March, and that afternoon the squadron deployed back to Amberley for the Anniversary Air Display. The Mirage display was flown in good weather, although some cloud appeared later in the day. The team returned the next day to Williamtown for an overnight stop before continuing on to Richmond for another air display rehearsal.



Members of the 50th Anniversary display team "Checkmates" Townsville April 1973. (RAAF)



Wreckage A3—79 near Gloucester 3 April 1973. (RAAF)

At Williamtown on 3 April 1973 the remaining crews flew photo reconnaissance and visual navigation sorties. It was during one of these low level navigation flights that the squadron suffered its first fatality in a Mirage aircraft, when FLGOFF S. Groom's aircraft (A3-79) experienced severe engine vibrations. The pilot failed to eject and the aircraft was destroyed on impact approximately five miles south of Gloucester, NSW. The funeral service for FLGOFF Groom was held with full military honours at the Base Chapel and Beresfield Crematorium on 6 March 1973. Despite the tragedy, the formation team carried out a faultless flying display at Williamtown the following day. The team departed to Richmond the next day, performing a display that afternoon.

The squadron deployed 12 aircraft to Darwin from 21 May to June 1973 for exercise Blue Denim. The exercise was planned to run in three phases: Phase one consisted of a workup series of intercepts under the control of 2CRU, Phase two comprised of

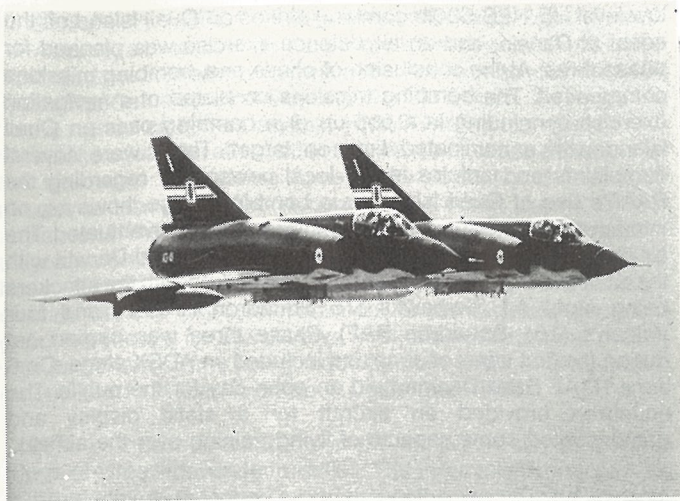
low level HE/HES 500lb combing strikes on Quail Island off the coast at Darwin; and an air defence exercise was planned for phase three. At the conclusion of phase one, bombing missions commenced. The bombing missions consisted of a navigation exercise concluding in a pop-up dive bombing pass on Quail Island with a nominated time on target. There were several complaints and articles in the local newspaper regarding the RAAF's use of Quail Island as a bombing range, however, no interference to the squadrons bombing schedule eventuated. The air defence phase required 77 Squadron to defend Darwin with the aid of two AEW Neptunes from 10 Squadron with the attackers being eight A4 Skyhawks (75 Squadron RNZAF) and four Vulcan's (101 Squadron RAF). Phase three was carried out during the first week of June and included an ADEX stage. On 6 June RAAF Base Darwin held an open day for the public. The squadron provided an aircraft for a static display and demonstrated some aspects of flying training over the airfield.



101 Squadron RAF Vulcan over Darwin May 1973. (RAAF)



Detachment personnel May 1973. (RAAF)



Returning from Quail Island 30 May 1973 FLTLT Jack Smith
A3—41 FLGOFF Bob Chaplin A3-59. (RAAF)

Another 77 Squadron 'first' occurred on 24 July 1973, when during range missions at Saltash Range, FLTLT B.W. Turner achieved a perfect result during his mission by scoring six out of six on skip bombing and sixty hits out of sixty rounds on the staffing. On 25 July the WOD, Warrant Officer N.E. Power departed on posting to Amberley as the position of WOD had been disestablished earlier in the year. The position of WOD was not filled again in the squadron until the end of 1985.

During August the squadron deployed three aircraft to Nowra to carry out live Sidewinder firings. These firings were carried out in conjunction with elements of the Weapon Research Establishment (WRE) and the RAN. The detachment commander was FLTLT D.T. Bowden, the other two pilots being FLTLT J.A. Smith and FLTLT G.A. Kubank. The Sidewinder missiles were fired on 16 August as part of the trials, and in each case the missile was fired at a flare on a target being towed by a Jindivik pilotless aircraft. After a most successful and rewarding trial the aircraft returned to Williamtown on 17 August.

On 20 August, FLTLT W.A. Evans had the distinction of flying the 1000th Photo Reconnaissance mission flown by 77 Squadron. During August the squadron flew 593 hours, the highest yet achieved by the squadron. Following the disbandment of 76 Squadron in that month there was considerable apprehension throughout the airmen ranks concerning stability of their positions and their future. The squadron's capability was improved however as it received equipment spares no longer required at 76 Squadron.



Exercise Temple Tower October 1973
Gun camera shot of Army targets in the high range. (RAAF)

During October the squadron deployed a small detachment led by FLTLT D.T. Bowden to Townsville for exercise Temple Tower. All sorties from Townsville were flown under FAC control in the High Range North West of Townsville. The missions in the training area were in support of the 2nd and 4th Battalions RAR with a simulated total air superiority environment. Whilst the deployment was in Townsville the squadron took over the hangars and buildings vacated by the disbanded 76 Squadron at Williamtown. This involved a major reorganisation of existing buildings and the changes continued for several months. Also during October aircraft serviceability had risen, as available equipment and spares had been transferred from 76 Squadron.

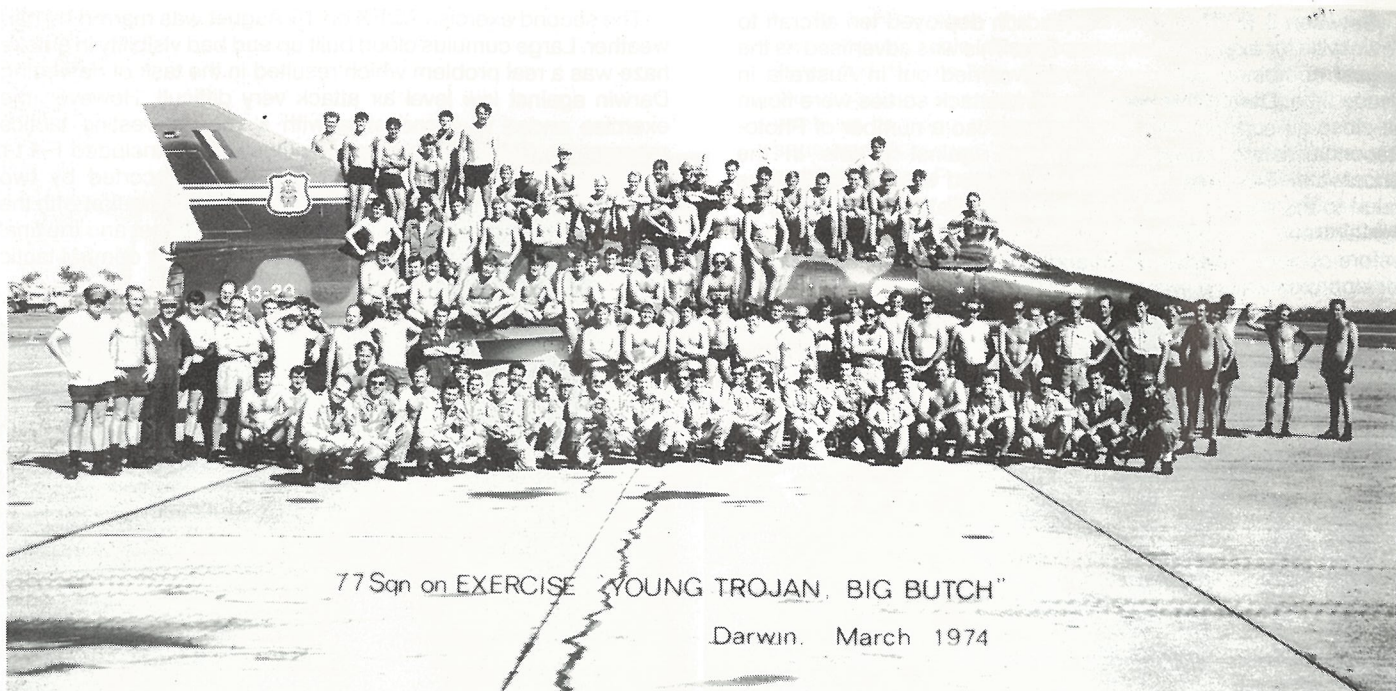


Aftermath of the crewroom fire. 12 December 1973. (RAAF)



CO supervising the rebuilding of the crewroom.
(RAAF)

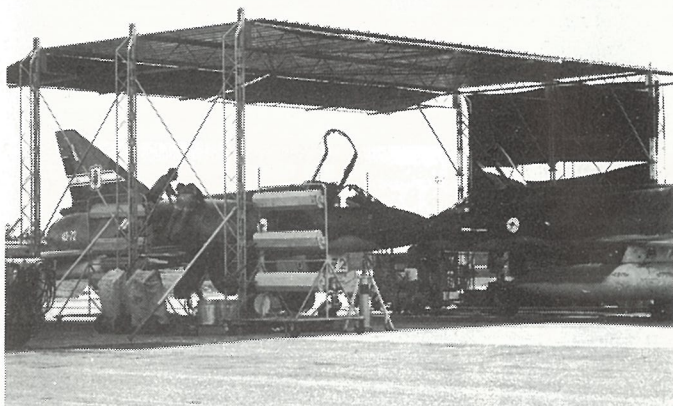
During the early hours of 12 December disaster struck the squadron when the crewroom change room building was destroyed by fire. Many squadron records and plaques were lost but, surprisingly, a considerable amount of historical items were salvaged. With some effort and the use of sandpaper and paint, their darker than normal appearance was the only reminder of the incident. Although several albums were totally destroyed, old photographs were sent in by past and present members and cataloguing started. The heart-breaking job of cleaning up began and all repairable items were salvaged from the charred rubble. The work continued into the period of reduced activity that year and the squadron moved into the new crewroom and operations room. The squadron resumed after the Christmas stand-down and eagerly set about building a new crewroom which was officially re-opened on 10 May 1975.



77 Sqn on EXERCISE "YOUNG TROJAN, BIG BUTCH"

Darwin, March 1974

Members of the detachment March 1974. (RAAF)



Squadron maintenance facilities in Darwin during exercise Young Trojan March 1974. (RAAF)



CAPT Tom Walsh celebrates his final Mirage flight on 8 May 1974 with other aircrew members. (RAAF)

1974

Under the leadership of the CO, WGCDR Ron Johnston, the squadron formed another formation flying team for the forthcoming Anniversary Air displays during April 1974. The five aircraft display consisted of Vic, Goose and Card formation manoeuvres followed by two Mirage break-off for co-ordinated aerobatics. By 6 February, the formation team was presenting a very polished display, but this proved to be the last as all the air displays for 1974 were cancelled. February also saw the Squadron dispatch aircraft A3-9, A3-19, and A3-33 to Avalon to be placed in long term storage.

After a delay due to poor weather the squadron deployed twelve aircraft to Darwin on 5 to 29 March. The programme in Darwin consisted of two exercises, one with 2CRU called Young Trojan and the other with 114 mobile CRU (MCRU). Because of the inclement weather early in the exercise the deployment was extended by one week, but the weather remained marginal for almost all the exercise because of a cyclone in the Darwin area. Despite the bad weather on 18 March the ADEX for exercise Young Trojan was carried out against F-1-11 aircraft and targets at high, medium and low levels, and a 50% success rate was achieved with the fast, low level targets proving to be the most difficult to intercept. It was at the top of the climb from Darwin that WGCDR Johnston achieved his 1000th Mirage flying hour which was the first to be achieved by a present CO of 77 Squadron in a Mirage aircraft.



FLTLT Jack Smith being congratulated by the OC AIRCDRE J. H. Flemming. The CO looks on. (RAAF)

On 6 June the squadron Fighter Combat Instructor (FCI) FLTLT J.A. Smith reached a grand total of 2001 Mirage flying hours. This was the first double 1000 of the squadron. To mark the occasion FLTLT Smith was congratulated by the CO and OC AIRCDRE J.H. Flemming. He was presented with a glass of champagne, 'christened' with 'holy water' and taken on a tour of the base in the 'hot seat chariot'.

Between 8 to 17 June the squadron deployed ten aircraft to Townsville for exercise Kangaroo One. This was advertised as the largest combined services exercise carried out in Australia in peace time. During this period ground attack sorties were flown as close air support with FAC control. Also a number of Photo-Reconnaissance sorties were flown against targets in the Shoalwater Bay area. The exercise proved to be of enormous value to the squadron as a whole and was excellent training for the aircrew. Fortunately the detachment left Williamtown just before cyclonic weather set in and stopped flying at Williamtown for approximately a week.



The CO WGCdr R. V. A. Johnston reviewing the passing out parade of No. 142 Basic Parachute Course on the 20 June 1974. (RAAF)

On 29 July twelve aircraft deployed to Darwin for the month long exercise 'Top Flat'. The first phase comprised of intercepts under the control of No. 2CRU and this phase climaxed with an ADEX against F-111 aircraft from 6 Squadron Amberley. The weather for both day and night periods was excellent resulting in an impressive kill rate. After the ADEX the squadron began low level navigation sorties ending with a live bombing strike on Quail Island using 25lb practice bombs. Also during this period the Photo-Reconnaissance aircraft were flown each day to targets throughout the Northern Territory and the north of Western Australia.

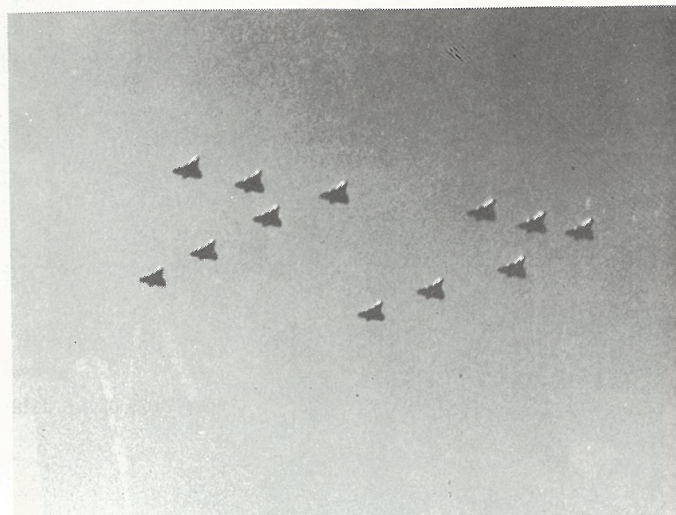


All weather Mirages operating in Darwin During Exercise Top Flat August 1974. (RAAF)



6 Squadron RAAF F111 strikes the airfield during Exercise Top Flat 5 August 1974. (RAAF)

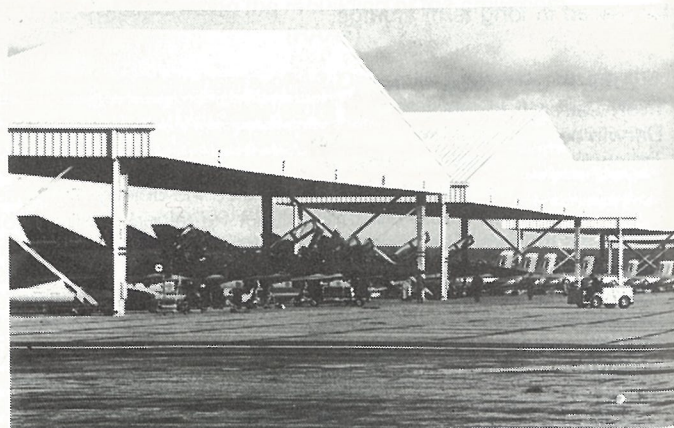
The second exercise ADEX on 19 August was marred by bad weather. Large cumulus cloud built up and bad visibility in smoke haze was a real problem which resulted in the task of defending Darwin against low level air attack very difficult. However, the exercise ended in grand style with a very interesting tactics programme. Bombing missions on Quail Island included F-111 escort and bounce sorties with one F-111 escorted by two Mirages. A further two Mirages intercepted the formation with the aim of preventing the F-111 from reaching its target and the final phase of the exercise progressed onto multiple air combat tactic missions.



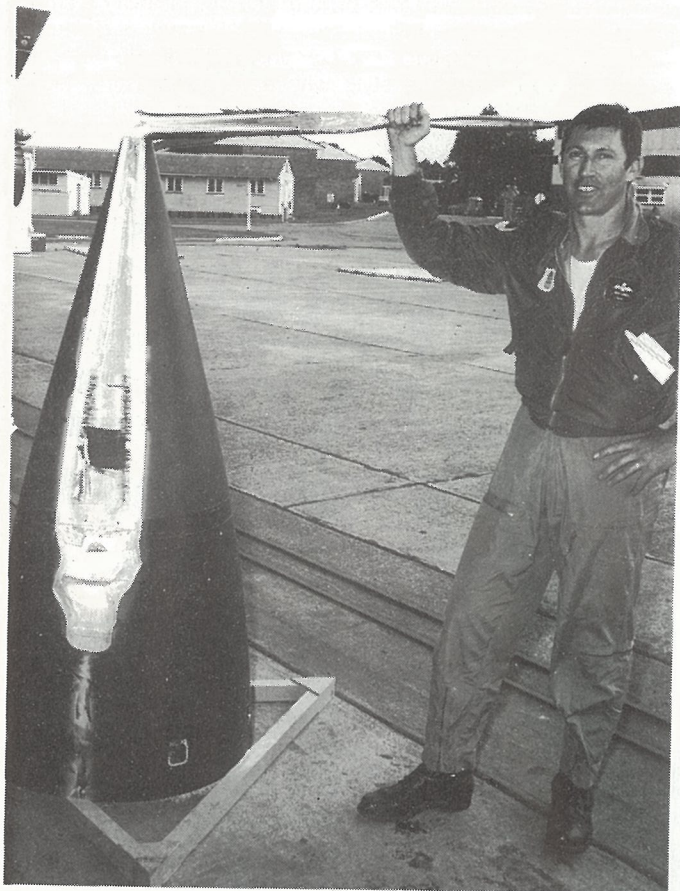
Aircraft returning to Williamtown after exercise "Top Flat" 9 September 1974. (RAAF)



Members of 77 Squadron and 25 Squadron get together during the detachment to Pearce September 1974. This occasion marked the affiliation of 25 Squadron with 77 Squadron. (RAAF)



Maintenance facilities at Pearce September 1974. (RAAF)



FLTLT Jack Lynch with the damaged nose cone after his emergency landing in A3—39 on 8 October 1974. (RAAF)

During October FLTLT Jack Lynch had two unexpected incidents on two consecutive sorties. On the 4th, his aircraft suffered a partial loss of engine power but was able to return to base and land safely. On the 8th, the nose wheel of his aircraft would not lock into the down position and he was forced to land the aircraft with the unsafe nosewheel. He was able to accomplish this very smoothly with only minor damage to the aircraft. For his efforts he was awarded a 'Green Endorsement' in his log book for this professionalism in handling the two emergencies.

The highlight of the month was the visit to the squadron by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales. He was introduced to the officers and spoke with many of the airmen and was shown over a Mirage by the CO, WGCDR Johnston.



The CO WGCDR Ron Johnston introduces HRH Prince Charles to SQNLDR G. Warrener, SQNLDR N. Smith, AIRCDRE J. Flemming looks on, October 1974. (RAAF)

On 5 November, the Williamtown AVTUR fuel supply was declared unusable due to contamination and flying had to be cancelled. On the 7th with base fuel supplies still contaminated, the squadron deployed its serviceable aircraft to Richmond to continue its flying programme. On its return to Williamtown the squadron prepared and deployed ten aircraft to Darwin for exercise Fence Post with SQNLDR A.F. Taylor as the detachment commander for the exercise. The exercise flying consisted of intercepts, half of which were continuation controller training and the other half intercept directors course training. A new radio procedure was introduced to limit the target aircraft's capability of determining the inbound interceptors position relative to the target.

The first ADEX for the exercise was held on 28 November. The targets were Vulcan aircraft from 101 Squadron RAF, and F-111's from 1 Squadron. Twelve kills were achieved from twenty three raids during the day and fourteen out of nineteen during the night phase. Squadron maintenance personnel worked extremely well during the ADEX and achieved an excellent turnaround time of 32 minutes average over 36 sorties. After several groundings due to a tropical cyclone, the squadron redeployed on schedule to Williamtown on 6 December for a well earned Christmas Break.

The devastation of Darwin by Cyclone Tracey caused future squadron deployments to be cancelled in that area and Amberley was selected to be used as a deployment base for the immediate future.

1975

In the new year SQNLDR A.F. Taylor was promoted to Wing Commander and assumed command of 77 Squadron from WGCDR R.V.A. Johnston ADC was posted to Department of Air, Canberra.

On 16 February 1975 members of 25 Squadron (City of Perth) arrived at Williamtown for their annual camp, with the squadron employing 43 members of various technical musterings for two weeks. The camp proved successful for all members of 25 Squadron and during their stay the squadron employed the dual to give members of 25 Squadron familiarisation rides.

The squadron began to use the 'Butterfly' air to air pattern for the first time on 24 March 1975. The exercise involved passing the target head on and obtaining hits from a right hand pass, calling the target to reverse, then obtaining hits from a left hand pass, with the object being to obtain a minimum of one hit from each pass in the shortest possible time. The value of this exercise was reduced because of the abnormal number of banners not flying vertically, as when the banners were horizontal they were unusable during most right hand turns. Also during this time two aircraft deployed to Avalon to test the new air to air banner to be towed by the Mirage.

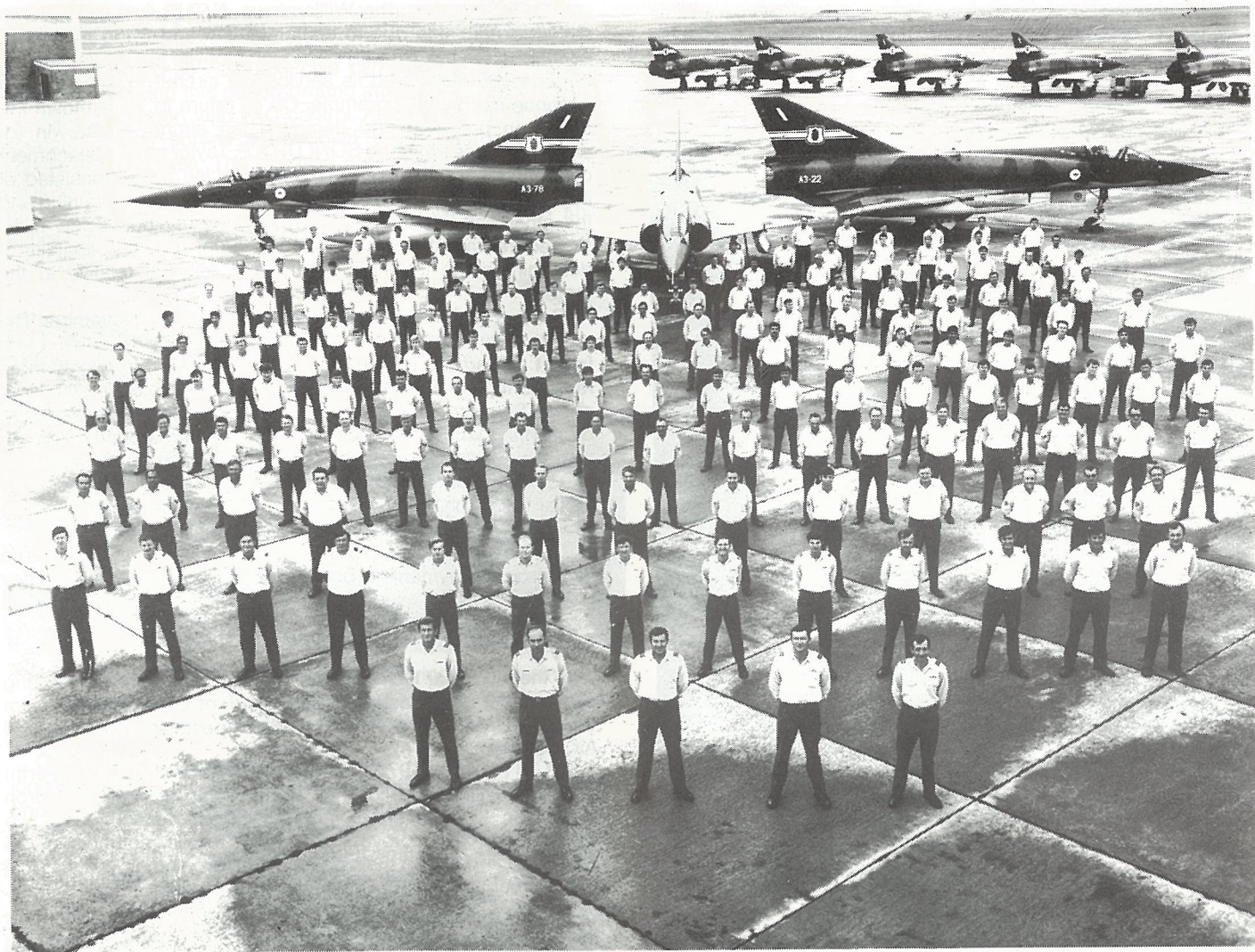
On the night of 28 April the squadron flew dive bombing missions on Saltash Range. The results were generally good for the first night bombing by the squadron in Mirage aircraft.

On May the squadron carried out live FAC controlled bombing strikes on Beecroft Naval Range. This was the first opportunity for most pilots to use the MK82 500lb high drag bombs, which was used on approximately half the missions. During one such mission on the 21 May, SQNLDR G.R. Gent OPSO (A3-14) was hit by a ricochet on the underside of the port wing. SQNLDR Gent did not hear or feel anything unusual during the normal gunnery pass and returned to Williamtown where the damage was found to be only minor.

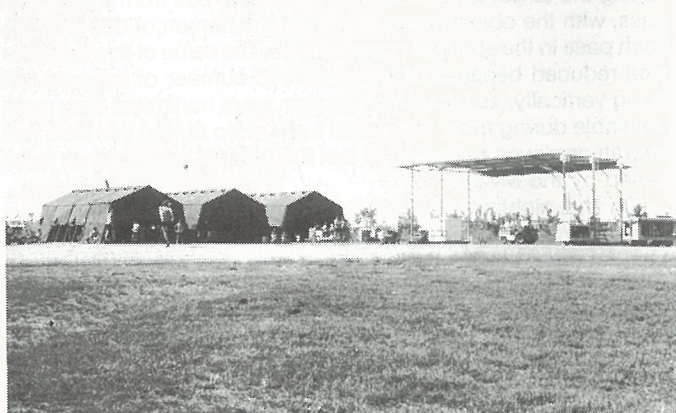
The squadron deployed five aircraft to Darwin on the 29 July to 8 August for exercise Winter Swan which was the first visit since Cyclone Tracey. Despite the damage incurred, Darwin was still able to offer excellent domestic and operational facilities.

During October the squadron flew night dive bombing at Beecroft Range Nowra on targets illuminated by flares dropped from Navy A4-Skyhawks. It was the first time that the squadron had used parachute flares for Mirage night bombing.

December 1975 commenced with two successful live Matra R530 firings at targets towed by Jindwink drones. During the same exercise two live Sidewinder missiles were fired at flare targets also towed by Jindwink. Before the runway was closed on the 5th for resealing, the SENGQ SQNLDR N.A. Smith flew his final mission with the squadron. He was the first and last SENGQ to fly Mirages whilst holding down an engineering post with the squadron.



77 Squadron 1975 Williamtown. (RAAF)



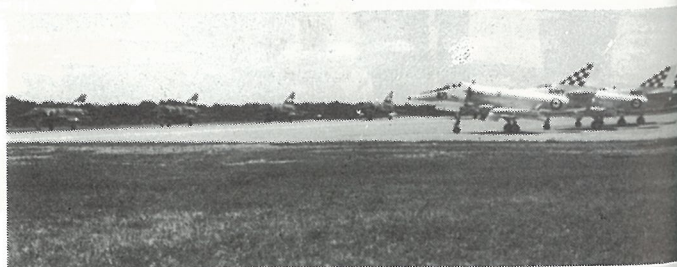
Squadron facilities at Darwin during Exercise Winter Swan August 1975. (RAAF)



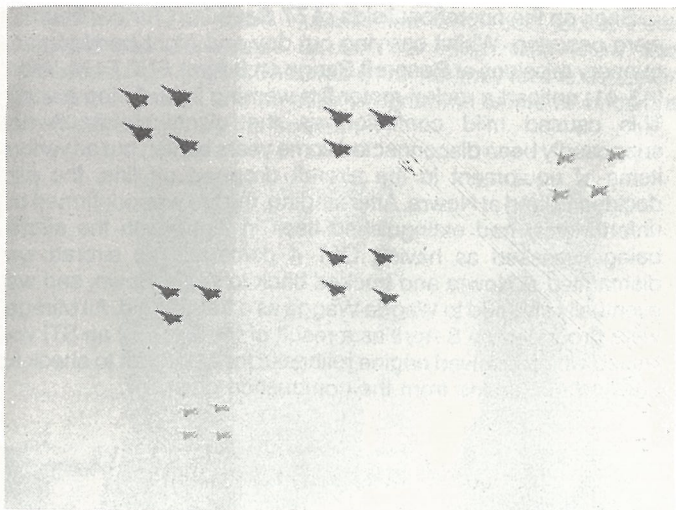
The 1975 Hewitt Trophy and Queen's Medal Rifle Competition (Richmond October 1975). This was the first time the squadron had participated in this competition and finished a creditable third. Left to right: Sgt. J. Puckridge, CPL R. Burns, FLTLT W. Vandenberg, LAC A. Devlin and LAC B. Donald. (RAAF)



Aircraft being serviced during Exercise Winter Swan August 1975. (RAAF)



805 Squadron RAN A4G Skyhawk's wait for 77 Squadron Mirages during Exercise Iron Man at Williamtown October 1975. (RAAF)



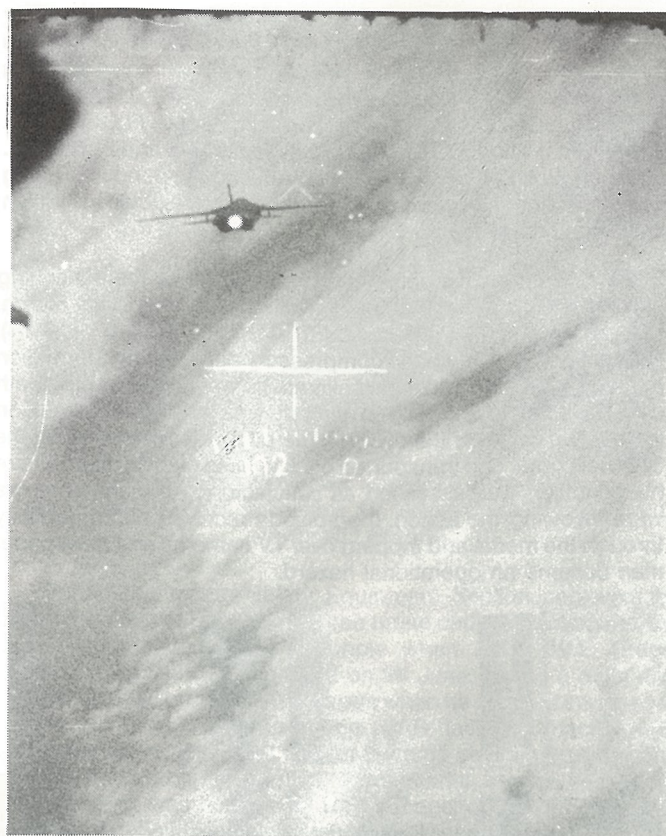
Flypast by 77 Squadron and 805 Squadron on the completion of Exercise Iron Man on 28 October, 1975. (RAAF)



77 Squadron SENG SQUADRON Neil Smith's last flight. 5 December 1975. (RAAF)

1976

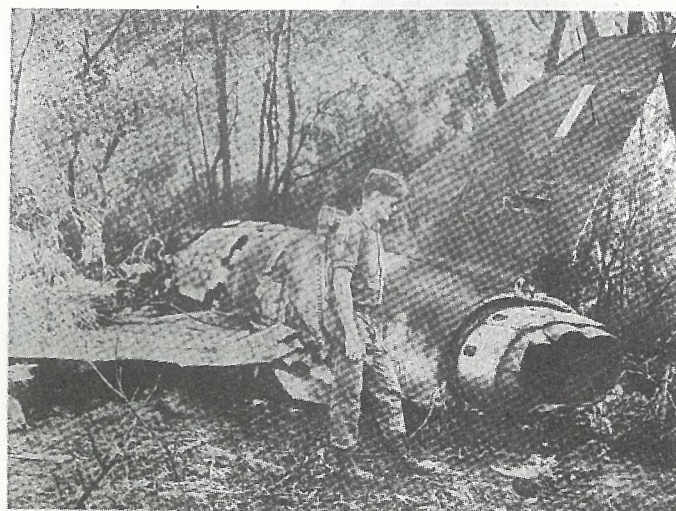
On 16 February, nine aircraft deployed to Amberley for exercise Summer Rain, but by 17 February the complement of aircraft was brought up to fourteen. Numerous intercept sorties were flown in an effort to polish up the operations of 114 CRU. Flying during the exercise consisted mainly of night missions with simulated kills mounting steadily against the USAF F4 Phantoms based at Williamtown. It was felt the squadron welded together extremely well with quick turnarounds and few unserviceabilities. A total of 75 scrambles were ordered with only one abort, and an over-riding atmosphere of teamwork between ground crew and air crew became increasingly apparent. Morale was high throughout the exercise and the conduct of squadron members drew favourable comment from the Officer Commanding Amberley.



Exercise Summer Rain February 1975. Gun camera kill on F-111 by FLTLT J. Washington. (RAAF)



Exercise Summer Rain 26 February 1976. Night time snack at 0430 hours. Left to right: LAC I. White, CPL M. Green, LAC G. Bernutt, LAC B. Tame, LAC J. Hanson, LAC R. Graham. (RAAF)



Aftermath of A3-14 Williamtown 16 March 1976. (RAAF)

On the 4 March 1976, the squadron formed yet another aerobatic display to take part in Air Force Week displays. The team known as 'The Miracles' comprised of the following members: WGCdr A.F. Taylor - Solo Lead, CAPT J.H. Fauske - Solo Two, SQNLDR G.R. Gent - Formation Lead, FLGOFF A.R. Begg - Right Wing, FLTLT I.M. Wilkie - Left Wing, and FLTLT G.A. Kubank - Slot. CAPT Jim Fauske USAF, had the honour of being the first exchange pilot with 77 Squadron to be selected to fly in an aerobatic display team.

Formation practice commenced slowly due to the continuing bad weather, but continued daily without incident till 16 March. On 1300 hours that day, FLTLT G.A. Kubank (A3-14), experienced an engine compressor stall during formation practice. With only 500 feet of altitude he was forced to eject with only seconds to spare. The aircraft was totally destroyed on impact just south of the airstrip. The pilot was recovered by the SAR helicopter and transported back to base medical flight where his condition was assessed as satisfactory. As many cameras were following the action, the episode received much publicity through the media and tripping over TV cameras and newspaper men became an operational hazard.



"Miracles" moments of stark boredom injected with "moments of sheer terror". Amberley during March 1975. Left to right: LAC M. Ohlin, SGT V. Brooker (Window), LAC B. Einam, LAC F. Lautenbach, LAC A. Harris, LAC A. Winton, WGCdr A. Taylor, CAPT J. Fauske, FLTLT I. Wilkie, SGT J. Smith (Doorway) PLTOFF T. Blessing, LAC Marmont. (RAAF)



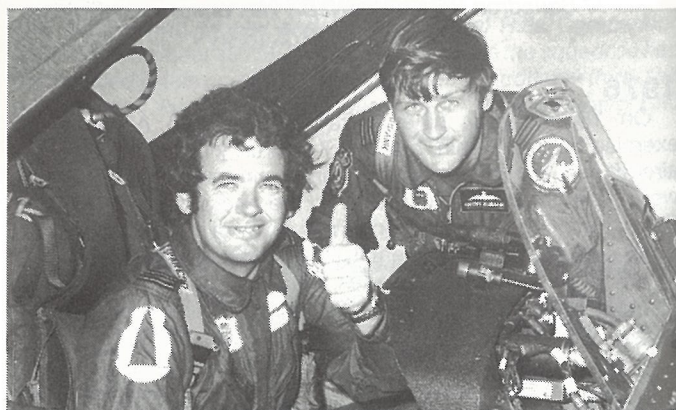
"Miracles" April 1976. (RAAF)

On 23 March 'The Miracles' departed for Amberley after FLTLT B.W. Turner had replaced FLTLT Kubank. After practices at Amberley the team departed for Townsville on the 25th for further practices with the first display before the general public on 27 March. All reports indicated that the public were thoroughly impressed and the hard work put in by the ground crew, finally started to bear fruit. On Saturday 3 April The Miracles performed in the Williamstown display in front of a crowd of 40,000 people and following the show the team departed for Richmond for the last display of the series. 'The Miracles' returned home on Sunday evening, with the ground crew returning Monday morning.

Back on the operational side of 77 Squadron, further trauma's were occurring. Whilst carrying out day and night bombing and gunnery missions at Beecroft Range on 6 April, FLTLT I.M. Wilkie (A3-41) noticed a rocket motor fire warning light during a sortie. This caused mild confusion as the electrical circuit had supposedly been disconnected some years earlier, but as various items of equipment in the aircraft dropped off line, the pilot decided to land at Nowra. After landing, the fire was confirmed but unfortunately had extinguished itself in flight, with the aircraft being assessed as having CAT 4 damage. The aircraft was dismantled at Nowra and trucked back to Williamstown, and was eventually shipped to Wagga Wagga as a training aid. All Mirages were grounded on 8 April as a result of the fire, and an STI was issued which involved engine rollbacks for all aircraft to check for cracked fuel drains from the combustion chamber.

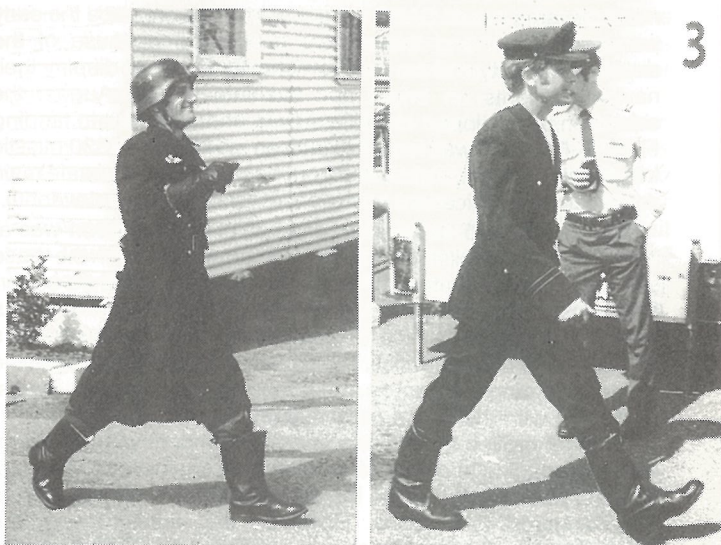


FLTLT Ian Wilkie after his incident in A3-41 6 April 1976. "Doc originally didn't believe in rocket bay fire lights, however he now believes in witchcraft, the tooth fairy, etc. (RAAF)



DJ Peter Meehan being strapped in by FLTLT G. Kubank on the 7 April 1976. (RAAF)

In April, FLTLT Geoff Kubank flew 2KO disc jockey Peter Meehan over Newcastle as an hour long radio show was broadcast from the air. This was a first not only for the squadron but for Newcastle, and no other programme before or since has been carried out by the squadron.



*Squadron Family Day 21 May 1976.
Baron Von Dreadful (FLTLT D. Freedman) and Sir Percy Goodfellow
(FLTLT G. Kubank) on their way to the war. (RAAF)*



*1976 Victorious Squadron Rugby Team
Left to Right: Backrow FLGOFF K. Stokes Coach, LAC G. Nutt, CPL
A. Rowe, CPL S. Rich, LAC P. Stevens, LAC JG. Neilson, CAPT J.
Fauske, FLGOFF P. Webb, CPL R. Lane,
CPL Blythman Manager.
Frontrow: LAC S. Buba, LAC D. Appo, LAC M. Rowles, LAC B. Fur-
nace, AC I. Gartner, CPL R. Peterson.
(RAAF)*

The squadron held a very successful family day on 21 May, and a comprehensive static display of working models of Mirage Systems drew many complementary remarks. Other events included half a mock air battle between Sir Percy Goodfellow (FLTLT G.A. Kubank) and Baron Von Dreadful (FLTLT D.C. Freedman). The episode ended as a case of "If I am Not There Start Without Me" when the Baron had to cancel his sortie as his Fokker Tiger Moth refused to start. A simulated ground attack mission by four Mirages against mock targets timed to explode at the right moment gave relatives and friends some insight into squadron operations.

The highlight of June 1976 was the official presentation of the Kittyhawk 'Best Fighter Squadron' Trophy to 77 Squadron. The presentation brought together seven past Commanding Officers of the Squadron. After a short flying display and the presentation of the trophy, a buffet for all squadron and associated members was held in the Airmens Mess.



*Presentation Kittyhawk Trophy 19 June 1976.
Left to Right: AVM R. T. Susans Mr. Alwyn Quoy, WGCdr A. C.
Taylor CO (RAAF)*

During the month Safety Equipment Section achieved the honoured feat of 8,200 failure free brake chute deployments, but the month ended on a sad note when FLTLT W.E. (Bags) Vandenberg (A3-61) was killed on 24 June, during a night dive bombing mission at Salt Ash Range when he crashed into the sea while running in on the range. SAR facilities reacted with commendable speed but it soon became obvious that no hope could be held for the pilot. A memorial service for FLTLT Vandenberg was held at the Base Chapel on 29 June. "Bags" was sadly missed by all members of the squadron.



*FLTLT W. E. (Bags) Vandenberg at the controls of a Vampire
aircraft. (RAAF)*



WOFF B. Straughair presents CAPT Jim Fauske (Gentleman Jim) with a memento of his stay with 77 Squadron 15 July 1976. (RAAF)

The squadron deployed 14 aircraft on 16 August for two weeks to Amberley. This was for the work up and participation in Air Defence Exercise Pacesetter. On the same day F-111C aircraft of 6 Squadron deployed to Williamtown to become the "Orange Land" (enemy) strike force and both units utilised the opponent's base facilities. Phase One of ADEX Pacesetter was conducted on the 18th and was planned as an aircraft identification phase. After phase one squadron training and 114CRU controller training mission continued, however, for a twist, several GCI controllers were given a back seat flight in the duals to see whether the grass was greener on our side of the fence.

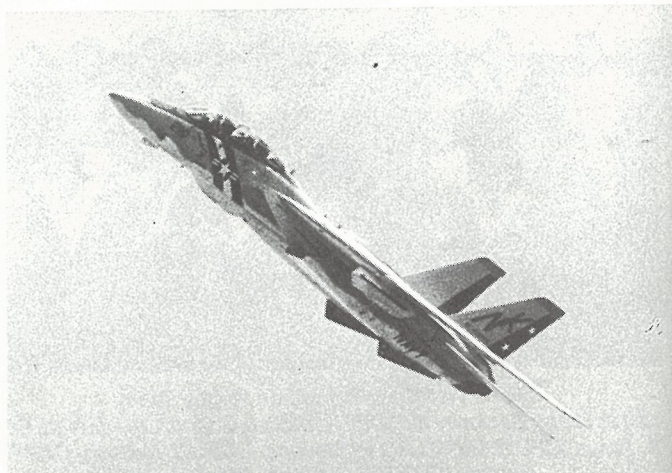


Groundcrew loading film to PR aircraft during exercise "Pacesetter" August. (RAAF)

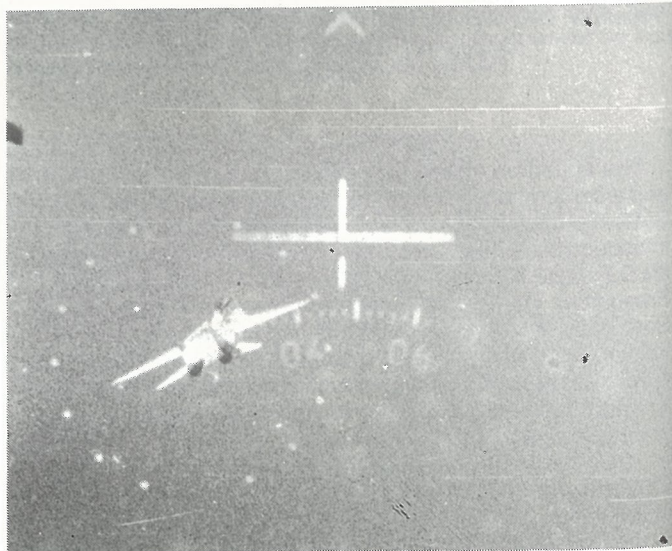
Phase Two of the ADEX was conducted on the evening of the 23rd, with 20 missions being flown from scrambles and combat air controllers (CAP). Many missed intercepts occurred because of the realistic operational approach taken by the F-111. This highlighted the limitations of the air defence system against modern tactical aircraft. The final phase on the 25th resulted in a more pleasing result. CAPS were employed to enhance the early warning system and these were successful because of the excellent visibility and the requirements for F-111 to display their navigation lights on bright and flashing. On 27 August the squadron redeployed to Williamtown, and just prior to landing FLTLT K.F. Clarke was forced to jettison his MATRA R530 missile into Stockton Bight, eight miles from base, due to an unsafe main undercarriage indication; however his landing was uneventful.

On Saturday 25 September, one half of the squadron was at work as usual whilst the other half formed part of the base contingent to celebrate the Freedom of Entry to the Shire of Port Stephens granted to RAAF Base Williamtown. The ceremony was held at Raymond Terrace in conjunction with the township's 175th Anniversary festivities. The squadron proudly displayed the Standard during the parade and a four aircraft formation flypast coincided with the actual presentation.

October proved to be a very interesting month with squadron aircraft engaging in combat and intercepts against eight types of the aircraft belonging to the US and Australian Navy's as part of the Kangaroo 2 exercise. However, the highlight was the dissimilar aircraft combat tactics against the USN F-14 Tomcats. Before the programme commenced ten base pilots flew out to the US Enterprise in a Greyhound (carrier on board delivery aircraft) for a face to face briefing with F-14 aircrew. The mission flown highlighted the superiority of the Tomcats long range kill capability, however, its vulnerability at close range against the Mirage was evident with some convincing gun kills by 77 Squadron pilots.



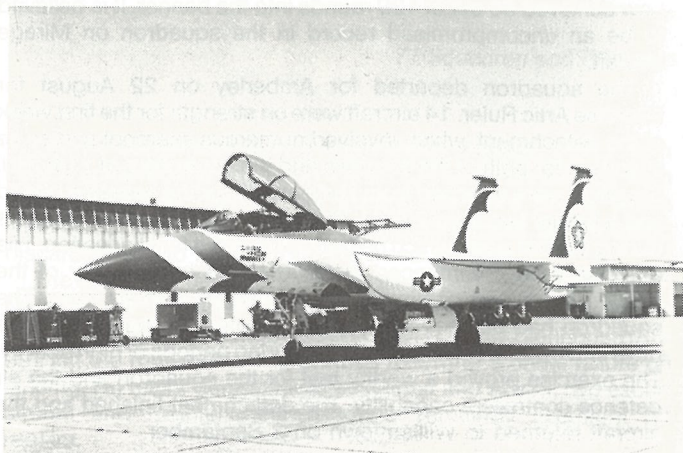
USN F14 Tomcat during exercise "K2" October 1976. (RAAF)



Pilots view of F14 Tomcat during exercise "K2" October 1976. (RAAF)

The squadron combined forces with 20CU to defend Williamtown from the combined Fleet Air Arm of USS Enterprise and HMAS Melbourne during three ADEX periods of Exercise Kangaroo 2. During these ADEX's from 12 to 14 October the fleet launched mass raids of Skyhawks, Intruders, Prowlers, Vigilante and Corsair II aircraft for strike, and the Tomcats as strike defence aircraft. With fair weather during the early phases of the ADEX the results for both forces was quite rewarding. The final phase was somewhat disappointing due to bad weather restricting carrier launches and recovery.

For the final phase of exercise Kangaroo 2 the squadron deployed to Townsville on 15 October. The role of the Mirages was that of close air support and tactical photographic reconnaissance in support of Orange forces, as tasked by the Air Component Commander. Most of the hours flown were in transit from Townsville to the Shoal Water Bay exercise area. The F-14 Tomcats were successfully employed as air defence for blue forces and claimed many Mirages in transit to the exercise area. After the exercise the squadron redeployed to Williamtown on 27 October.



McDonnell Douglas TF15 aircraft Williamtown 2 November 1976.
(RAAF)



FLTLT Freedman after his canopy explosion 13 December 1976.

A McDonnell Douglas TF-15 Eagle aircraft arrived from Guam on 2 November at Williamtown, and was on a demonstration tour of Australia as a possible Mirage replacement. Some 23 fortunate Williamtown aircrew were able to evaluate the TF-15 from flights in the back seat. The TF-15 departed for Honolulu on 10 November (with an inflight refuelling KC-135) but not before leaving a favourable impression on the base for performance and serviceability. The five fortunate squadron pilots to have a back seat ride were the CO WGCDR W. Taylor, SQNLDR G.R. Gent, SQNLDR B.G. Weston, FLTLT A.B. Treloar and FLTLT S.S. Welsh.

Two 77 squadron aircraft (A3-36, A3-73) together with one from 20CU flew from Williamtown to Darwin on 24 November as the first stage of a deployment to replenish Butterworth with aircraft that it had lost that year. The second stage was flown to Singapore via Bali, with the aircraft being left in Singapore, and after a few hours shopping, the aircrew returned to Williamtown by Hercules aircraft.

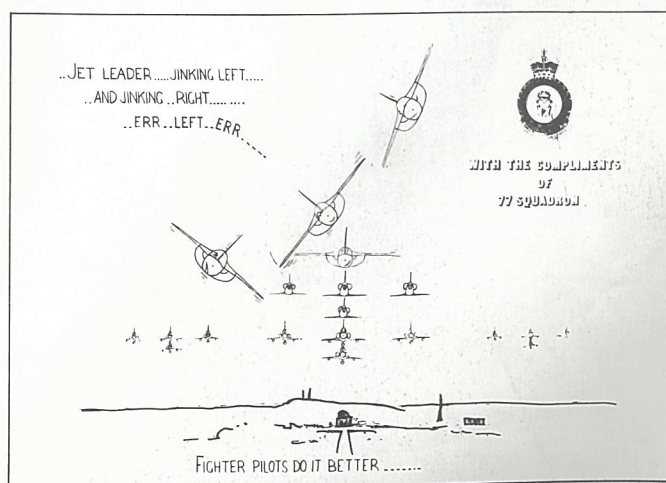
By the beginning of December, the squadron was winding down for the long awaited Christmas break. The year was not to end quietly as on 13 December FLTLT D.C. Freedman suffered a cut forehead whilst returning to Williamtown from Amberley in the back seat of a 20CU Mirage dual flown by SQNLDR M.B. Nixon. The aircraft was flying at 48000ft and Mach 1.95 when the aircraft suffered an explosive decompression when the canopy blew out.

WGCDR D.G. Stenhouse arrived from RAAF SUCAN to take over the duties of CO from WGCDR A.F. Taylor who was posted to HQ Williamtown.

1977

The year began with the arrival of aircraft A3-3, which had been in storage at Avalon since the disbandment of No. 76 Squadron in 1973. The aircraft had been completely refurbished before being released from storage and had successfully passed an acceptance test flight. During an acceptance 'A' servicing being carried out upon arrival at the squadron, a bird strike which was approximately five years old was found in one of the auxillary intakes. As the remains of the bird had been painted over, a skin repair was required which took the squadron 110 man hours to repair.

The Silver Jubilee Parade flypast before Her Majesty the Queen was held on the 8 March 1977. The flypast was completed successfully with the CO WGCDR D.G. Stenhouse, leading a contingent of 12 Mirage aircraft. The high speed section of the flypast was led by four F-111 aircraft followed by four Navy Skyhawk aircraft and 12 Mirage aircraft in the rear slot. All went well until about 30 seconds from overhead of the parade, when the lead E111 called jinking left and jinking right. This short sharp manoeuvre did absolutely nothing for formation integrity and the thoughts of all squadron pilots taking part were suitably recorded in a cartoon drawn by FLTLT Steve Low. After the parade the aircraft recovered directly back to Williamtown.



Queens Silver Jubilee Parade
The problem as described FLTLT Steve Low. 8 March 1977.

On 15 April - 20 April four aircraft departed for Townsville for Exercise Shifting Sand. The exercise was designed to evaluate helicopter tactics against hostile fighter aircraft. From the squadron point of view the exercise was excellent and all aircrew gained a great deal of knowledge.

Further exercises continued in April as Exercise War Bonnett was carried out at Williamtown on 27 and 28 April between 1300 hours and 0600 hours. The exercise was run much more realistically than previous air defence exercises. The whole base was placed on a war footing, rather than just 77 Squadron and 3CRU. An aircraft dispersal plan was used and at nightfall base blackout procedures were observed. The squadron defended Williamtown against F-111 aircraft from Amberley and F4 Skyhawk aircraft from Nowra. The exercise progressed quite slowly; over the 17 hour exercise only 34 raids were carried out and with some pilots becoming airborne three times and not carrying out one intercept.

After many weeks of preparation the squadron celebrated the 7/7/77 in grand style. The day commenced with a ceremonial parade during which the squadron standard was shown and the parade was reviewed by Air Commodore J.W. Newham, the Air Officer Temporarily Commanding, Headquarters Operational Command. After the parade a squadron photograph was taken followed by a social function in the hangar. Guests for the day included Commanding Officers, World War II members, two Korean veterans and latter day members.

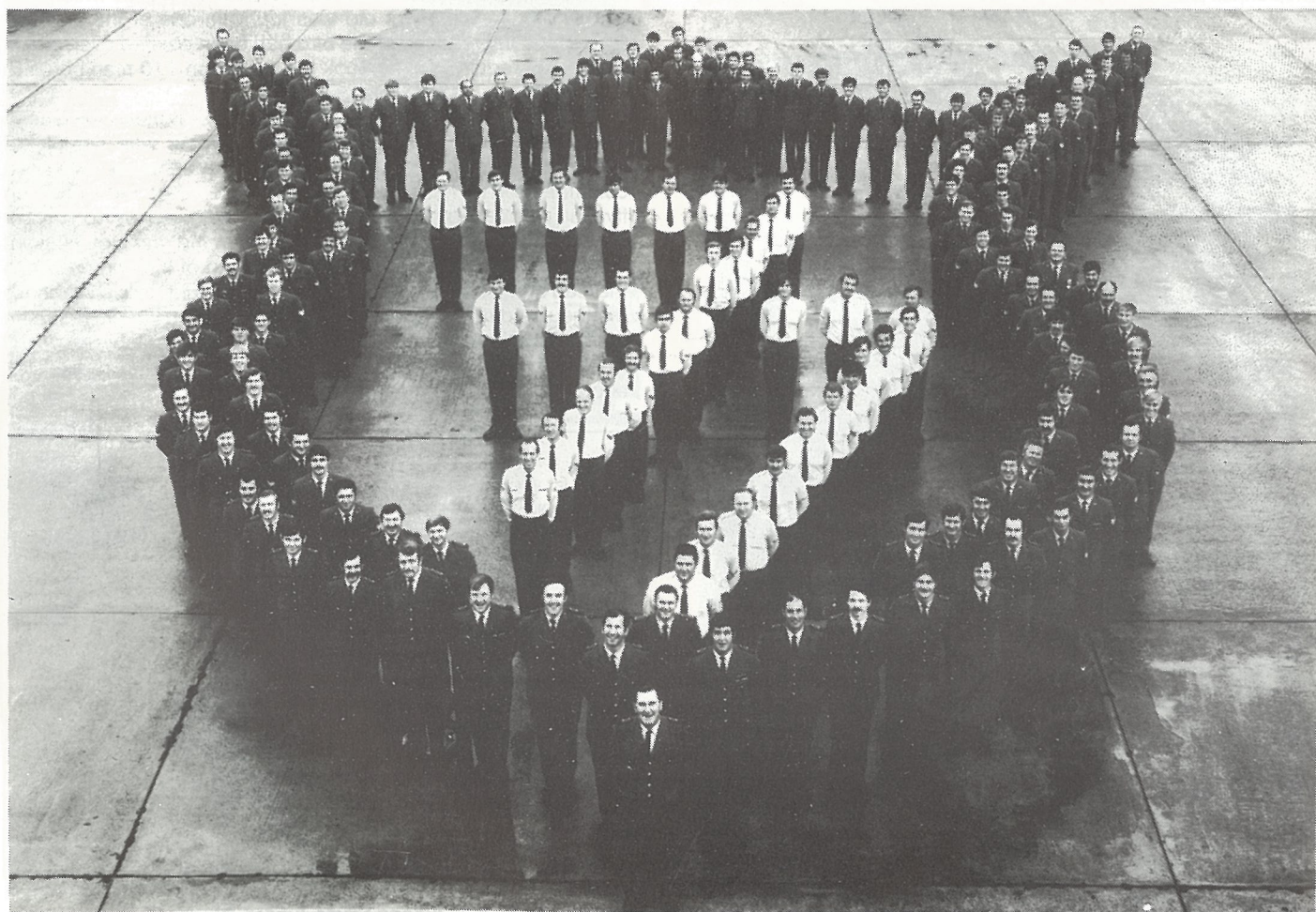
On 12 July 1977 the CO, WGCDR Dennis Stenhouse flew to RAAF Edinburgh to present a squadron plaque and bestowed honorary squadron membership to Ryan Martin who was born at 7.07 am on 7/7/77 in the Queen Victoria Hospital, Adelaide. The same honour was also bestowed on Andrew Hill of Newcastle by the OPSO SQNLDR Dave Bowden. Andrew was born at 7 am on 7/7/77 and was 7 days early.



77 Squadron parading the Squadrons colours. 7/7/77.

On 15 July during an air to air gunnery mission, FLTLT Steve Low achieved 60 out of 120 rounds into the banner. It is believed to be an uncompromised record in the squadron on Mirage aircraft.

The squadron departed for Amberley on 22 August for Exercise Artic Ruler. 14 aircraft were on strength for the first week of the detachment, which involved numerous intercept sorties as a workup for both of the aircrews and the controllers of 114CRU. Six pilots were attached from Butterworth for the exercise period and a further two from 2OCU. The squadron flew on three nights during the first week which helped as blackout familiarisation. The exercise itself commenced at 0800 hours on Tuesday of the second week and continued for the following three days. The squadron had at least one aircraft airborne for the entire three days and up to five aircraft airborne during periods of high activity. The exercise proved a worthy test for the squadron and the air defence controllers capability. The detachment finished and the aircraft returned to Williamtown on 2 September.



7/7/77 Parade Shield.



*77 Squadron and RAN personnel at Amberley October 1977.
(RAAF)*

On 14 September during night flying mission, FLTLT Ron Haack achieved the squadron's first FOX strike on take-off from Williamtown. He claimed his trophy, the fox's brush which lingered for two days under the operations desk before being discarded due to its effect on the nasal system!

The squadron deployed ten aircraft to Learmonth W.A. on 27 October, for Exercise Golden West. The only hitch on the deployment occurred when CO, WGCDR Dennis Stenhouse (A3-39), left the runway at Alice Springs following a brake failure on landing. No major damage was sustained and A3-39, two escort aircraft and maintenance personnel remained overnight for repairs.

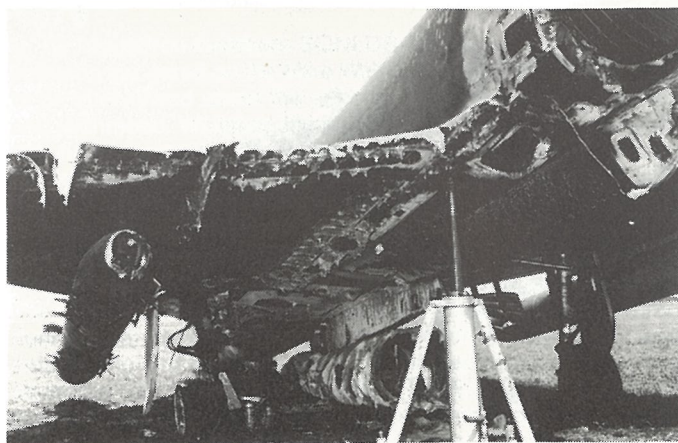
After settling in at Learmonth, the squadron commenced strikes on Learmonth Range in earnest to assess the area's capabilities, using HE 500lb bombs the target was finally struck a mortal blow with a direct hit in the last range sortie. Before the squadron returned to Williamtown some of the members took the opportunity of a trip on some prawn trawlers operating from Exmouth. The squadron successfully re-deployed on 9 November.

On 3 December, nine aircraft participated in the final Queen's Silver Jubilee Flypast together with four A4 Skyhawks over Sydney, with the following day being airshow day at Williamtown in which thirteen sorties were flown by the squadron. That afternoon four aircraft flew to Canberra, formed up with four Navy Skyhawks for a flypast for the closing ceremony of the 1977 Pacific Games.

So ended the year 77 for 77.

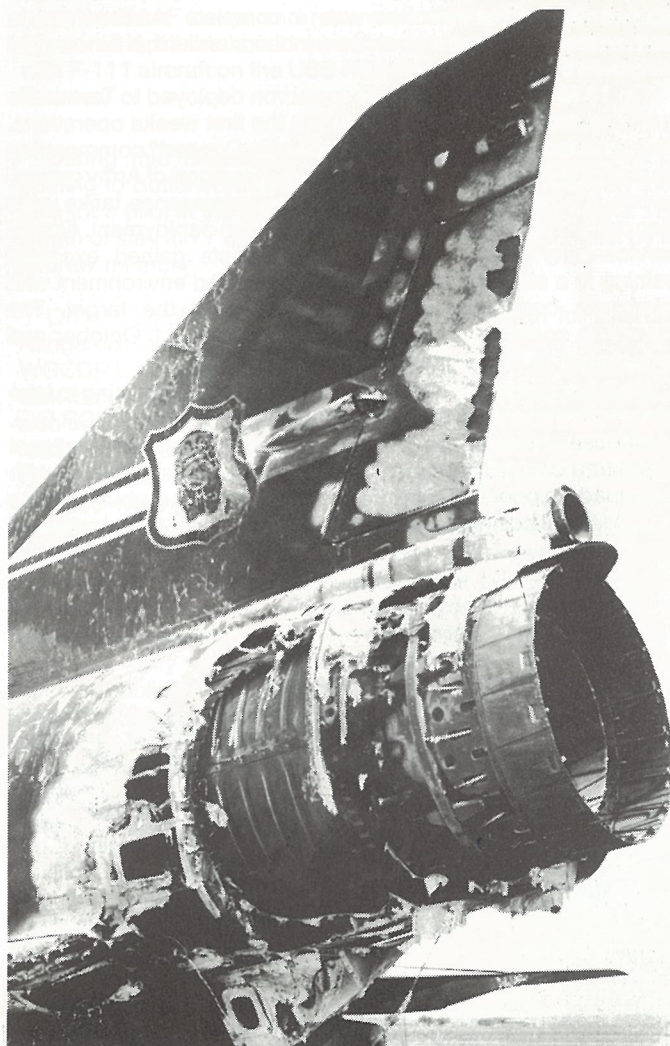
1978

The first deployment for 1978 departed to East Sale for HE 500lb bombing and gunnery missions on 6 February. The sorties profile involved a High Low navex and strike on Dutson Range



Damaged to A3—08 7 February 1978. (RAAF)

with MK82HE 500lb bombs followed by two gunnery passes, and returning back to East Sale. The second week turned out to be quite eventful as the last two days of the week involved four aircraft each day for a fire power demonstration at Pukapunyal. After practice on 16 February, the real demonstration took place the next day with aircraft carrying four 500lb MK82 bombs and 180 rounds of 30mm HE ammo.



Damage to A3—08 East Sale 7 February 1978 after barrier engagement. (RAAF)

Whilst at Sale, 77 Squadron encountered a few problems. During take-off FLTLT Ian Watson (A3-08) aborted due to a blown tyre, with his aircraft engaging the barrier at approximately 90 knots. On engagement the nose wheel collapsed and the aircraft fell on the centre line fuel tank, ruptured and burst into flames. As soon as the aircraft stopped, FLTLT Watson shut the engine down, unstrapped and sprinted away from the aircraft. East Sale emergency squads were in quick attendance and despite the intensity of the fire and the threat from live ordnance, the fire was quickly extinguished and the aircraft disarmed. The aircraft damage was assessed as CAT 5, with the starboard wing of A3-08 eventually being sent to Wagga to be fitted to A3-41 in order for that aircraft to be used as a training aid.

During March the decision was made by Headquarters Operational Command to transfer the squadron 'D' servicing responsibility to No 481 Maintenance Squadron for a three month trial. The transfer also involved the attachment of 20 airmen to 481 Maintenance Squadron and by the end of March the squadron had completed ten and a half 'D' servicings since 1 July 1977. With the transfer of twenty personnel to 481 Maintenance Squadron the squadrons ability to deploy from within their own resources was limited, however a two aircraft deployment was possible without seriously affecting the flying rate at Williamtown. On the other hand, a four aircraft deployment limited the flying at Williamtown to virtually every other day. Previously the 'D' team was reduced to support the deployments and the back log of work on the 'D' servicings was caught up at a later date.

On 14 August F5 E Tiger 2 aircraft from the USAF Aggressor Squadron arrived to conduct dissimilar aircraft tactics against the Mirages. The sorties flown against the F5 E's were quite successful and no one was shot down. Whilst the Aggressor Squadron was at Williamtown Exercise "Grand Legend" was conducted. This tactics exercise against F5 E's was the culmination of the tactics planned for the year. During the F5 E's visit all aircrew of the squadron had at least one sortie flown against them. The exercise was a complete success and a marked improvement was evident in the standard of air combat tactics for the squadron.

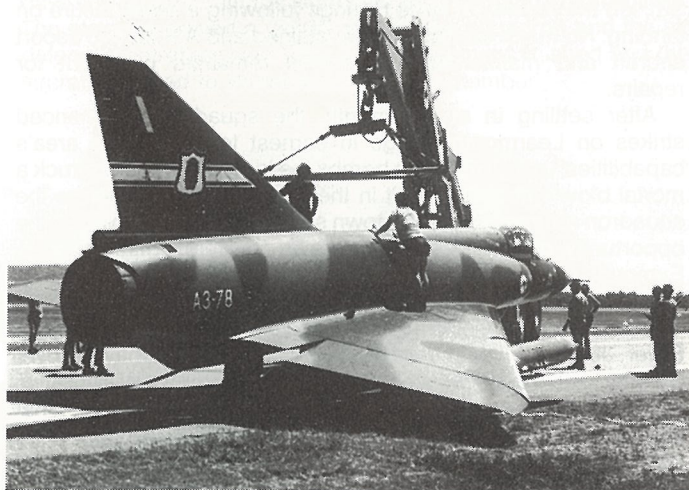
On 13 September the whole squadron deployed to Townsville and a blistering pace was set during the first weeks operations. The squadron was involved in exercise "In Concert" commencing on 30 September which involved flying in support of Army ground forces. A sizeable amount of Photo-reconnaissance tasks were also carried out around Townsville during the deployment. Aircraft serviceability was consistent and all pilots gained excellent training in a scenario of a hostile air to ground environment with intercepts occurring both before and after the target. The squadron completed exercise 'In Concert' on 11 October and redeployed to Williamtown on 13 October.

On 7 December WgCDR L.A. Naylor arrived on posting to take over as Commanding Officer of 77 Squadron and WgCDR D.G. Stenhouse departed on posting to Headquarters Operational Command on 15 December. That day he flew his last flight with the squadron, prior to departure, anticipating that he would receive the traditional hosing down, "Stinky" not to be out done taxied his

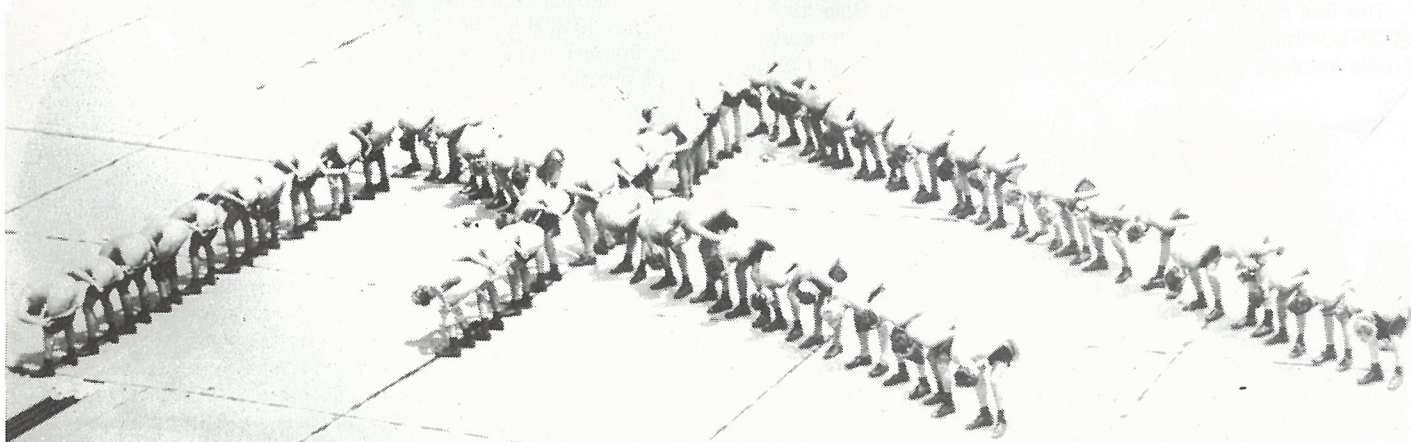
aircraft into the revetments at the end of the strip. After shutting his aircraft down he quickly changed from his flying gear and restarted his aircraft and taxied up to the 77 Squadron lines. With fire hose in hand and bags of french chalk the members were waiting when "Stinky" stepped out dressed in a swimming costume, raincoat, cap and running shoes. After being hosed down he was taken for a tour of the base in the 'hot seat'.



The CO WgCDR Dennis Stenhouse shows the Governor General Sir Zelman Cowan the cockpit of a squadron aircraft during Exercise In Concert September 1978 in Townsville. (RAAF)



A3-73 bogged on the side of the strip during Exercise In Concert in Townsville on the 12 September 1978. (RAAF)



77 SON DEFINITELY DOES IT BEST

EX IN CONCERT TVL SEP-OCT 78

Every picture tells a story. October 1978. (RAAF)



FLTLT I. Watson after his last flight, 11 December 78.
His parting words were "You Bastards". (RAAF)



Stinkys last flight after the traditional hosing. 14 December 1978.
(RAAF)

1979

Two squadron members, SQNLDR R.B. Treloar and FLTLT B.A. Johnson appeared on the Mike Walsh Show during March 1979, to be interviewed about the upcoming air displays at Amberley and Richmond. Whilst on the show, FLTLT Brian Johnson learnt that he had won the Sir Richard Williams Trophy for the most improved Fighter Pilot in 1978. FLTLT Johnson was later presented the award on 2 June by General McKee (USAF) at a squadron parade.

On Friday 30 March a four aircraft flypast accompanied by four Macchis was carried out to celebrate a tri-service march through the main street of Perth. The hospitality shown to the squadron during the deployment by 25 Squadron members was outstanding and helped make a difficult deployment easier. The squadron also participated in a RAAF open day at Pearce on 1 April with an estimated 40,000 people watching the display. A solo handling demonstration was flown by FLTLT W.E. Guy in addition to a three aircraft simulated ground attack.



FLTLT B. Johnson after his Sir Richard Williams Trophy
Presentation. 2 June 1979. (RAAF)

The aircraft left Pearce on 2 April and flew to Avalon to practice for the forthcoming air displays the next weekend. On 7 and 8 April the display team carried out displays at both Edinburgh and Laverton RAAF bases and returned to Williamtown on the 9th. Also on 9 April the squadron carried out a co-ordinated attack with F-111 aircraft on the USS ROARK as it departed Newcastle harbour.

During mid September, FLTLT Shane Welsh departed for posting to Butterworth. FLTLT Welsh had spent a relatively long time for a pilot in the squadron of some forty three months. This length of stay at 77 Squadron is believed to be the longest by an aircrew member.

On 15 October the squadron deployed North for Exercise Kangaroo Three. Eight aircraft under the command of the CO, WGCDR L.A. Naylor arrived at Rockhampton as part of the "Blue" task force operating in the Shoalwater Bay area. Two aircraft were also deployed at the same time to Amberley to operate in photo-reconnaissance role. Unfortunately the members had to sleep at Rockhampton in tents at the airport. Although the maintenance facilities were a bit rough and conditions sparse, the ground crew's morale remained high and all maintenance commitments were carried out. To help boost morale over the exercise period, members of the squadron constructed their own swimming pool in the living area. Although operating from a forward strip on adverse conditions the squadron encountered no FOD problems and the only two engine changes were due to minor unserviceabilities. Exercise flying out of Rockhampton mainly consisted of air superiority, air defence, combat air patrol and close air support as directed by the Air Defence Controllers. The squadron returned to Williamtown at the completion of the exercise on 31 October.

Six aircraft departed for Ohakea, New Zealand for exercise "Willow Two" on 29 November. The fact that this was the first time that the squadron had deployed Mirages out of Australia and the first time the squadron had left Australia in 13 years helped make the exercise memorable and certainly successful. The detachment began flying the first week of December with air to ground and dissimilar air combat tactics sorties. The second week of the detachment was spent flying aircraft tactics missions against the A4 Skyhawks of 75 Squadron RNZAF at Ohakea. On 14 December the detachment returned via Noumea and created history by being the first Mirages to visit the French colony.



Squadron deployment personnel Pearce March 1979 (RAAF)



Squadron detachment Pearce March 1979: Perth rock band Crumpet caused much feminist flack when they visited the detachment. (RAAF)



Squadron maintenance facility at Rockhampton airport during Exercise K3. October 1979. (RAAF)



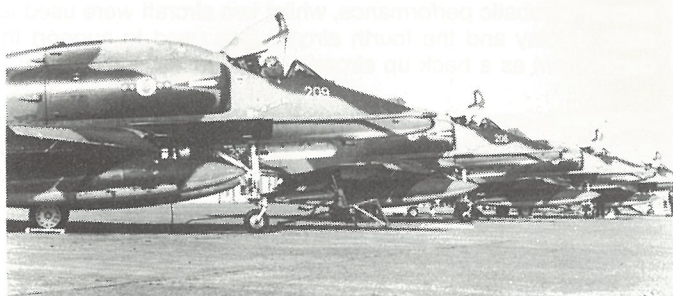
CO WGCDR L. Naylor being welcomed to Hobart by the Mayor on 6 September 1979. The visit coincided with Battle of Britain celebrations in Hobart. (RAAF)



Rockhampton airport K3 October 1979. (RAAF)



*Exercise Willoh 2 detachment members December 1979.
(RAAF)*



RNZAF A4 Skyhawk aircraft, 75 Squadron Ohakea. (RAAF)

1980

Flying recommenced in the second week of the new year, with an air support demonstration at Singleton and Salt Ash bombing ranges. This bombing and strafing programme continued into early February when night bombing sorties commenced. All the air to ground application work was in preparation for a fire power display at Puckapunyal army base in mid February.

The bombing practice was interrupted on 11 February, when five Mirage aircraft deployed to RAAF Base East Sale. The following day they overflew Melbourne in formation as part of the funeral service for Sir Richard Williams (the father of the RAAF).

The squadron deployed six aircraft to East Sale for the fire power demonstration at Puckapunyal but not without incident. On the morning of 18 February, during his first bombing recovery pass over Dutson Range, FLTLT J. Carr (A3-75) suffered an engine flameout for no apparent reason after releasing the first of his 500lb bombs. After trying unsuccessfully to relight his engine, he ejected from the aircraft. FLTLT Carr successfully bailed out and landed in grass and reeds some two metres high but was quickly winched out by helicopter and flown to hospital. During the ejection he suffered a hairline fracture to the spine as well as cuts and burns to the chin caused by the helmet strap.

The aircraft had crashed in marshland on a narrow strip of land separating the La Trobe River from Dowd's Morass near Dutson Range. On impact, clouds of black smoke and burning swamp grass obscured the crash site. Due to the inhospitable terrain, firemen and police did not attempt to cross the swamp to extinguish the flames and relied on the Forestry Commission and

the CFA tankers to patrol the southern edge of the blaze instead. At the same time, the Alpine Aviation aircraft water bombed the three inaccessible fronts, but the fire spread quickly and approximately 200 hectares of swamp was burnt out before it was extinguished.

On 10 March, a Mirage piloted by FLTLT P. Devine took part in the army "Rapier" missile trials at North Head, Sydney. A segment of the trials was screened on "Nation Wide", and although the Mirage featured prominently, 77 Squadron never got a mention!

On 2 May, six aircraft were involved in CAP exercises with HMAS Hobart. On return to Williamtown A3-58, piloted by PLTOFF G. Butterworth, experienced an undercarriage malfunction. After several attempts to re-cycle the undercarriage and rectify the fault, the aircraft was headed out to sea for a planned ejection. With the aircraft critically low on fuel, the pilot ejected safely and the aircraft crashed just short of the beach at Tanilba Bay.

On 2 June, 77 Squadron commenced a live air to air gunnery programme. Targetting was provided by Canberra's from No 2 Squadron but several sorties were flown against a special trial target towed behind an ARDU Mirage. The trials proved a success but some problems still occurred with the release unit, and the target system was returned to ARDU for further development. The Canberra continued as the target towing aircraft for Mirage air to air gunnery until its withdrawal from service in mid 1982.

Due to the introduction of the RAAF Anaclytical Maintenance Programme (RAMP) servicing policy in April, the "D" servicing was a thing of the past. These were now replaced by "R" servings and on 17 June 1980, FLTLT Dave Halloran flew the last 'Post "D" Airtest' at Williamtown. The aircraft returned from the test flight totally serviceable.

July proved to be a very busy month for 77 Squadron. From 24 July the squadron deployed to Townsville with 12 aircraft for a strike programme. During the first week, strikes were carried out in the high range training area, including 15 sorties in support of an Air Contact Officer (ACO) course. In the second week, strikes with bounce aircraft and escorts were carried out on Rattlesnake Island.

On 28 July, four A4 Skyhawks arrived from RNZAF Ohakea for a ten day detachment. The exercise code named 'Willoh III' was a joint strike programme on Saltash Range with the Mirages and A4 Skyhawks alternating between bounce, escort and strike roles. The dissimilar tactics with the A4's continued into early August when the New Zealand detachment returned home.

A close-up photograph of a mechanical instrument, likely a pressure gauge or flowmeter. The instrument features a semi-circular scale with markings from 0 to 300. The needle is positioned at approximately 150. The scale has major markings at 0, 50, 100, 150, 200, 250, and 300. The needle is a simple, thin metal pointer. The background is dark and textured, possibly a wall or a piece of equipment.

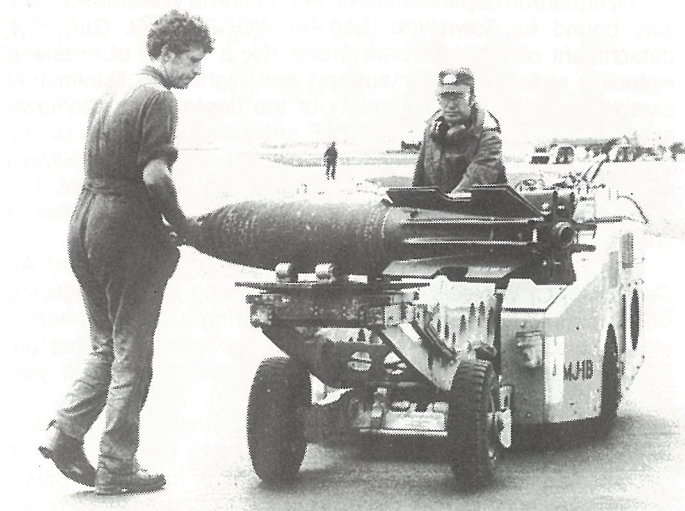
Exercise Pacific Consort, which commenced on 27 August until 9 September involved flying Air to Air tactics with F15 Eagle aircraft of the USAF, and defending the base against low level attacks from F111C aircraft operating from Amberley. After the aircraft and pilots returned from Amberley they were reconfined and prepared for exercise "Intrepid Gunner"; a fire power demonstration at Nowra. All was in readiness for the exercise when at the last moment it was cancelled due to a total fire ban.

In December WGCdr G.R. Gent was posted in to take over the position of CO 77 Squadron from WGCdr L.A. Naylor.

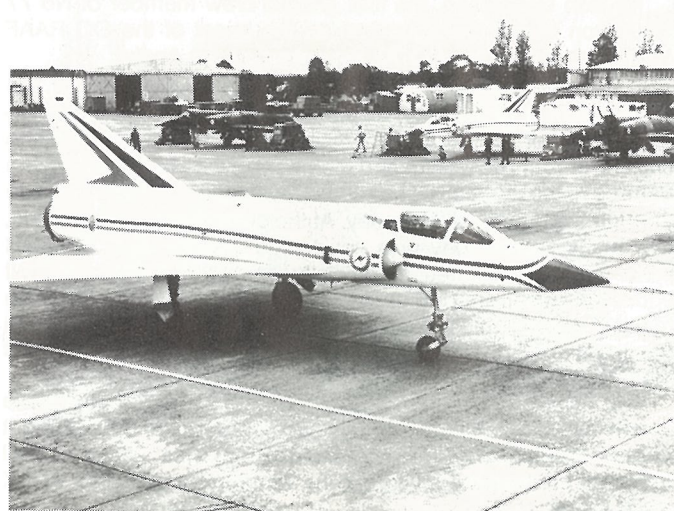
On 26 February four aircraft and support crew deployed to New Zealand to participate in the RNZAF "Air Force Day 1981". On Sunday 1 March 1981, SQNLDR Steve Low gave a single aircraft aerobatic performance, whilst two aircraft were used for static display and the fourth aircraft was used to support the deployment as a back up aircraft.

A black and white photograph showing a group of men in a bar setting. Two men in the foreground are holding a large, rectangular wooden plaque. The plaque has the word "AIRCRAFT" at the top, followed by a list of names and dates, and the word "WINE" at the bottom. The group of men behind them are smiling and some are holding glasses, suggesting a celebratory occasion.

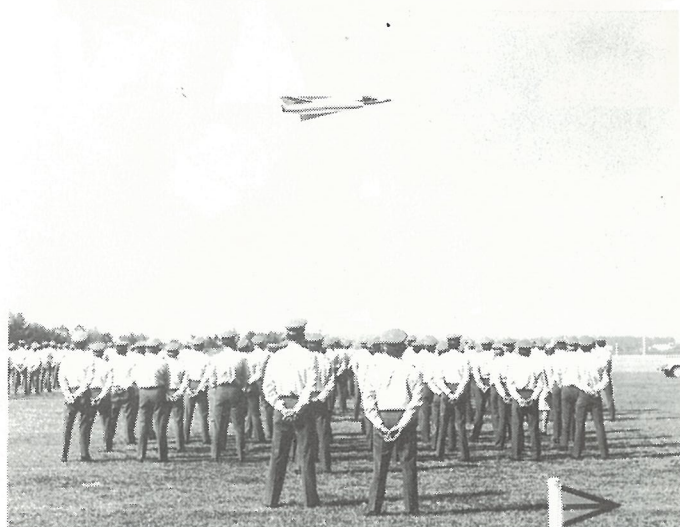
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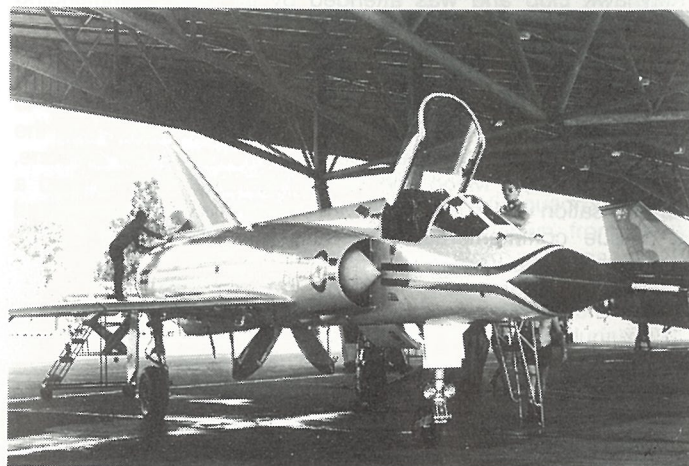
East Sale deployment 1A reason for deployment LAC R. Burns CPL P. Mead. (RAAF)



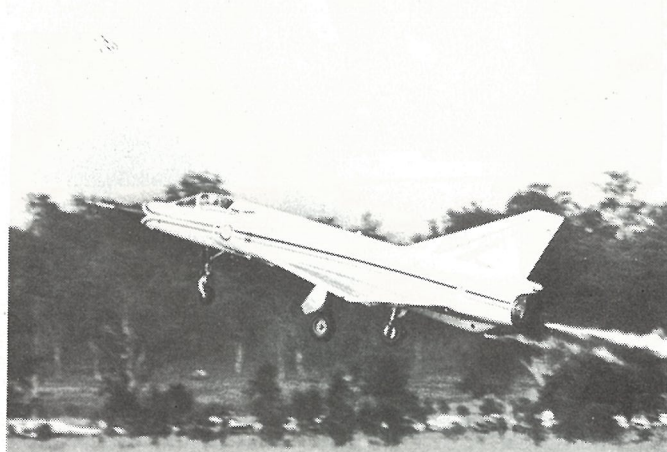
Jubilee airshow aircraft 29 March 1981 — leaving for the Schofield's air show. (RAAF)



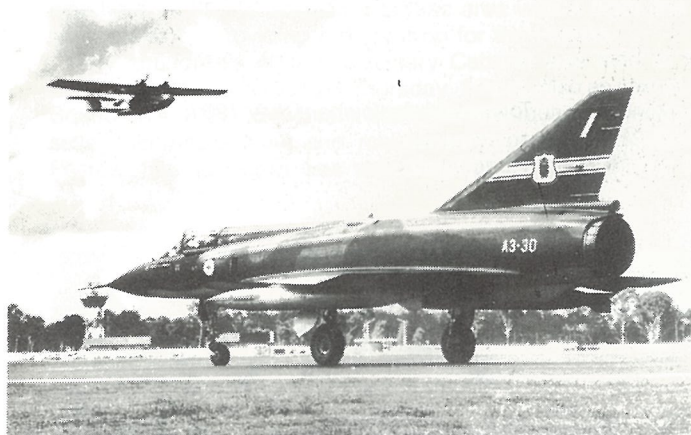
FLTLT D. Pietsch overflies Williamtown Diamond Jubilee Parade. 27 March 1981. (RAAF)



Turnaround in luxury under Amberley carport during Jubilee air show. (RAAF)



Jubilee Aircraft takes off during the display 5 April 1981 at Amberley. (RAAF)



PLTOFF P. Bishop taxiing back from the opening flypast as the Catalina shows its style Amberley. 5 April 1981. (RAAF)

Seven aircraft deployed to Amberley on 2 April for the RAAF Diamond Jubilee Airshow. The squadron contributed to the Airshow on 5 April with the opening formation flypast, synchronised aerobatics by SQNLDR Low and FLTLT Pietsch, and close air support during the Mock War! The small ground

crew maintenance support of the squadron was stretched to the limit when some twelve extra Mirage aircraft from 2OCU landed at Amberley after the final flypast because of inclement weather at Williamtown. The squadron redeployed back to Williamtown the next day after launching all the Mirage aircraft at Amberley.

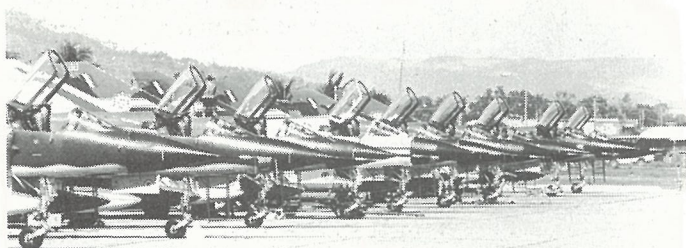
Mr Ron Donaldson, the first ground crew member of No 77 Squadron visited the squadron as the guest of the OC RAAF Williamtown and the CO 77 Squadron on 28 April.

Forty members of 77 Squadron visited Kempsey on the weekend of 9 to 10 May, to participate in the Kempsey Shire 'Cavalcade of Sport' and to establish a liaison between the citizens of Kempsey Shire and members of 77 Squadron. On the Saturday, the squadron led the 'Cavalcade of Sport' parade through the streets of Kempsey. At the conclusion of the parade, the opening ceremony was conducted and the CO, WGCDR Gary Gent was invited to officially open the 'Cavalcade'. All squadron members competed in all the sporting activities, the result of which could be gauged by the return of twenty squadron members to Kempsey to compete in the Kempsey Raft race on 24 May.

The flying programme ceased on 20 May for almost three weeks when all Mirage aircraft were grounded due to flight control problems. Flying recommenced in June with a tactical intercept programme as part of the working up phase for ADEX Pitch Black.

On 20 June, thirty seven members of the Kittyhawk squadron branch of the Air Force Association visited the squadron to attend the presentation of the Kittyhawk Trophy for 1980 to 77 Squadron by AVM J.W. Newham CAFD. The presentation was held in the Kittyhawk club and was attended by all base Commanding Officers and 63 squadron members.

Four aircraft departed for Air Base Butterworth, Malaysia on 23 June to replace aircraft returning from 3 Squadron and 75 Squadron for major servicings. The four aircraft returned to Williamtown from Townsville the following day however, after the Indonesian diplomatic clearances were revoked. On 24 June, Colonel Ki Sung Moon, the Korean Defence Attache paid a familiarisation visit to the squadron. During this visit he presented a plaque commemorating the valuable role played by 77 Squadron in the Korean War.



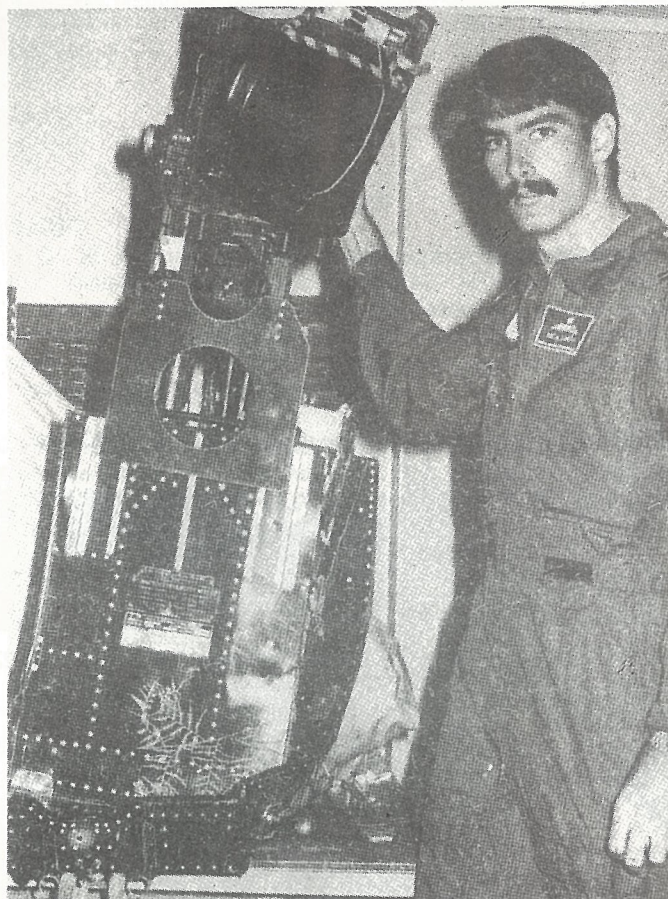
Townsville deployment July 1981.



The usual traps at Townsville, the heat, the hill and the birds. July 1981. (RAAF)

The squadron departed the wintery climate of Williamtown on 7 July bound for Townsville. Led by WGCDR G.R. Gent, the detachment of twelve aircraft arrived for a variety of missions including strike, close air support and night flare illumination exercises. To add to the variety of the deployment, Skyhawk aircraft from 75 Squadron RNZAF arrived at Townsville on 11 July. Strike and dissimilar air combat tactics missions were flown against 75 Squadron for the remainder of the deployment. The squadron redeployed on 24 July without incident after a successful deployment.

From 10 August, the squadron operated with Forward Air Control (FAC) Winjeels at Singleton bombing range practicing both high and low strikes for a week. During a recovery from a strafing run, FLTLT Sean Trestrail (A3-15) suffered a ricochet, but the aircraft handling was not affected and the aircraft was returned to Williamtown without incident. Also during the programme, on 12 August PLTOFF Peter Bishop (A3-72) was forced to jettison both 286 gallon fuel tanks on take-off. The aircraft had suffered an afterburner blow out and partial compressor stall, but was able to come to rest in the arrestor barrier.



FLGOff Nick Alexander with the battered ejection seat that saved his life. 9 September 1981. (RAAF)

On 8 September, during the last wave of aircraft launched to carry out live missile firings, FLTLT Jorge Washington flying aircraft (A3-44) sustained fragmentation damage when the missile he fired detonated shortly after leaving the aircraft.

Returning from a photo-reconnaissance sortie at 1720 hours on 9 September, FLGOff Nick Alexander (A3-80) had an unsafe indication on the right hand undercarriage when the landing gear was selected down. Due to minimal fuel he attempted some sharp turns in an effort to lock the undercarriage in the down position. When this proved unsatisfactory, he ejected over Saltash bombing range at 1300 metres. After landing safely FLGOff Alexander walked about three kilometres before being picked up by a water board vehicle. The aircraft crashed on a mud flat in the Swan Bay area north of RAAF Base Williamtown. On impact the Mirage disintegrated starting a small grass fire. Due to his safe escape from A3-80 FLGOff Alexander became another unlucky member of a small band of 77 pilots to receive his Martin Baker tie for using the ejection seat.



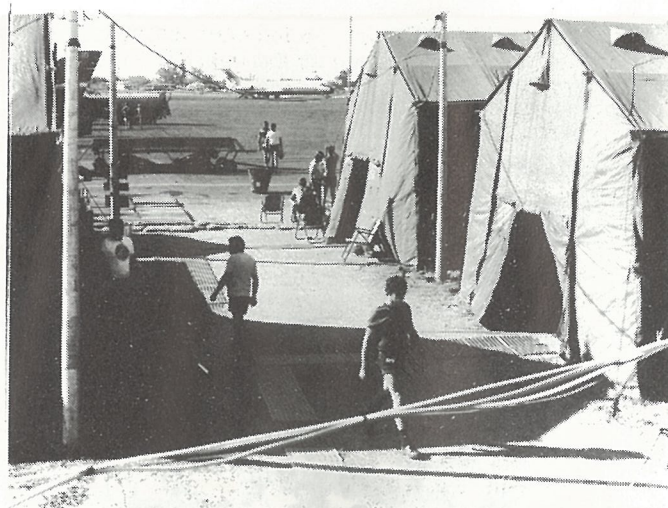
*Winners Inter-Squadron Touch Football Competition
77 Squadron defeated 20CU 5 - 1. October 1981.*

Top row: AC Cook, LAC Koch, SGT Schubert, LAC Sparke, CPL Pill, LAC Robertson, LAC Prior.

Bottom row: CPL Saltmarsh, CPL Gray, CPL Kneen, LAC Inglis, AC Davis. (RAAF)



K81 SQNLDR A. Wylie escorts winner of 77 Squadron/K81 Bathing Beauty Contest, Ms. Roberta Umsted, to the Rockhampton strip swimming pool.



K81 Working area Rockhampton airstrip. (RAAF)

On 15 October 1981, five aircraft departed for Rockhampton, Queensland to participate in Exercise Kangaroo 81, with a further six aircraft following on 19 October. During the exercise, close air support and battlefield air defence sorties were flown as the squadron's contribution to the war effort. Flying operations Rockhampton also included dissimilar air combat tactics missions against American F15 and RNZAF Skyhawk aircraft. Also during the exercise several photo-reconnaissance missions were flown.

Once again on 30 November eight Mirages departed for Ohakea, New Zealand to participate with 75 Squadron RNZAF in Exercise Willoh 81/4. Exercise sorties flown from Ohakea consisted of HiLo navigation and pairs strike missions to various bombing ranges. 75 Squadron Skyhawks provided an occasional 'bounce' however no tactics missions were flown due to the impracticality of reconfiguring the aircraft during such a short exercise period. On 9 December the aircraft departed Ohakea for return via Auckland and Noumea.

1982

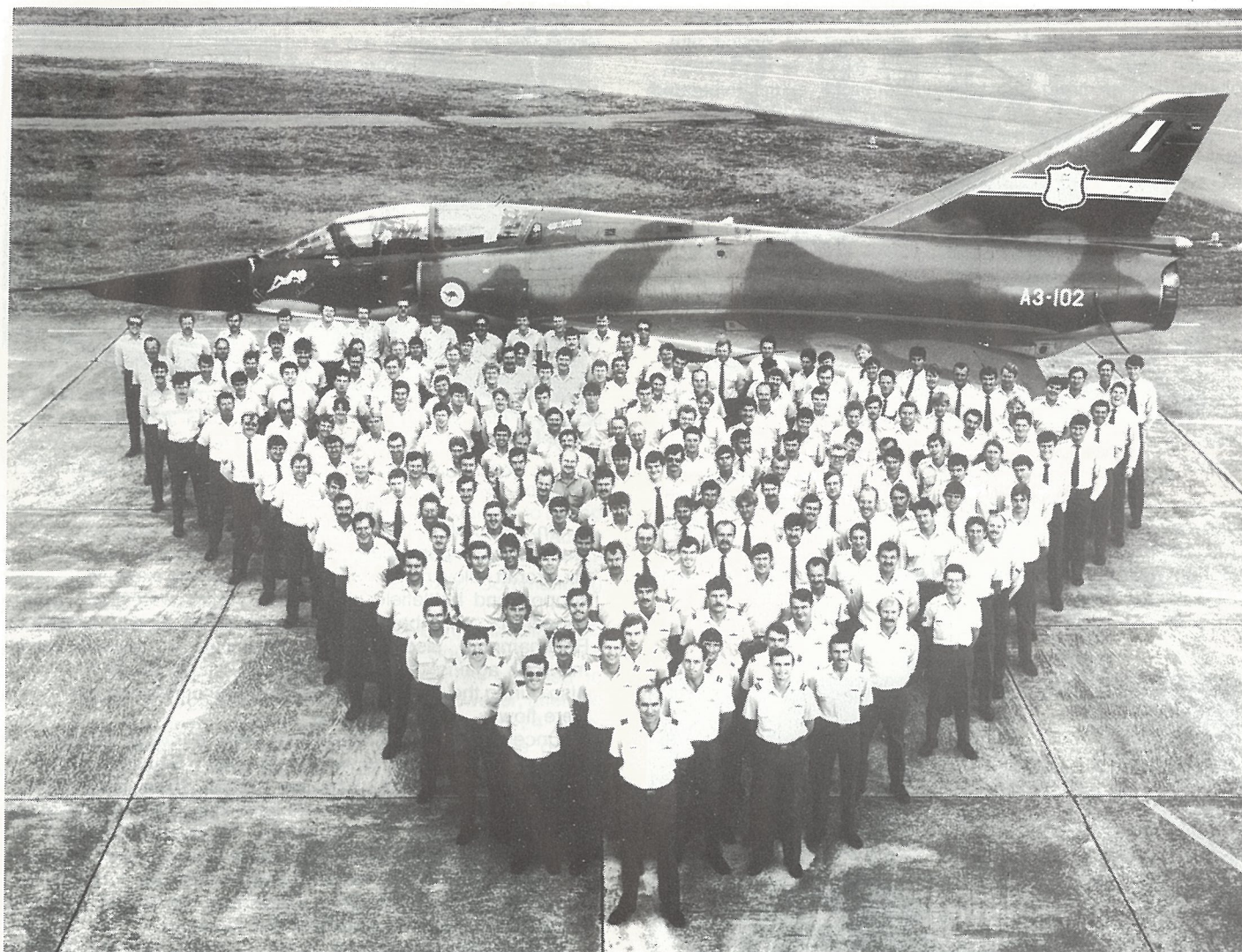
In February the first changeover of Mirage aircraft from Butterworth for 1982 commenced, when four Mirages departed for Malaysia as part of Project Murai.

On 16 March the squadron celebrated 40 years of service to the RAAF. On this day a special Commanding Officer's Parade was held on the 77 squadron tarmac area with a flight line of Mirage aircraft providing a back drop for the Parade.

The squadron's 40th Anniversary Cabaret was held at the Newcastle Worker's Club on Thursday, 1 April. Also as part of 77 Squadron's 40th Anniversary activities, the squadron deployed seven aircraft, aircrew and maintenance personnel to RAAF Pearce. The squadron was welcomed and hosted during the



Ground crew awaiting aircraft from Williamtown Ohakea December 1981. (RAAF)



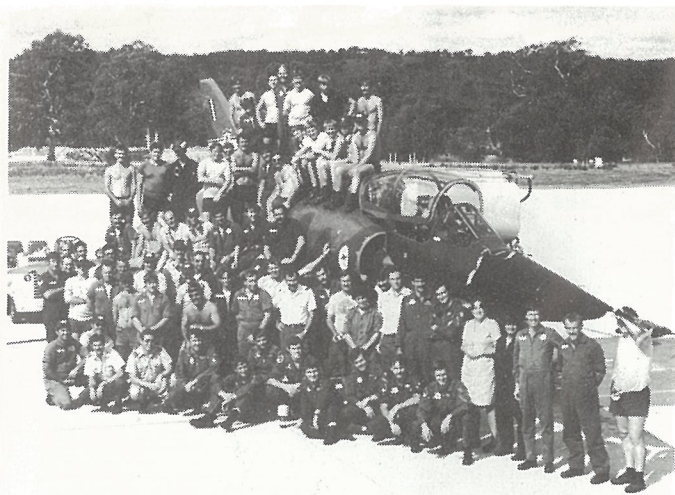
Squadron photo December 1981. (RAAF)



WGCDR G. R. Gent CO 77 SQN Addresses SQN personnel during 40th Anniversary Parade. 16 March 1982. (RAAF)

Original 77 SQN foundation members gather after 40th Anniversary Ceremony at Perth airport. 16 March 1982. (RAAF)





Pearce 40th Anniversary detachment April 1982. (RAAF)



PLTOFF 'Slug' Wiley confirms security of fuel tank prior to flight. His previous aircraft had jettisoned a tank whilst airborne on 18 April 1982. (RAAF)

deployment by No 25 (City of Perth) Squadron. A HiLo navigation programme commenced at Pearce, while the dual A3-102 (Daphne) was continually programmed for No 2FTS aircrew cadets motivational and familiarisation flying.

During the week 17 to 21 May a live firing Air to Air gunnery programme was conducted. Due to the phase out of Canberra aircraft from service in late 1982, this was 77 Squadron's last opportunity to fire at a banner towed by this historic aircraft.

Led by the CO, WGCdr G.R. Gent, twelve aircraft deployed to RAAF Townsville on 24 May until 4 June for Exercise 'Iron Standard'. Whilst at Townsville a mini war scenario was conducted, as well as a bombing programme using laser guided bombs on the high range and Cordelia Rocks range areas.

The squadron received Exercise Western Reward deployment orders on 26 August. The departure of all thirteen Mirage aircraft on the morning of Friday 27 August was delayed due to a heavy fog at Williamstown, but all aircraft eventually departed with the first wave leaving at noon. The maintenance support party of 145 personnel departed for Learmonth on a RAAF B707 aircraft the following day. The initial programme at Learmonth involved a working up phase with 114 Control and Reporting Unit (114CRU) from Amberley. During the same phase some aircraft were flown on missions against the Army Rapier Missile teams in readiness for the next stage of the exercise.



Western Reward, September 1982. Aircraft over American ULF Radio Base north of Exmouth. (RAAF)

Initially many maintenance problems were encountered due to the lack of a hangar, but these were eventually overcome. The entire aircraft servicing and repairs had to be carried out on the tarmac using a large tent as a repair section and due to the lack of lighting all maintenance had to cease at nightfall.



Exercise "Western Reward" 23 September 1982. Entrants in the Miss Learmonth Pageant. SQN entrants No. 3 and No. 9. (RAAF)

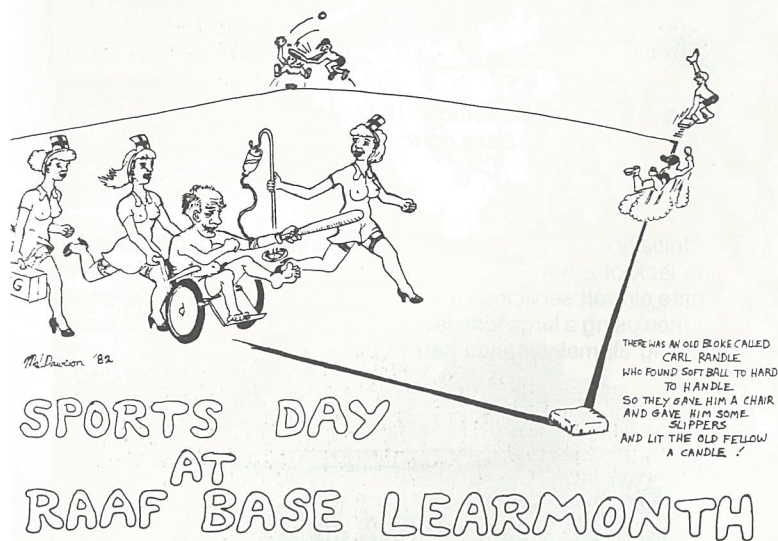
Airmen accommodation at Learmonth was also a problem with many members living in tents and having to use sleeping bags due to the lack of bedding available. Despite all the early problems, the morale of the squadron remained high and many social functions were held on the base because of its remote locality. One of the highlights was the Miss RAAF Learmonth Pageant in which the squadron performed creditably with Miss Roberta Umsted gaining second place! The Airmen's Fancy Dress parade also resulted in some imaginative squadron entries. Dave Shotton and Bob Umsted had their heads wrapped in bandages, their bodies covered in mercurochrome and with sponge rubber thongs on their backs went as a pair of feet with tinea! Another imaginative entry was that of Bosie Bosworth who went as a Mirage aircraft but during the night suffered many undercarriage malfunctions which resulted in severe damage to his nose cone. Not to be out done, Bernie Caddy attended wearing only a RAAF Blue Raincoat and with a strategically stuffed sock and was, as he described himself, the only true airman!



RELUCTANTLY WE
SAY GOODBYE TO - TO -
TO WHAT EVER THAT PLACE WAS CALLED

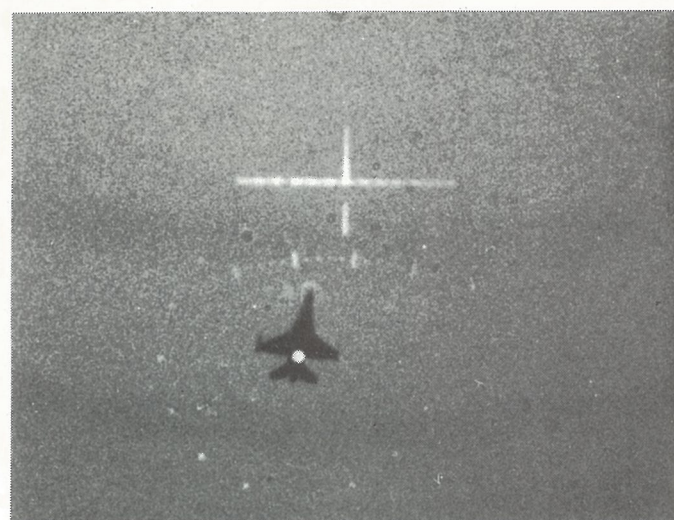


Squadron tractor in operation at Alice Springs
16 November 1982. (RAAF)



SPORTS DAY
AT
RAAF BASE LEARMONTH

Western Reward
as seen by Squadron photographer LAC Mal Dawson



Mirage gun camera shot F16 exercise "Sand Groper"
November 1982. (RAAF)



Western Reward 1982. Dehydration, sun and lack of transportation took tis toll. (RAAF)

In between social events the aircrew found time to carry out a mini war with the scenario of strike, escort and bounce missions, interspersed with intercept missions against F111 and Orion aircraft. The final phase of the mini war scenario was devoted to low and medium level intercepts. To boost squadron moral during the exercise the squadron photographer, LAC Mal Dawson, drew many cartoons on the daily happenings and on return to Williamtown these were compiled into a small booklet. After perhaps one of the most rewarding deployments undertaken by the squadron, all 13 aircraft returned to Williamtown via Alice Springs, returning to Williamtown on 29 September.



The 77 Squadron standard being unfolded Christ Church
Cathedral 11 November 1982.

Left to right: SGT D. Bromfield, WOFF C. Randell, FSGT B. Waters,
FLTLT P. Frawley, FSGT K. Dutton.

On 19 November, the squadron was advised that WGCDR R.V.A. Johnston (retired) had died unexpectedly that day. WGCDR Johnston had served as CO of 77 Squadron from February 1973 to January 1975. As WGCDR Johnston had lived locally at Tomago, a service funeral was conducted on 23 November at the Base Chapel and afterwards at the Beresfield Crematorium.

To complete the year's flying commitments a four aircraft, flypast was carried out on 22 December. The flypast was a salute for the P & O luxury liner SS Canberra as she berthed at Circular Quay, Sydney, after serving England in the Falklands war against Argentina.

1983

An unfortunate incident occurred on the evening of 18 January when A3-19 landed heavily during a night approach to Runway 12. The pilot, FLTLT P.U. Frawley and the aircraft were only temporarily unserviceable however, and the dented tail and pilot's pride were soon restored to full flying duties.

RAAF Public Relations Week was given a boost when, on 29 January, four aircraft did mock bombing and strafing runs on Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour. The ABC gave full coverage on Nationwide Television that same evening.



Mirage on static display at Whenuapai air show in Auckland, New Zealand. 27 March 1983. (RAAF)



Exercise Pitch Black Darwin May 1983. Mirage kill on B-52 bomber. (RAAF)



Exercise Iron Standard Townsville June 1983. Resident 35 Squadron Caribou happily tolerated frantic fighter fun. 75 Squadron RNZAF Skyhawk in foreground. (RAAF)



Exercise Iron Standard flight line Townsville, June 1983. (RAAF)

The CO, WGCDR Gary Gent, finished his career as a Regular Air Force Officer on 7 July after completing successful sorties on the banner. He was farewelled by all members of the squadron by being towed to the front gate in his aircraft!

The introduction of Fleet Support tasking began from July 1983 following the disbandment of the RAN Fleet Air Arm and resulted in changes in the squadron's operations. An increase in configuration changes and message traffic (of high precedence) were two noticeable areas.



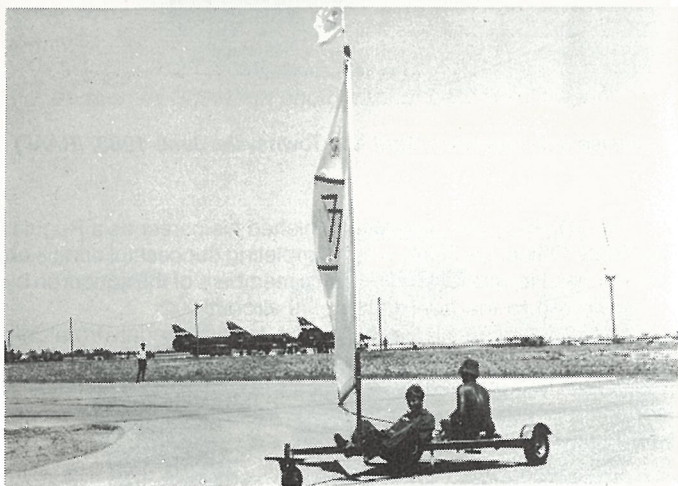
CO WGCDR Gary Gent completes 28 years service with his final Mirage sortie 7 July 1983. (RAAF)

WGCDR A.W. Titheridge arrived at 77 Squadron from Canberra and assumed command of the squadron on 1 August.

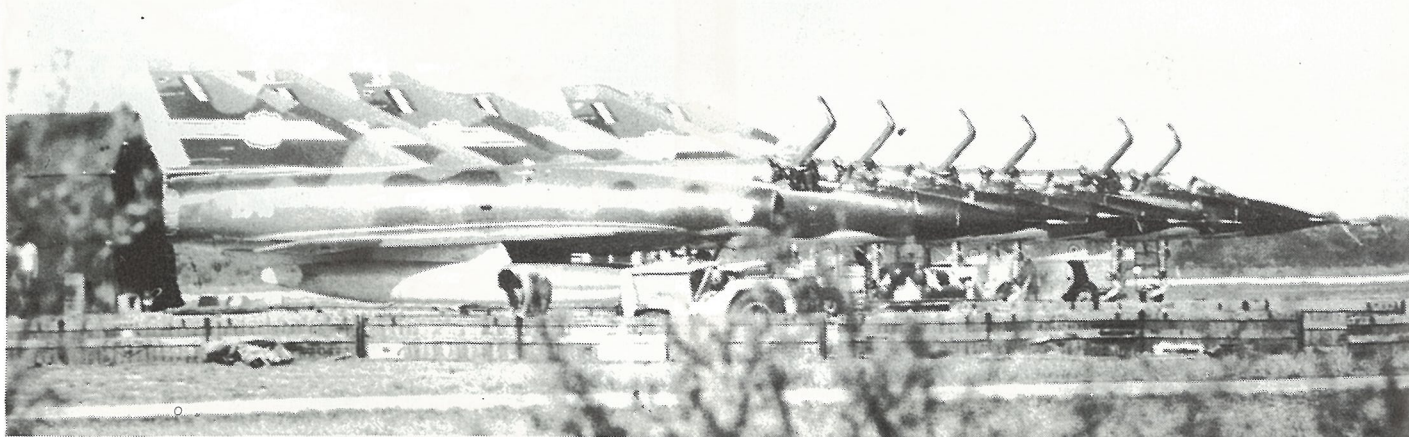
After only one day as the CO, WGCDR Tithridge lost the first Mirage in his command. SQNLDR J.F. Kindler, on 2 August, successfully ejected from Mirage A3-82 approximately 80 kilometres from Nowra. The aircraft had suffered an engine power loss and he ejected when it would not restart. The aircraft was considered unrecoverable due to water depth. A3-82 belonged to 20CU and had only been borrowed by the squadron for one mission. SQNLDR Kindler spent one hour in the water prior to being rescued by HMAS Hobart.



SQNLDR John Kindler returning to NAS Nowra after ejecting from A3-82. 2 August 1983 (RAN)



Kangaroo 1983 — Newport Rhode Island: Eat your heart out! Learmonth land yacht race in which 77 Squadron came second. (RAAF)



Kangaroo 83 flight line at Learmonth September 1983.

Led by SQNLDR J.F. Kindler, the squadron deployed six aircraft to Learmonth on 16 September to participate in Exercise Kangaroo 83. The exercises involved air defence and tactical reconnaissance against "Kamarian" forces. The enemy included RAAF Caribou, F-111, ARA Porter and USMC Hercules aircraft. The squadron was joined by RNZAF Skyhawks to assist in the air defence of Learmonth and the battlefield area. RAAF P3 Orions and RAN Guided Missile Frigates provided naval input with the squadron involved in combat air patrol over designated areas, and the squadron redeployed on 15 October.

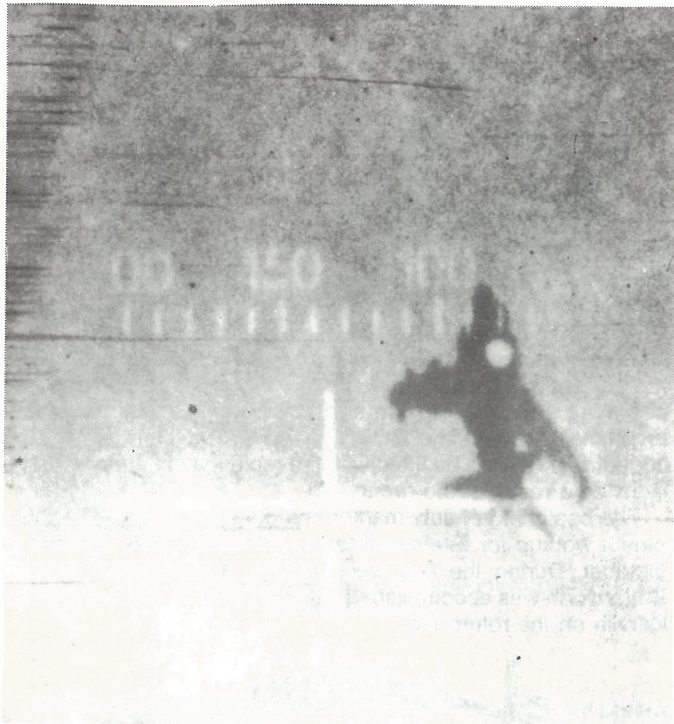
1984

Flying in 1984 commenced slowly with few squadron commitments but by February this increased markedly. Numerous fleet support missions were flown day and night, resulting in an increased burden on the squadron flying effort.



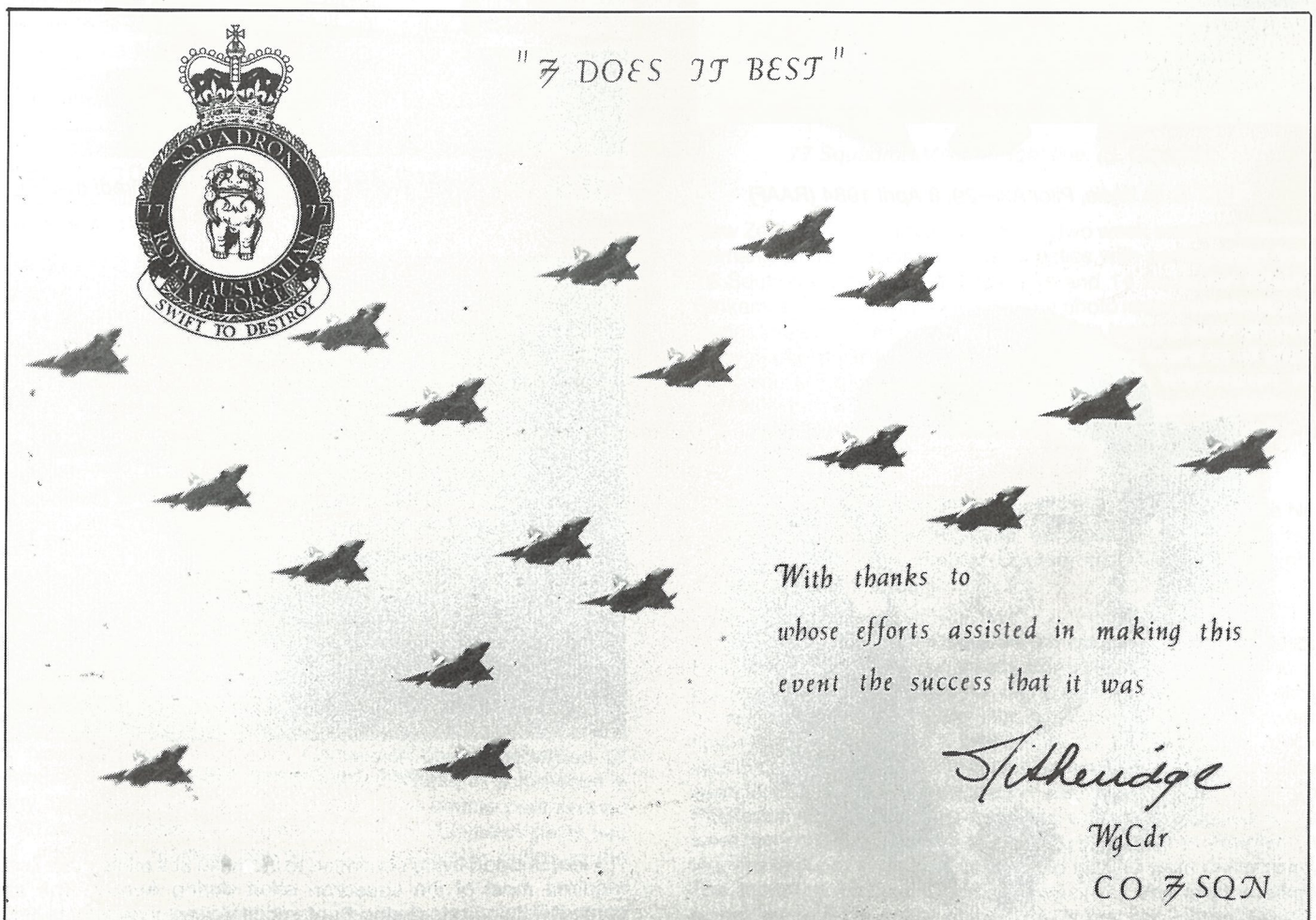
September 1983. Pilots celebrate firing of last AIM 9 B Sidewinder by 77 Squadron (RAAF)

To celebrate 77 Squadron's 42nd Birthday on 16 March, the squadron staged 18 aircraft flypast over Port Stephens and Newcastle. These aircraft constituted the Squadron's total aircraft strength less one aircraft which was at GAF undergoing a R4 servicing. Special guest pilots recruited for the occasion included OC Williamtown, AIRCDRE R.J. Bomball, GPCAPT E.J. Walker, BXO, WGCDR G.A. Thoms, BSOPSO, and CO elect 3 Squadron, WGCDR B.R. Wood. The exercise proved to be a great success despite the few hiccups which occurred during the launch. Whilst the aircraft taxied out, 481 Squadron revised a banner stating 481's support for the effort. The sign read '77 DOES IT BEST WITH A LOT OF HELP FROM 481!'



Britain's HMS Invincible with 801 Squadron Sea Harriers, visited our waters during December 1983. Air combat tactics were flown against this combat-wetted (Falklands) Squadron. Despite the victories 801 Squadron achieved against Argentinian Mirage aircraft, 77 Squadron was able to prove that the Mirage could still hold its own when flown well. The outcome was an honourable draw.

Over Sydney taken by FLTLT Al Adkins. (RAAF)



To celebrate the 42nd Anniversary a photo was given to all Squadron members 16 March 1984. (RAAF)

On 30 March the squadron deployed twelve aircraft to Townsville for Exercise Iron Standard. The exercise involved Strike, Escort and Bounce missions with 500lb HE bombs being dropped in the high range under army control.

Exercise Iron Standard was terminated early due to a mid-air collision on 8 April. At approximately 1020 hours, FLTLT C.R. Wylie (A3-29) and FLGOFF P.L. Rim (A3-30) collided over Bluff Downs, 80 kilometres west of Townsville. Both pilots were killed instantly when the aircraft collided. Although the aircraft collided at low altitude, the wreckage of the two Mirages was found eight kilometres apart. Another Mirage pilot thought he saw the canopy of a parachute fall from one of the aircraft, but this later proved to be a brakechute. Rescue personnel were hampered in the recovery of the wreckage because of possible unexploded bombs. Due to this danger, the RAAF put up a protective zone around the crash site, keeping out both air and road traffic to within a 32 kilometre radius from the zone. Bush fires flared in the aftermath of the crash which also hampered rescue attempts.



FLTLT C. R. Wylie, Pilot A3—29, 8 April 1984 (RAAF)



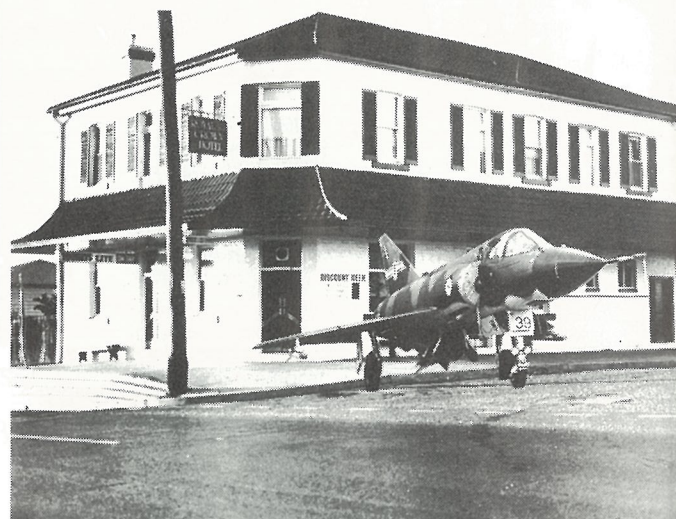
FLGOFF P. L. Rim, Pilot A3—30, 8 April 1984 — (RAAF)

A Memorial Service for the pilots was conducted in the St James Cathedral, Townsville on 11 April. Leading clergy from Townsville carried out the service which was attended by all the Townsville dignitaries, as a mark of respect for the valued contributions by the armed forces made to the city. In his tribute to the pilots, ALD Reynolds stated, "It is part of life in the armed forces that one is prepared to risk one's life for one's country in time of war. That these two men died in peace time should not lessen our recognition of that preparedness".

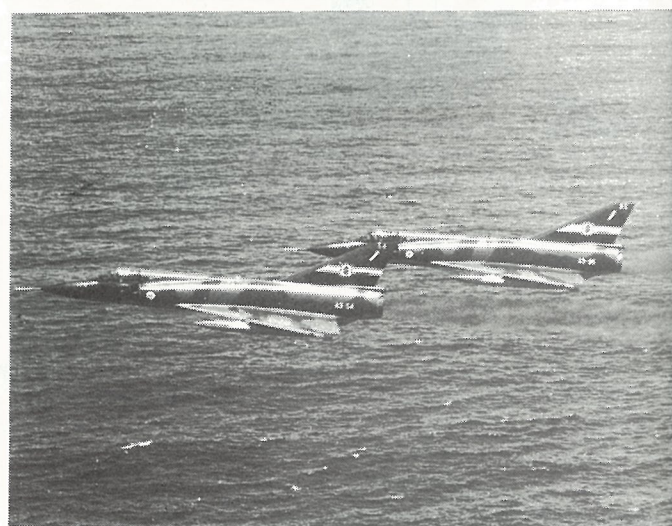
The squadron redeployed back to Williamtown on 11 April still in a state of shock. A Memorial Service for FLTLT Wylie was held at Mayfield and a burial service at the Eltham Cemetery, Melbourne for FLGOFF Rim. FLTLT R.F. Lea flew a Mirage over the graveside ceremony as a memorial tribute from the squadron.

The fleet was grounded for the majority of May due to the loss of Mirage aircraft at Darwin and Edinburgh. On 24 May flying recommenced with the CO flying A3-57, which was the first squadron aircraft to be fitted with the replacement undercarriage jacks as a result of the grounding.

The beginning of July marked the commencement of a three month workup for Exercise Triad to be held in New Zealand in October. During the first week of July a ten aircraft ferry to Butterworth was accomplished with only two aircraft being left at Darwin on the return leg.



77 can park fighter aircraft anywhere when required! (RAAF)



Mirages over the sea. (RAAF)

Fleet Support flying continued to increase at a steady rate and required most of the squadron effort during August. The air combat training rate during September slowed markedly, which was due to the fleet concentration period in the middle of that month.



Exercise "Triad" October 1984 LAC K. Houghton straps in FLTLT A. Adkins. (RAAF)

The New Zealand detachment began on 1 October and several squadron records were broken before arrival at Ohakea. A number four aircraft in a formation had substantial difficulty joining his formation thus establishing the squadron's longest rejoin (1000 miles and 1.9 hours) and the first solo crossing of the Tasman sea by a Mirage.

Exercise Triad began two days after arrival and continued until 10 October. Other participating nations were USAF (F15, F16) and New Zealand (Skyhawks). This provided the squadron with some excellent dissimilar air combat training and displayed the F16's vast manoeuvring superiority over our aging Mirages. However, the employment of hit and run tactics and large amounts of cunning kept the kill ratio even. Redeployment to Australia via Noumea was not planned until four days after the exercise so the opportunity was taken by most squadron members to indulge in a little snow skiing before redeployment on 15 October.

Squadron flying operations for 1984 ended early when flying ceased on 3 December. This was due to the runway being closed for the installation of arresting cables for Hornet operations which were due to begin in 1985.

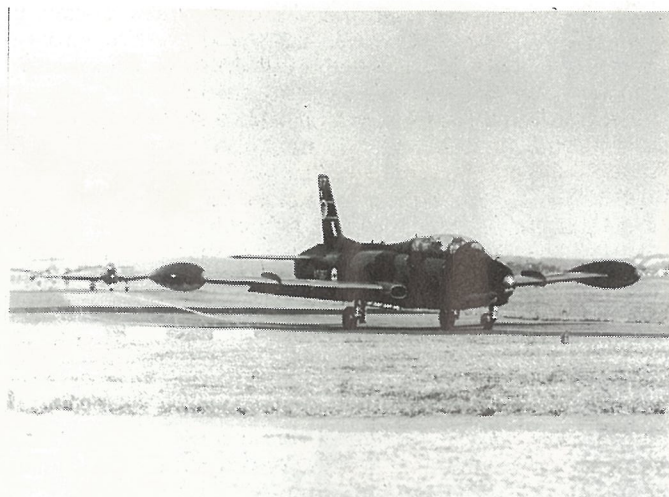
1985

From 1 January, 77 Squadron assumed responsibility for operational Mirage, training Mirage and Macchi flying in order to allow 20CU to re-equip with the Hornet aircraft. 20CU's instructors and ground crew officially became part of the unit along with their Mirages (single and dual) and Macchi aircraft. Operations flight and Headquarters staff moved into 20CU's old Headquarters building. With the arrival of all the extra personnel all sections in the squadron became vastly overcrowded and well spread out. To necessitate the extra squadron flying roles, three separate flight line facilities were utilised — Mirage operations, Mirage training and Macchi operations. Due to the remoteness of the Macchi facility it was decided that all Macchi personnel would be separate from the Mirage facilities.

After many teething problems, the squadron was ready for full operations by the end of January. 77 Squadron had now become the largest peace time fighter squadron in Australia.

No 46 Mirage Operational Conversion course began on 17 January 1985 and was the first Mirage course to commence in any fully operational fighter squadron. The course commenced with twelve members, including three ex RAN Skyhawk pilots, two of whom had recently returned from exchange duties in the USA.

Despite the runway not being re-opened for Mirage operations until 14 February, the squadron deployed eight operations flight Mirages and associated maintenance personnel to Ohakea, New



77 Squadron Macchi's Taxi. Note 2 OCU tail flash which were left on as the Macchi's were programmed to return to 2 OCU in the future. (RAAF)



77 Squadron Macchi flight line. (S. Cousins)

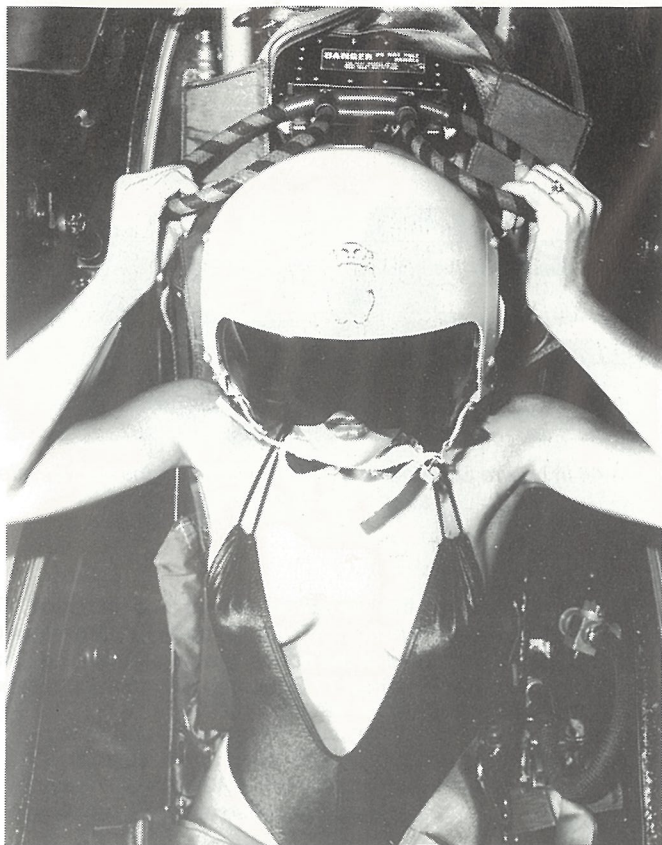
New Zealand for Exercise Willoh. The two week exercise focused primarily on dissimilar air combat tactics with participation from 75 Squadron RNZAF A-4 Skyhawks and 14 Squadron RNZAF Strikemaster aircraft. In addition some photo reconnaissance and navigation exercises were flown. Valuable lessons in all aspects of large dissimilar-type formation tactics were learnt by all pilots concerned. The aircraft were redeployed to Williamtown via Auckland on 17 February, completing what the squadron believes is the first East-West Tasman Sea crossing by Mirage aircraft in a single stage.

To add to the burden of the Mirage training course, course No 1/85 Crew Conversion Macchi Introductory Fighter Course (formerly Introductory Fighter Course) commenced with eight students on 11 February.

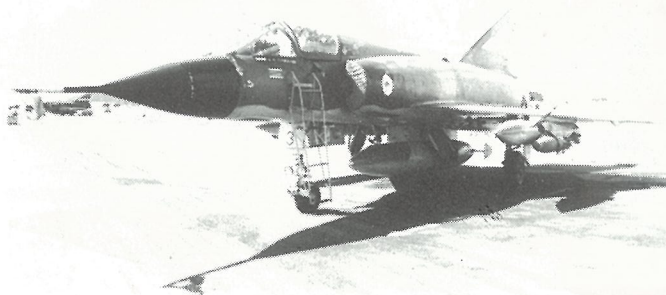
Six operational flight Mirages were deployed to East Sale for Exercise Night Owl for two weeks from 6 May, and was aimed at exposing squadron pilots to night trail navigation and dive bombing techniques. HiLo strikes and application patterns were flown onto Dutson range in preparation for the night work, which was initially carried out on ground illuminated targets. Later in the exercise, night trail navigation exercises were flown to Puckapunyal range, where bombing under air dropped flares were carried out. In addition, trials using searchlights mounted on leopard tanks to illuminate designated targets were undertaken. The aircraft redeployed to Williamtown on 17 May and the return coincided with the arrival of the RAAF's first two Hornet aircraft. The Mirage aircraft participated in a flypast to commemorate the F/A 18 flight from the USA.



77 SQUADRON 1985.
BIGGER AND BETTER (RAAF)



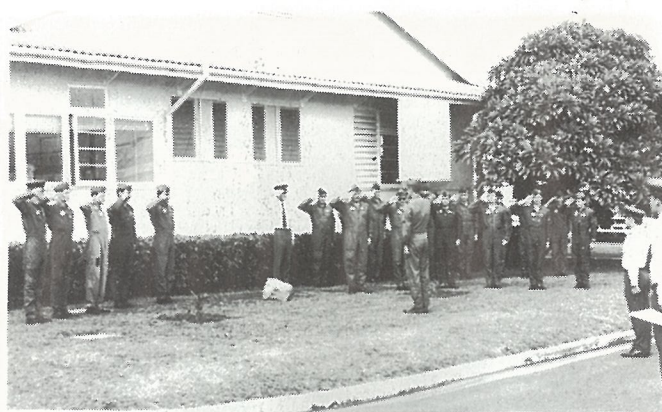
One of the delights of the 1985 Squadron calender. (M. Dawson)



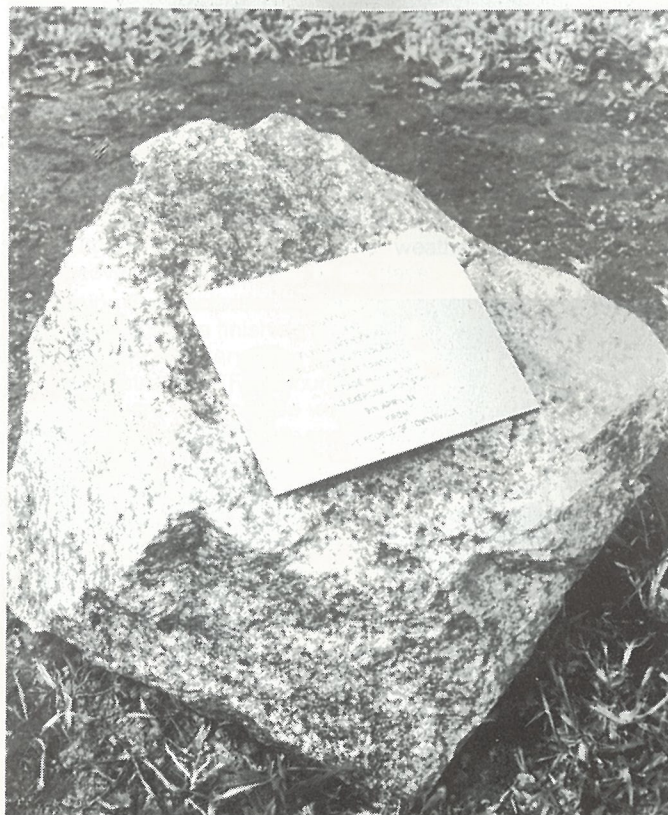
Aircraft waiting for bombing sortie with 500lb HE/HES bombs. Townsville, June 1985. (RAAF)

27 May saw the squadron deploy ten operations flight aircraft to Townsville for Exercise High Sierra. This detachment was the first full detachment carried out by the squadron since its amalgamation with 20CU and personnel strength had to be divided in half to facilitate maintenance facilities in both Townsville and Williamtown. Exercise High Sierra consisted of bounce, escort and strike missions, utilizing the high range and Cordelia Rock as targets for the strike aircraft. With the loss of a Mirage aircraft in Darwin due to engine problems, restrictions were placed on low level speed operations. Although these restrictions placed some restraints on expedient recovery to base, operations were not hindered to any degree.

A few weeks after the mid-air collision near Townsville the year before, someone had left two palm trees at the gate of RAAF Base Townsville. Accompanying the trees was an anonymous note explaining that the trees were in memory of the two pilots lost. The trees were planted at RAAF Base Townsville on 31 May followed by a short ceremony. The CO, WGCdr A. Titheridge, laid a plaque between the two palms mounted on a rock brought back from the High Range.



Twin Palms Parade. Townsville, 31 May 1985. (RAAF)



Twin Palms Plaque in Townsville. (The plaque was made and mounted by 77 Squadron Fitter LAC Peter Cazaly). (RAAF)

The mobility of the squadron was fully tested on 11 June when the squadron's operations flight and maintenance personnel redeployed to Williamtown, and the training flight deployed with maintenance personnel to Townsville to complete the second phase of the northern detachment. Training flight deployed No 46 Mirage Conversion course plus instructors to continue with the high explosive bombing programme. In addition, the course caught up with a number of Air to Air sorties missed out during that phase of the course. The training flight redeployed on 27 June after a very successful deployment by both squadron detachments.

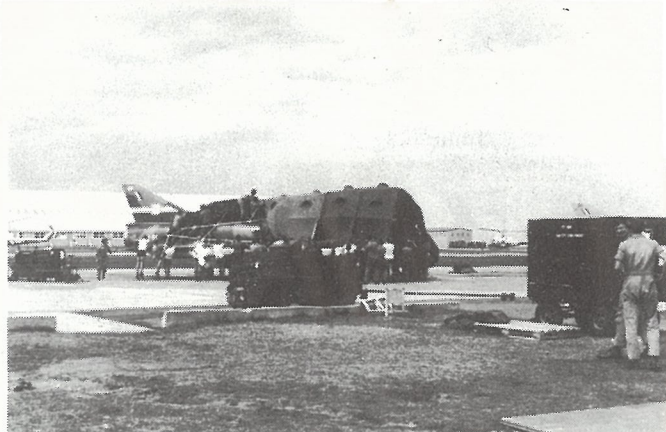
On return to Williamtown, operations flight participated in a combination intercept and workup programme with 20CU Hornets. Most pilots were able to get a back seat ride and were suitably impressed with the RAAF's new aircraft.

No 46 Mirage course graduated the full complement of twelve students on 19 July. This was the first Mirage Conversion course that the squadron had graduated and with a 100 per cent success, despite the difficulties of such a large squadron and all the other flying commitments.

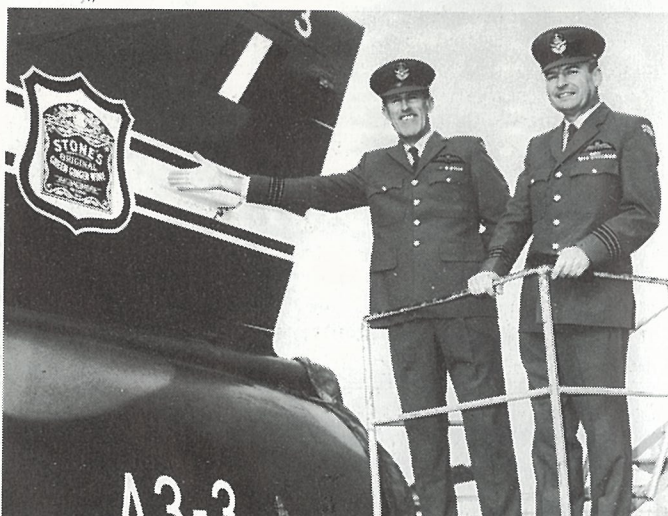


No 46 Mirage Course 19 July 1985.

Left to Right Backrow: PLTOFF G. Mahoney, PLTOFF P. Hutchinson, FLGOFF S. Last, FLGOFF M. Frohlich, PLTOFF J. Lonergan, SQNLDR N. French, PLTOFF C. Mackleman, FLTLT M. Buddery. Front row: FLTLT M. Maher, FLGOFF J. Eaglen, PLTOFF M. Edwards, FLTLT R. France. (RAAF)



A3-44 in Nowra September 1985. Tent covered the aircraft after strong winds. (RAAF)



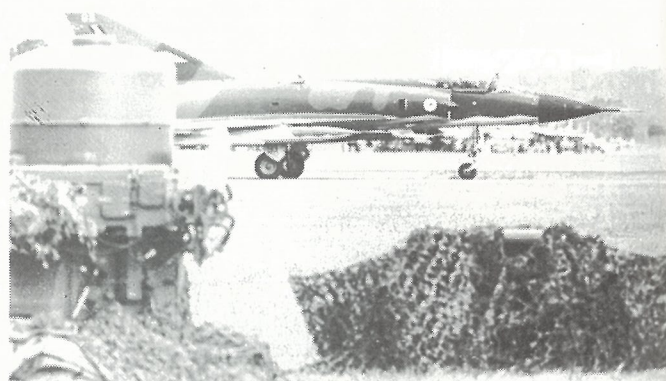
The outgoing CO WGCDR Alan Titheridge points out the new proposed Squadron tail flash to the new CO WGCDR Roger Wilson. (RAAF)

WGCDR R.A. Wilson DFC took over command of No 77 Squadron from WGCDR A.W. Titheridge, who was posted to Base Squadron Williamtown as BOPSO on 5 August.

Calls for the relocation of the RAAF's practice bombing range at Salt Ash to a new site out to sea were renewed after the crash of a 77 Squadron Macchi jet trainer on 19 August. PLTOFF S. Chase Callcott (A7-85) was on a routine practice run in a four jet formation engaged in air to ground gunnery, when at approximately 1000 hours, a fire warning light came on in his cockpit. He asked for visual confirmation of the problem by ground observers on the range, and the Range Safety Officer (RSO) confirmed his aircraft was on fire. The pilot pulled the aircraft up to maximum possible height before shutting off the engine. He ejected safely and landed one kilometre from the crash site uninjured but shaken. After the crash a huge mushroom of grey-black smoke more than 50 metres high could be seen for kilometres. The crash was only the second Macchi lost at Williamtown and the first for 77 Squadron.

On 24 August Exercise El Alamein was carried out. This consisted of four aircraft striking Singleton range with laser guided and Hi-drag MK82 500lb bombs. The display went as planned, suitably impressing the audience of politicians and foreign defence personnel.

On 27 September the squadron moved into the new 77 Squadron headquarters building. The building was only designed to house the 35 personnel of the normal size squadron, and as a result, it is very crowded whilst 77 Squadron still incorporates the ex-20CU training flight.



Mirage taxis past an Army Rapier Missile site during Exercise Coral Sea. (RAAF)

The beginning of October saw twelve F15 Eagles from the USAF's 13th Air Force arrive at Williamtown from Kadena, Japan for Exercise Coral Sea. Flying against the Eagles commenced with one day of performance comparisons whilst five days were set aside for ADEX flying, and the remainder of the three week detachment was taken up with multi-ship DACT missions. Two missions were flown with dissimilar aircombat tactics approved overhead, providing maintenance personnel with a grandstand view of exercise flying. Overall it was stated that the squadron performed remarkably well.

On 10 November operations flight deployed to Townsville with twelve Mirages and maintenance personnel. Multi-ship strikes carrying MK82 500lb bombs were flown using two escort aircraft to protect the bombers. The air threat consisted of a two aircraft bounce using simulated air to air weapons. Missions were made more complex by not giving leaders the navigation route details until after the pilots were strapped in. This meant that rapid and accurate in-cockpit planning was required in order to reach the target on time. The flight redeployed on 20 November.

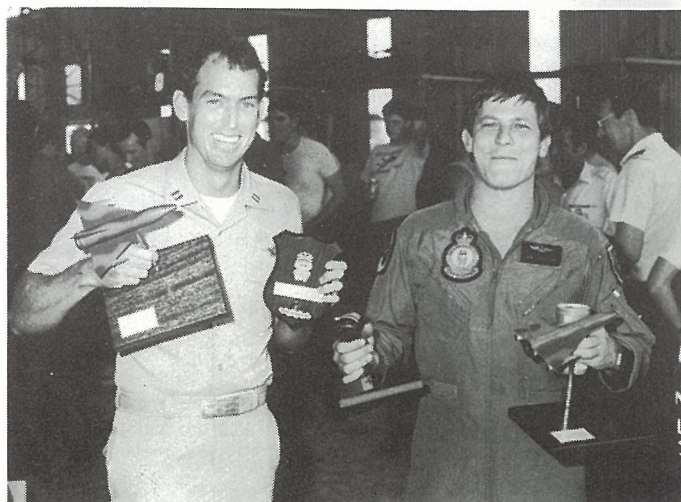
Training flight deployed to Townsville with ten aircraft on 22 November. The detachment was in support of No 47 Mirage Course and marked the completion of the courses air to ground phase. Training flight redeployed on 2 December to Williamtown.



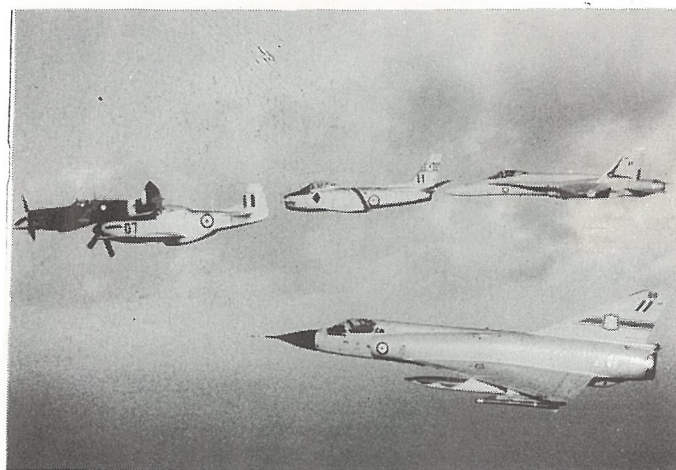
12 December 1985 FLTLT Wayne Higginbotham (Higgy) became the first 77 Squadron pilot to fly a Sabre since the Squadron began flying Mirages. He is seen here with SQNLDR G. P. Keogh, 77 Squadron CO WGCdr R. Wilson and 2 AD ground staff. Higgy had no previous Sabre experience. (RAAF)



A3-20 with max external fuel configuration 24 January 1986. (RAAF)



Last two American pilots to enjoy the delights of Mirage flying with 77 Squadron and the RAAF. LT Sullivan (USN) MAJ Hunter (USAF) 27 February 1986.



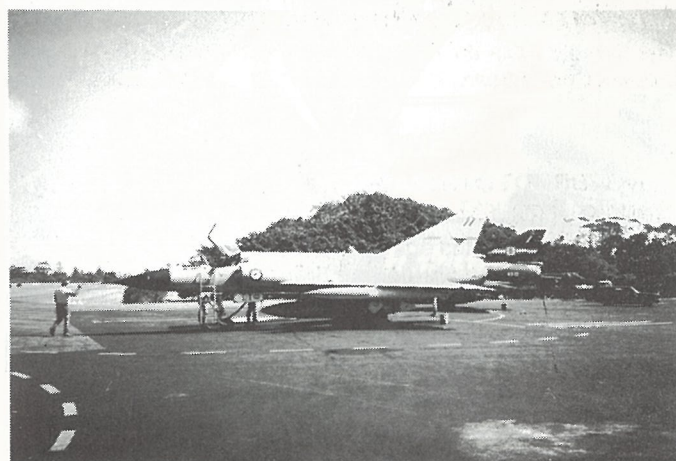
1986 fighter pilots re-union flypast. Spitfire, Mustang, Sabre, Mirage, Hornet February, 1986. (RAAF)

1986

On 20 January, the first changeover of Mirage aircraft to Butterworth for the year commenced when five aircraft departed for Butterworth. Despite adverse weather all the way, the changeover was completed in six days.

Training flight activities were also intensive with No 47 Mirage Conversion Course finishing the final phases before its schedule finish in early February. Also in the Training Flight. No 20 Fighter Combat Instructors (FCI) course commenced with six students on 13 January. This course would be the last FCI course to be trained on Mirage aircraft and marked the beginning of the phasing out of the Mirage.

Eleven Mirage aircraft deployed to Ohakea, New Zealand on 10 March via Norfolk Island. Norfolk Island had to be used as Noumea was unavailable due to political problems with the French. Exercise Willoh involved dissimilar air combat tactics against 75 Squadron RNZAF A4 Skyhawks starting with one versus one performance comparisons, progressing to two versus four strike and bounce attacks. On 21 March operations flight redeployed ten aircraft back to Williamtown via Norfolk Island. One aircraft, A3-96, remained in Ohakea due to a fuel feed problem and had to be recovered by 481 Squadron personnel at a later date.



Aircraft staging through Norfolk Island, 10 March 1986. (J. T. Lonergan)

The highlight of squadron activities for the month of April was Exercise Pitch Black which took place at Williamtown from 4-21 April. The aircraft involved in the exercise consisted of USAF F4 Phantom aircraft from South Korea, RAAF F111, Mirage, Macchi and Hornets. The exercise consisted primarily of DACT flying but did involve many pilots getting missions in F4 and Hornet aircraft.



Phantom aircraft takes off past squadron aircraft during exercise Pitch Black April 1986. (RAAF)

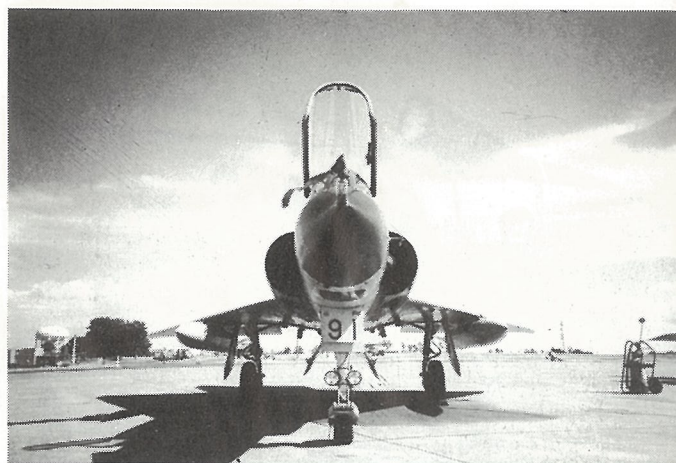
May started tragically when on the 2nd PLTOFF C.D. Macklemann was killed. PLTOFF Macklemann (A3-40) was involved in air to air gunnery approximately 70 miles off the coast as number two in the formation of four. After calling in live on a pass on the banner at approximately 1220 hours, he was never heard to respond after the pass. The other aircraft in the flight and the Lear Jet target tug immediately carried out a search. The only indication of what had occurred was a huge splash mark in the sea and an oil slick. PLTOFF Macklemann's remains were later recovered by a chopper crew. The funeral was held at the Church of England Boys Grammar School in Brisbane, and the squadron gave a final tribute with a single Mirage flypast. Craig's death was felt not only by aircrew members but by many of the ground crew who had known him personally. A Board of Inquiry was held, but the exact cause of the crash was never discovered.



PLTOFF Macklemann, April 1986. (RAAF)

On 2 June the students and instructors of No 20 FCI course commenced the highlight of their course when they left Australia by RAAF B707 aircraft on a world trip. The trip was to visit NATO Bases in Germany and England as part of their course. The lucky members returned on 23 June to complete the final flying phases of their course.

Operations flight escaped the rigours of a cold southern winter when on 30 June they deployed twelve aircraft to Darwin via Townsville. This deployment included the last Mirage — Butterworth ferry with replacement aircraft. Operations in Darwin included low level navigation sorties and simulated strikes as the primary mission, and intercepts with 2 CRU as the secondary missions. The deployment returned to Williamtown on 11 July.



A3-91 on the tarmac in Darwin June 1986. (J. T. Lonergan)



WGCDR B. Wood (Right) welcomes CO WGCDR R. Wilson to 79 Squadron Butterworth during the last replacement ferry by 77 Squadron July 1986. (RAAF)

Mirage training flight graduated all six members from No 20 FCI course on 11 July. The new FCIs started work immediately with the last Mirage conversion course.



*A7—77: the only Macchi with a 77 tail flash. June 1986.
(P. Fortune)*

Macchi operation flight deployed away three times in July, twice to Laverton for Fleet Support tasks and four aircraft to Rockhampton for army support on Exercise Diamond Dollar on the 26th. The Rockhampton aircraft were primarily employed in the air to surface role, and two Macchi aircraft had to be ferried from 2FTS (Pearce) to help in a high workload period from 20 to 24 July.

The beginning of the wind-down of Mirage operations of 77 Squadron began on 31 July 1986 when the CO, WGCDR R.A. Wilson DFC flew aircraft A3-90 on its last mission before being dismantled for spares. On its return to base A3-90 was met by the media to mark the occasion. A more eager mob of 481 Squadron personnel arrived to start an immediate disassembly of A3-90. The last flight of A3-90 marked the first 77 Squadron Mirage to be phased out in anticipation of re-equipping with Hornets in 1987.



WGCDR Roger Wilson fittingly flies A3—90 on her last flight as he had also flown A3—90 when the RAAF had taken delivery of her from GAF. (RAAF)



Eager 481 SQN personnel ready to immediately dismantle A3—90 31 July 1986. Left to Right:

*Back row: SGT B. Einam, work experience lad, SGT J. Hobbs.
Centre row: CPL L. Jackson, LAC R. Doyle, LAC J. Tulloch, FSGT P. Hartcher. (RAAF)*

EPILOGUE

SQNLDR J. W. WASHINGTON OPERATIONS OFFICER 77 SQUADRON

Following the cessation of Mirage conversion training at 77 Squadron in December 1986, the unit will revert to its former single function of an operational front line Mirage squadron, although at a reduced capacity. Over the six months from January to June 1987, when 77 Squadron will cease operating the Mirage III, the unit's aircraft will either be withdrawn from service or transferred to 75 Squadron at Darwin or 79 Squadron at Butterworth, Malaysia. 77 Squadron will retain responsibility for Macchi Introductory Fighter Training with a core of five instructors throughout the rundown period and the Macchis and their staff will eventually be transferred to 2 OCU. During the final six months of Mirage operations at Williamtown the unit's Mirage manpower will consist of nine pilots, five engineering officers, one supply and one administrative officer, 45 SNCOs and 154 other ranks. The unit's Macchi contingent will comprise four instructional staff, one engineer, 13 SNCOs and 50 other ranks.

At the conclusion of Mirage operations, 77 Squadron will begin to re-equip with the Hornet aircraft, thus entering a new era of fighter warfare.



A3—90 after her final flight 31 July 1986. (RAAF)

77 SQUADRON MIRAGE ATTRITION

DATE	AIRCRAFT	PILOT	LOCATION	TYPE OF ACCIDENT
27.04.72	A3-74	FLTLT R.J. Perry	Darwin	Birdstrike
03.04.73	A3-79	FLGOFF S. Groom	Gloucester	FOD (Fatal)
06.04.76	A3-41	FLTLT I. Wilkie	Nowra	Engine Fire
16.03.76	A3-14	FLTLT G.A. Kubank	Williamtown	Compressor Stall
24.06.76	A3-61	FLTLT W. Vandenberg	Williamtown	Unknown (Fatal)
17.02.78	A3-08	FLTLT I.C. Watson	East Sale	Tyre Burst on Take-Off
18.02.80	A3-75	FLTLT J.W. Carr	East Sale	Engine Failure
02.05.80	A3-58	PLTOFF G.R. Butterworth	Williamtown	Undercarriage Malfunction
09.09.81	A3-80	FLGOFF N. Alexander	Williamtown	Undercarriage Malfunction
02.08.83	A3-82	SQNLDR J.F. Kindler	Nowra	Engine Failure
09.04.84	A3-29	FLTLT C.R. Wylie	Townsville	Mid-Air Collision (Fatal)
09.04.84	A3-30	FLGOFF P.L. Rim	Townsville	Mid-Air Collision (Fatal)
02.05.86	A3-40	PLTOFF C.D. Macklemann	Williamtown	Unknown (Fatal)

COMBAT (FIGHTER) REPORT

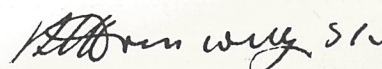
UNIT: 77 Squadron R.A.A.F.

Raid 47

24 A

Report No. 4	Pilot: S/L R.C. Cresswell	Squadron: No. 77
	Duty To intercept unknown number of enemy bombers approaching DARWIN	Place: BERRIMAH
		Date 23 / 11 / 42.
		Time: 0505 hrs. (local)
	(1) Number, type and formation of our own aircraft taking part in attack: 1(one) P.40E	
(3) Position of enemy (relative to own aircraft) when first sighted: one o'clock-1000ft above		(4) Type of enemy aircraft: 3(three) "BETTYS"
(5) Number and formation of enemy aircraft: Three in close Vic. travelling south		(6) Was own approach observed or unobserved: believed unobserved.
(7) Type of attack delivered on enemy: First attack from below on port rear quarter firing at 200 yds, a raking burst across the whole Vic. Second attack on rear port quarter and followed through stern to starboard quarter.		
(8) Action by enemy: Opened fire from tracers seen to enter starboard engine and top of wing, which caught fire. Third attack made from above on starboard rear quarter. Tracers entered mid wing section. E/A exploded in air about 16,000ft.		
(9) Result of engagement, including own and enemy casualties: Bettys turned sharply to port when first attacked and in doing so starboard aircraft became detached. The remaining 2 Bettys returned fire from side blisters and rear turrets, fire erratic registering no hits. The detached aircraft was the one shot down.		
(10) Special comments: (See Instructions paras. 3 and 4.) Searchlights illuminated targets several times but P40 was never in a position to attack immediately. Contact was made visually guided by A.A. fire and searchlights. Clouds at 24,000 ft forming shadow screen. No lights showing E/A.		
IN THE CASE OF ESCORTED ENEMY FORMATIONS, THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION;— Airspeed during attack about 175 mph indicated E/A		
(11) Number, type and formation of escorting aircraft: airspeed estimated at the same figure.		(12) Position of escort relative to main force
(13) Was attack directed against escort or main force:		
(14) Action taken by escort:		
(15) Action taken by main force:		
(16) Special comments: (See Instructions para. 5.)		

A total of 262 rounds were fired. During the second attack two guns only were firing, and finally only one. The failure was due to freezing.



ATTACK BY S/L CRESSWELL ON E/A AT NIGHT OVER DARWIN.

S/L Cresswell of 77 SQUADRON in a P40E aircraft was scrambled at 0327 K hours in order to patrol line "B" over DARWIN.

At 0504 K hours while at 22,500 ft heading West(position 5 miles East of DARWIN approximately), three "BETTY" aircraft were sighted flying in tight Vic formation 1000 ft above, and heading South. At the time there was a thin layer of stratus cloud at 24,500 ft and a perfect silhouette of the E/A was observed, they being between the moon and the P 40E.

The P.40E climbed, so as to be in a position 20ft, below on the port rear quarter of the enemy. A four second burst was fired at 200 yds closing, the burst raking all three aircraft.

The enemy immediately turned to port, the outside aircraft dropping behind.

The fighter aircraft carried out a second attack on the detached aircraft from rear port quarter, astern to starboard rear quarter, 20 ft , below at about 40-60 yds away.

While passing the other two aircraft, cannon fire from rear turret and fire from side blisters was observed passing in front and behind the P 40E. In this attack only two guns worked, finishing attack with only one gun working. Failure due to freezing.

After attack P 40E broke away and E/A was observed to be on fire from inside top of starboard engine nacelle. E/A was losing height and flying on a weaving course, heading N.E.

The fighter circled high above E/A and decided to carry out another attack, this time from rear starboard quarter, slightly above and aiming at mid-wing section between blazing nacelle and fuselage.

Attack was successfully carried out at 18,000 ft. And later E/A was observed to blaze fiercely and suddenly explode, the aircraft breaking in two, and both parts landing about one mile apart near the ADELAIDE RIVER.

During the last two attacks return fire was observed from blister guns, but not from tail cone.

Not at any time during the attack did searchlights help to illuminate target.

It is again pointed out that the use of cloud for a shadow or silhouette screen and the moon in relation to the E/A and own fighter is extremely useful, if E/A is not illuminated by searchlights.

One "BETTY" E/A definitely destroyed, and probably bullets entered other two E/A in initial attack.

W. Cresswell

C.O. 77 SQUADRON

77 SQUADRON PERSONNEL KILLED ON OPERATIONAL DUTY

WORLD WAR II

ADCOCK F.W.
BROWN L.E.
BULMER L.F.D.
COOPER H.
HUNTER R.W.
JOHNSON B.
KRAUSE H.O.
McDONALD R.W.
McFADDEN K.W.
MELROSE L.C.

O'KEEFE A.F.
O'REILLY E.N.
PALME R.A.
SCHLENCKER P.G.
SMITHWICK K.R.
SPROULE D.M.
SUMMONS H.D.
WURTZ R.F.

B.C.O.F.

HILL R.R.
NISSEN C.

KOREAN WAR

ARMITT E.D.
AVERY A.J.
BOOTH F.H.G. (RAF)
BROWNE-GAYLORD M.A.
CHALMERS P.B.
COLEBROOK M.E.
COWPER L.H.C.
CRANSTON I.R.
CRUICKSHANK O.M. (RAF)
ELLIS D.C.
GILLIAN B.T.
GRAY W.V.
HALLEY J.B.

HARROP W.P.
HASLOPE L.C.
HILLIER D.
JAMES R.L. (RAF)
JOHNSTON H.E.
KILPATRICK C.
LAMB R. (RAF)
LAWRENSON F.J.
MATTHEWS K.G.
McCLINCHEY L.T.
NOLAN D.T.
PURRSEY I.G.S.
ROBERTSON D.M.

ROBERTSON D.N.
ROBINSON K.G.
ROBSON R.
ROSSER A.J. (RAF)
ROYAL K.E.
SMITH K.D.
SPENCE L.T.
SQUIRES S.S.
STEPHENS G.I.
STRANGE H.T.
STROUT G.
SURMAN J.L.

1954 — 1956 (METEOR)

ANDREWS H.D.
HAYWOOD E.

1957 — 1968 (SABRE)

CURTIS M.V.
McGRATH M.

1969-1986 (MIRAGE)

GROOM S.
MACKLEMAN C.D.
RIM P.L.
VANDENBERG W.E.
WYLIE C.R.

APPENDICE C

AIRCRAFT PERFORMANCE TABLES

AIRCRAFT	MAX. SPEED	SERVICE CEILING	MAX. RANGE
Curtiss P40-E Kittyhawk	350mph at 15000ft	30600ft	800 miles
Curtiss P40-N Kittyhawk	352mph at 11000ft	32500ft	1210 miles
North American P51-D Mustang	437mph at 24500ft	41500ft	1650 miles
Gloster Meteor F Mk8	592mph at sea level	44000ft	1000 miles
Gloster Meteor T Mk7	585mph at sea level	44000ft	1000 miles
CAC CA32 Sabre	700mph at sea level	55000ft	1150 miles
Dassault Mirage III-O	863mph at sea level (1460mph at 40000ft)	55775ft	745 miles (max. combat radius)



Left:
COMMANDING OFFICER
77 SQUADRON.
WGCDR R. A. WILSON, DFC

SQUADRON AIRCREW

Right: MACCHI FLEET SUPPORT AIRCREW

Left to right: PLTOFF A. Seaton; FLGOFF M. Hobbs;
FLGOFF W. Pike; LCDR Coppins (RAN); FLGOFF D. Rowe;
FLT LT R. Hughes; FLGOFF G. Kelly; PLTOFF F. D'Alterio.

Absent: FLT LT W. Higginbotham



Left: MIRAGE OPERATIONS AIRCREW

From Left to right: PLTOFF G. McKenzie, FLGOFF R. Jeffreys; SQNLDR B. Crowhurst; SQNLDR J. Washington; FLGOFF B. Heslin, FLGOFF J. Lonergan; FLT LT M. Buddery; FLGOFF J. Richardson (Intello.); PLTOFF K. Smith; FLT LT S. Riley (RAF). Absent: FLT LT S. Goodier, FLT LT M. Evans.



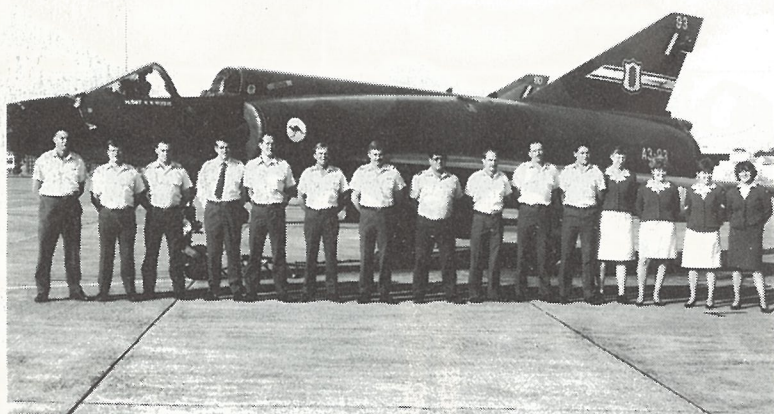
Left: MIRAGE AND MACCHI TRAINING AIRCREW

Left to right: Back Row — SQNLDR H. Burlingson; SQNLDR L. Gordon; FLTLT B. VanDonkelaar; FLTLT K. Rushworth; FLTLT E. J. Batten; FLTLT G. Todd; FLTLT J. Absolon; FLTLT M. Gardner; PLTOFF A. Allen; FLGOFF R. Porteous; FLGOFF S. Wild; FLGOFF S. Friend. Front Row — SQNLDR B. Hartwich; SQNLDR B. Johnson; SQNLDR I. Watson; FLTLT P. J. Batten; FLTLT J. Quaife, FLGOFF D. Wong; FLGOFF N. Hart; FLTLT R. Vadiveloo; FLGOFF G. Pesavento. Absent: PLTOFF I. Eccles.

SQUADRON SUPPORT SECTIONS

Right: ORDERLY ROOM STAFF

Left to right: CPL L. Anderson, LACW D. Menage, LACW L. McLeod, LAC C. Nelson, LAC D. Battistini, SGT R. Rolfe, FSGT G. Dickens, SQNLDR P. Wythes, FLGOFF A. Donselaar, WOFF C. Dunne, AC B. Edwards, CPL C. Badman, AC J. Trapp, LAC T. Cartwright, ACW T. Short.



Left: EQUIPMENT SECTION

Left to right: FSGT K. Hartwig, LAC R. Van Der Meulen, LAC W. Turnbull, LAC M. Timms, LAC D. Edwards, SGT W. Skelly, FLGOFF A. Harris, SGT G. Holme (RAF Exchange) LAC J. Sheridan, LAC L. King, LAC P. Heatley, ACW J. Curtin, ACW L. Morterson, CPL L. Pugh, ACW L. Payton. Absent: SGT R. Robson (Exchange to U.K.) CPL B. Wilson.

Right: SAFETY EQUIPMENT SECTION

Left to right: FLTLT K. Watson (OIC); LAC T. New; LAC D. Newman; SGT G. Northfield; LAC S. Tetley, FSGT T. Biggins, CPL H. Blanchard, LAC K. Bell, CPL P. Baikaloff.



Right: GROUND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT SECTION
 LAC L. Stephens; CPL K. Roberts; LAC R. Henderson;
 SGT R. Parsons; CPL W. James; LAC L. Donkin; LAC S.
 Connor; CPL C. Douglas; LAC K. Houghton; LAC P.
 Irwin.



SQUADRON MAINTENANCE SECTIONS

Left: SQUADRON ENGINEERING OFFICERS
 Left to right: FLTLT L. Jelley (ARMO); SQNLDR R. Royal
 (OIC AMS); WGCDR J. Pluck (SENGO); FLTLT A.
 Richardson (OIC AMW); FLTLT K. Colman (OIC AEMS);
 FLTLT K. Watson (OIC AEMW); FLTLT D. Jones (OIC
 Macchi FLT). Absent: FLTLT M. Bartetzko (OIC MCS and
 FLT line).



**Right: SQUADRON WARRANT OFFICERS AND
 AIRCRAFT CO-ORDINATORS**

Left to right: FSFT I. Scott; WOFF N. Garrett; FSGT C.
 Kirley; WOFF R. Scott; FSGT C. Foggo.



Left: MAINTENANCE CONTROL SECTION
 Left to right: Rear Row — LACW D. Mooney, CPL M. Wat-
 son, LAC L. McQualter, LAC S. Mollross, LAC T. Knell, CPL
 B. Watson, SGT C. Priestly, FSGT S. Cousins.
 Front Row — LAC J. Trapp, LAC S. Morris, LAC T. Fulton,
 CPL T. Lear, Absent: LACW K. Palmer, LAC D.
 Henderson.



Left: AIRFRAME SECTION

Back Row — LAC J. Allan, LAC M. Norris, LAC R. Murphy, CPL K. Harmer, LAC G. Bower.

Centre Row — LAC K. Byrne, LAC W. Webber, LAC A. Jones, LAC I. Thorpe.

Front Row — FSGT C. Foggo, SGT M. Lee, SGT L. Mervin, SGT R. Pugh, SGT R. Lane, SGT R. Letham, SGT J. Carvosso, LAC M. Schneider, LAC A. Gerrard, LAC R. Swan, LAC J. Burridge, LAC A. Scott, LAC G. Vercoe, LAC C. Galea, LAC B. Sisson, FSGT A. Miller (SNCOL/C), CPL A. Huntly, LAC A. Black, CPL C. Drage, LAC G. Crossman, LAC P. Wright, CPL B. Pike, LAC K. Eleveld, LAC J. Castles, LAC D. Lamb, LAC P. Blyth, CPL B. Cox, LAC J. Franklin, CPL W. Bailey, CPL B. Mammen, LAC G. Stokes, LAC R. Irwin, SGT M. Coate, LAC R. Warrall, LAC D. Martinek, LAC G. Moss, LAC S. Mooney, CPL N. Walker, CPL S. Piesse, LAC R. Gunnourie.

Absent — SGT P. Allford, SGT D. Wood, CPL B. Caddey, CPL D. Spencer, CPL W. Pollock, CPL P. Lindus, CPL D. Berlin, LAC R. Hoffman, LAC M. Heath, LAC D. Livesey, LAC S. Peters, LAC C. Thompson, LAC S. Guildea, LAC W. W. Moir.



ARMAMENT SECTION

Back Row: Left to right — LAC A. Gunning, LAC M. Woolley, LAC S. Rockliff, CPL D. Roberts, LAC T. Walk, CPL P. Kelberg, CPL P. Goodall, CPL J. Wydro, LAC C. Carter, LAC S. Bodey, CPL G. Jones, CPL A. Cogan, LAC P. Watson, LAC M. Plociennik, LAC A. Grott, LAC B. Mulder, CPL B. Brown, LAC S. Campbell, CPL G. Hart, LAC M. Ducker, LAC R. Bailey, LAC A. Lowe, LAC B. Petersen, LAC M. Breitsameter, LAC D. Downey, LAC W. Sykes, CPL B. Cooper, CPL H. Skelton, LAC C. Colman, LAC S. Hasling, LAC D. Slattey.

Front Row — LAC M. Newman, LAC G. Disario, LAC J. Mack, LAC G. Snow, CPL D. Barrett, SGT A. Bullock, SGT W. Hayes, SGT B. Unicomb, FSGT N. Peterson, WOFFF B. Allen, FLTLT L. Jelley, FSGT M. Johnson, SGT M. Coleman, SGT W. Cradock, LAC T. Carpenter, LAC M. Long, LAC S. McIntyre, LAC C. Evans, LAC D. Simpson.

Absent — SGT J. Simpson, CPL M. Quince, CPL J. Cash, CPL N. Mortimer, LAC B. Smedley, LAC W. Turnbull, LAC S. Kearns, LAC C. Kraft.



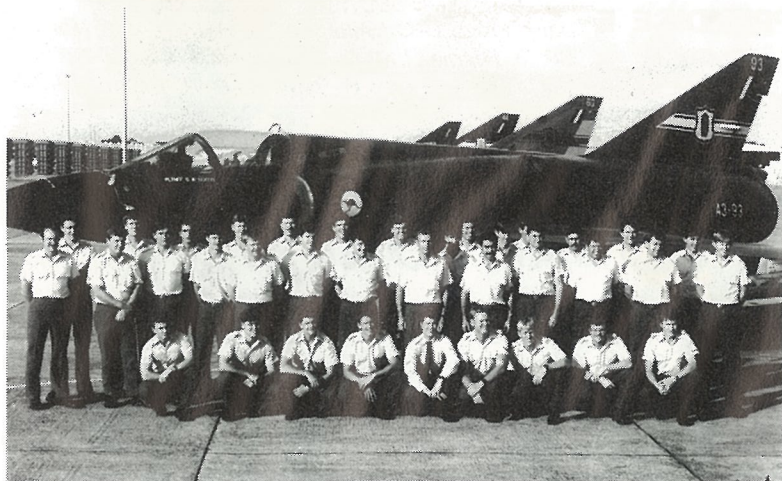
Left: ENGINE SECTION

Left to right: Rear Row — CPL J. Wilson, LAC K. Chambers, AC M. Williams, LAC B. Harman, LAC A. Cork, CPL H. Hermans, CPL D. Scrimgeour (obscured), LAC A. Janson, LAC J. Dempsey, AC D. Stout, CPL P. Hunt, LAC R. Eygel shoven, SGT M. Ohlin.

Middle Row: LAC G. Mathews, LAC C. Richards, AC T. Edwards, SGT I. Rowe, LAC R. Nicholson, AC R. Smyth, LAC P. Mulquiney (obscured) AC P. McInnes, CPL G. Balzer, LAC K. Whately, CPL N. Russell, CPL G. Foley, SGT W. Hill, LAC S. Hamid, CPL P. Bunker, LAC D. Jeffery, LAC B. Armstrong, SGT W. Curry, SGT D. Wilson.

Front Row — AC G. Phillips, AC S. Lowth, LAC W. Brown, CPL E. Gatehouse, CPL C. Sandham, SGT G. Campbell, LAC M. Ferguson, SGT P. McGee, SGT A. Davis, FSGT T. Brown.

Absent — FSGT C. Kirley, SGT D. Lewis, CPL L. Van Eldik, CPL D. Sparke, LAC J. Scott, LAC R. Bowra, LAC M. Timms (EQUIPO) AC S. Shephard.



Left: ELECTRICAL SECTION

Rear Row: LAC P. Dawes, LAC P. Flinn, LAC G. Beveridge, LAC M. Donlan, LAC McInnes, CPL C. Signorino, LAC R. Henderson, SGT C. Richardson, CPL S. Wootton, LAC R. Lloyd, CPL A. Hamence, CPL K. Roberts.

Centre Row: LAC R. Coulter, CPL R. Hughes, LAC D. Dufour, LAC C. Shepherd, LAC T. Mason, LAC K. Houghton, LAC I. Campbell, WOFF J. Hubbard, LAC M. Gilvarry, SGT A. Borg, LAC S. Gilbert, LAC P. Hook, Sgt D. Miles, SGT R. Parsons, SGT P. Watson.

Front Row: LAC D. Farmer, LAC R. Bailey, LAC G. Anderson, LAC M. Scott, CPL G. Kerr, CPL R. Crust, LAC B. Caplice, LAC R. Vandermeulen, LAC S. Connor.

Absent: LAC L. Hawke, LAC P. Cronin, LAC B. Tucker, LAC J. Nyhan, CPL D. Estreich, SGT J. Tufrey, LAC A. Maltese.

Right: INSTRUMENTS SECTION

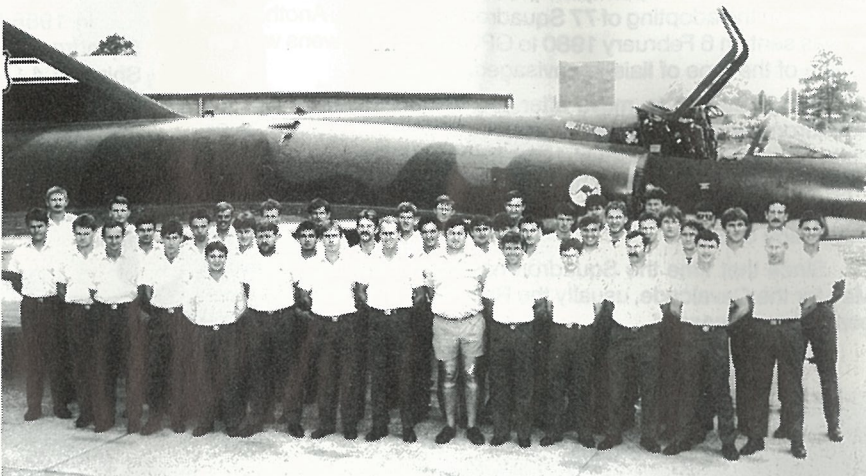
4th Row: CPL D. Cook, SGT D. Hannam, CPL R. Gilby, CPL B. Smith, AC B. Patterson, AC R. Bell, LAC L. Browne.

3rd Row: LAC R. Seppala, LAC M. Forsey, LAC P. Vanstan, LAC S. Gordon, LAC R. Yeaman, LAC S. Ross, AC S. Grant, LAC J. Murdoch, LAC J. Holland, LAC C. Smith, CPL R. White, CPL W. Mazzoni.

2nd Row: LAC D. Boole, CPL M. Evans, LAC M. Riemsdyke, LAC S. Caban, LAC G. Mazalo, LAC S. Mollross, LAC D. Mathews, CPL S. Clark, LAC D. Kelly, LAC R. Zyntek, LAC G. Mason, LAC P. Eldredge.

Front Row: LAC J. Browning, LAC C. Thomas, LAC S. Fallapi, FSGT G. Powell, CPL L. Thomas, FLTLT K. Watson, FSGT D. Woolard, LAC G. O'Donohue, AC K. Shaw, SGT A. Maxwell, SGT G. Stewart, CPL J. McGrath.

Absent: SGT B. Hong, CPL C. Whitfield, LAC S. McWatters, LAC A. Knell, LAC G. Graham, LAC I. Pinch, LAC S. Pickard, LAC D. Hewlett, LAC P. Stuart, CPL D. Badger.



Right: MACCHI FLIGHT

Far Back Row: LAC S. Piper, LAC S. Webster, LAC A. Newitt.

Back Row: LAC J. Chappel, LAC V. Davey, LAC R. Reeve, LAC, R. Calinowski.

Middle Row: CPL J. Nightingale, LAC B. Hadden, LAC P. Head, LAC R. Swinburne, LAC L. King, CPL D. Brundell, LAC C. Sivier, CPL A. Shakespeare, LAC P. Nys, LAC B. Hunt, LAC M. Haysom, LAC G. Lamborn, LAC B. O'Rourke, LAC G. Fane, CPL M. Versace, CPL P. Cavanagh, CPL B. Smith, CPL R. Thompson, LAC R. Bonazza, LAC S. Mason, LAC J. Weber, LACW J. Curtin, CPL B. Wilson, CPL D. Wilson, CPL B. Orlowski, CPL A. Foord, LAC K. Adler.

Front Row: SGT B. Tessier, SGT C. Bentley, SGT D. Collins, FSGT G. Rule, FSGT D. Leonard, FLTLT D. Jones, FSGT P. Fortune, SGT C. McIntyre, SGT D. Smith, SGT W. Alston.

Absent: LAC M. Huntly, LAC K. Watt, LAC R. Jansen, CPL M. Bracey.

Left: RADIO SECTION

Front Row Left: SGT B. Mitchell, SGT A. Coole, FSGT F. Wood, SGT J. Ellis, SGT P. Ward.

2nd Row Left: LAC S. Gasbarrone, LAC A. Gardam, LAC R. Climpson, LAC A. Maclean, LAC P. Gray, LAC J. Steman, LAC J. Nield.

3rd Row Left: LAC D. Lazell, LAC P. Harriman, LAC P. Knellwolf, LAC T. Fulton, LAC J. Bastion, CPL R. Kies, CPL D. Douglass, CPL T. Troth, CPL B. Callaghan, LAC P. Cherry, CPL M. Cook.

Back Row Left: LAC S. Aldred, CPL D. Johnstone, CPL P. Barber, CPL G. Henley, LAC M. McCrum, LAC S. Moen, LAC P. Verwayen, LAC R. Peet, CPL M. West, LAC M. Barrett, CPL B. French, LAC C. Wadham, LAC R. Kelly.



LIAISON BETWEEN KEMPSEY AND No 77 SQUADRON

The idea of the Kempsey Shire adopting a Unit of either the Air Force or Army was first mentioned in July 1979, after the success Coffs Harbour had in adopting the crew of HMAS Ovens. The Kempsey Flying Club put forward the idea that No 77 Squadron be considered because of their close proximity to Kempsey.

A letter was sent by the Shire Clerk, Mr. G.R. Proudfoot to the Air Staff Officer at Williamtown on 9 November 1979 to get his feelings on the adopting of 77 Squadron by the Shire. Another letter was sent on 6 February 1980 to GPCAPT D.W. Owens with an outline of the type of liaison envisaged.

Things started to move after WGCDR L.A. Naylor, CO 77 Squadron, replied to a letter from Mr Proudfoot. WGCDR Naylor visited the city on 28 August 1980 for discussion with the Shire Council. Discussions were held with the idea that the Squadron should visit Kempsey in May 1981 to Participate in the Annual Cavalcade of Sport.

Since that time the Squadron has been travelling up every May for the Cavalcade, usually the Raft Race, in which they have been very successful.

In September 1984 the CO, WGCDR A. Titheridge went to the Official Opening of the Club Rooms for the Kempsey Flying Club.

Each Anzac Day a contingent of officers and airmen travel to Kempsey for the Annual Anzac Day celebrations. The first year of the Anzac Day March was held in 1984 when WGCDR A. Titheridge led a flight of airmen in the procession.

In 1986 the liaison between the Shire of Kempsey and 77 Squadron came to a climax with the granting of the Freedom of the Shire on 4 October 1986 while the city is celebrating its 150th anniversary of the settlement by Enoch William Rudder.

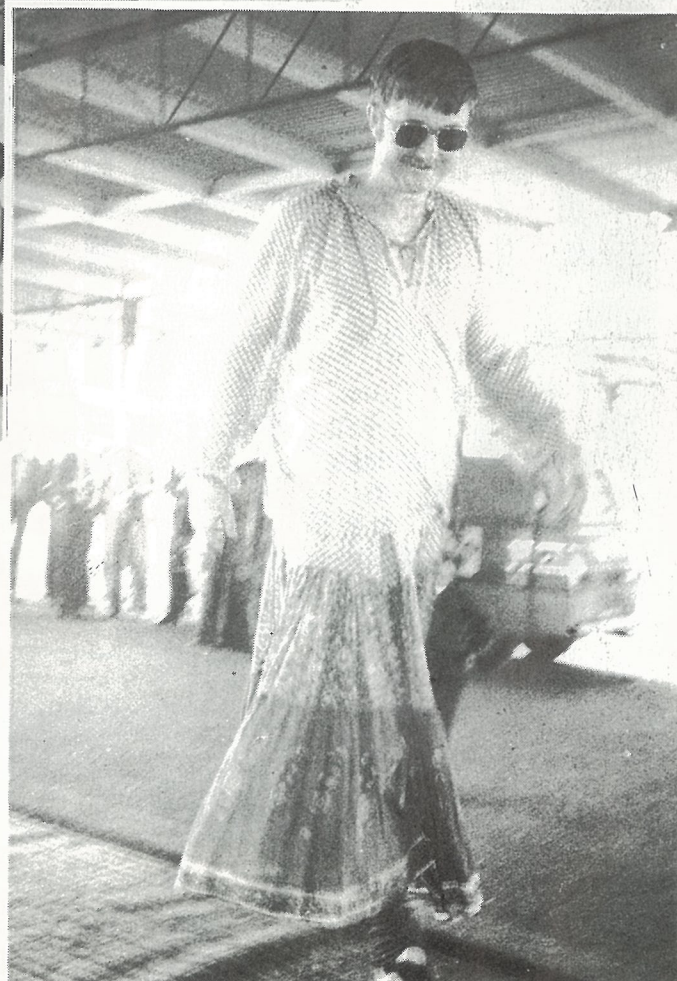
The main people behind the liaison between the Shire and Squadron are Tony Nolan and Bernie Peters of the Shire, Milton Riggs of the Kempsey Flying Club and CPL Jeff Shorthouse now of 20CU. Without their efforts the liaison would not have come about.



CO WGCDR Gary Gent officially opens the 1981 Cavalcade of Sport on the 9 May. With the CO holding the plaque is the Shire President Mr. S. P. McIntyre and other Kempsey dignitaries.



*Cavalcade of Sport Parade
Flight led by SqnLdr G. Morrison 9 May 1981.*



*FtLt Rubin James Admino
Fashion Parade Kempsey
Racecourse Cavalcade of Sport
10 May 1981.*



*77 SQN Raft Kempsey Raft Race
24 May 1981. (RAAF)*



Presentation to Kempsey Flying Club at the opening of their Club House. 27 October 1984.

L to R — LAC Bob Crust, SQNLDR Bill Johnson LAC Mick Evans, CPL Dave Shotton, CO WGCDR Alan Tithridge, Mr. John Williams (President of the Flying Club) CPL Jeff Shorthouse.

CO WGCDR Alan Tithridge Officially opens the Kempsey Flying Club's Club House 27 October 1984.



CO WGCDR R. Wilson leads a squadron contingent through Kempsey on Anzac Day 1986.



*Freedom of the Shire of Kempsey to 77 Squadron Parade
4 October 1986. Shire President Mr. S. P. McIntyre inspects the
escort flight during the parade with CO WGCDR R. Wilson.
(RAAF)*



*77 Squadron exercising the Right of the Freedom of the Shire of
Kempsey 4 October 1986.
(RAAF)*



*CO WGCDR R. Wilson and Shire President Mr. S. P. McIntyre holds the scroll proclaiming the freedom of the Shire of Kempsey. OC of RAAF
Williamtown AIRCDRE R. Bomball looks on.
(RAAF)*

