



RAAF ASSOCIATION (N.S.W. DIVISION) INC



Honour the Past – Support the Present – Act for the Future

THE RADAR BRANCH BULLETIN

WINTER 2018

Website: <http://www.raafradar.org.au>

Email: contact@raafradar.org.au

Patrons	Air Commodore D. Bowden AM (Ret'd) Air Vice Marshal R.B. Treloar AO (Ret'd) Group Captain Don MacPherson (Ret'd)
President	Bruce Niblett
Senior RAAF Member	Group Captain Nathan Christie
Correspondence	Secretary, Wing Commander Ian Gibson (Ret'd) Email: secretary@raafradar.org.au

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Radar Branch Annual General Meeting was held at the Stockton RSL Club on 20 April 2018. The new committee for 2018 was elected, as follows:

President:	Bruce Niblett	Vice-President:	Ray O'Donoghue
Treasurer:	Tony Rogers	Secretary:	Ian Gibson
Events Officer:	Diane Taylor	Membership Officer:	SQNLDR Dean Patterson
Branch Historian:	Jim Stewart	Assistant Historian:	Howard Campbell
Committee Member:	Narelle Owen	Committee Member:	John King

RADAR BRANCH ANNUAL AWARDS – 2018

The Radar Branch presents awards to members of 41 and 42 Wings for outstanding performance during the past year. The 2018 recipients were:

A.E. PITHER Trophy - awarded to the airwoman / airman providing the most positive contribution to the support of 41 Wing activities. The 2018 recipient was SGT Daniel HICKEY, 1 RSU.

Joe ULETT Memorial Trophy - awarded to the airwoman / airman providing the most positive contribution to the operational performance of 41 Wing. The 2018 recipient was LAC Benjamin BYRNE, 1 RSU.

G.E.S. STUCHBURY Award – recognises the officer of any category within 44 Wing who clearly stands out from her / his peers by demonstrating professional mastery beyond her / his core duties. The 2018 recipient was FLTLT Lauren BLIGNAUT, 452SQN, DAR FLT.

The Radar Branch heartily congratulates the recipients for 2018.

41 WING AWARD

CPL Lisa ROCHE Memorial Award – This award is maintained through 41 Wing, and recognises the ‘Instructor of the Year’. This year’s recipient is CPL Rosanna MOFFITT, 1 RSU.

44 WING AWARD

TC Delahunty Award – This award is maintained through 44 Wing and recognises the member who makes the most positive contribution to 44 Wing activities. This year’s recipient is FST Jamie BURTON, 452SQN, TVL FLT.

114 MCRU 75th Anniversary, May 2018

114MCRU (WGCDR Brett RISSTROM commanding) celebrated the 75th Anniversary of the unit’s formation (on 23 May 1943, at Camden NSW) and the 73rd anniversary of the Tarakan landing, on the unit’s annual ‘Tarakan Day’ parade. 114 MCRU trooped its Squadron Standard on a parade reviewed by the Air Commander Australia, AVM Steve “Zed” ROBERTON. The parade was supported by the Air Force band, with a flypast provided by 75 Squadron. 114MCRU is one of only two ground units to have been awarded a Squadron Standard.

Following the parade, the unit held an open day, where families could see what the unit does, and for some of the children it was their first visit to RAAF Darwin (how much has changed over the years). An evening reception was also held at Parliament House, Darwin, to commemorate the anniversary.

New Officer Commanding, 41 Wing

On 16 July 2018, GPCAPT Nathan CHRISTIE, CSM assumed command of 41 Wing, relieving GPCAPT Lyle HOLT who has been posted supernumerary to Air Force Headquarters pending further posting. GPCAPT CHRISTIE’s previous posting was Chief Of Staff, Surveillance & Response Group, and in addition to his role as Officer Commanding 41 Wing, he also assumes the role of Senior RAAF Member, Radar Branch. A brief biography of GPCAPT CHRISTIE is attached as an annex to this bulletin.

Exercise Pitch Black, July - August 2018

It is now the Dry Season, and it will be no surprise to any post-WW2 personnel to note that a major exercise is underway in the Northern Territory. Exercise Pitch Black 2018 commenced on 27 July, and is the largest RAAF exercise yet to be conducted. The exercise involves 4000 personnel and 140 aircraft from 15 nations, including India, France, Indonesia and South Korea. 41 Wing is heavily involved, with activation of the Northern Region Operations Centre for air battle management, with radar sensors deployed to key locations within the Darwin-Tindal area. 42 Wing is providing AEW & C support, whilst 44 Wing is responsible for managing the airspace required for this mammoth aviation activity.

New Editor, Radar Bulletin

The role of Editor, Branch Bulletin has passed from AIRCDRE Terry DELAHUNTY, who has held this role for many years, and the Branch owes a vote of thanks to Terry for his editorship. We wish him well as he progresses towards the true retirement that he has been pursuing for the last few years (frustrated by Chiefs of Air Force throwing new jobs at him) as he and Shona settle into their retirement on the NSW South Coast.

By way of introduction, the new editor of your Bulletin is Jim (‘Jimbo’ / ‘Jungle Jim’) STEWART. My few claims to fame include being the last Bograt to be posted to 1 CRU, the first Bograt to undergo controller training at 2 CRU, eight glorious years at 114 MCRU, Amberley (Training Officer / Chief Controller / Ground Ops O), and the designer of the 3 CRU and 41 WG badges.

DID YOU KNOW!!**Radar / Air Defence History, June – August**

06 June 1944: RAF Air Defence Ground Environment at D-Day Landings. On this day, the RAF ADGE deployed substantial assets in support of the Allied landing in Normandy. Three modified Royal Navy Landing Ship Tank were deployed as Fighter Direction Tenders (with GCI radars fitted, along with 174 RAF personnel) to cover the amphibious phase invasion. One FDT was subsequently torpedoed by a Luftwaffe aircraft, with the loss of 5 airmen. Once on shore, two GCI units (with their own supporting radar stations) were deployed to support the British and American invasion sectors. 15083 GCI had a particularly torrid time at OMAHA Beach (“*Bloody Omaha*”), with many of their vehicles and equipment sunk and having to overcome local enemy defences. This unit was able to salvage much of its equipment (under fire) and carry out its assigned role. 15083 GCI subsequently won 4 Military Crosses, 3 Military Medals and 1 Croix de Guerre, with 11 personnel killed in action.

11 June and 23 June 1943: 44 Wing Personnel Lost on Radar Countermeasures Operations. On these days (respectively) 44 Wing lost SGT Joseph HOLOHAN and SGT John GRAHAM. These members (Wireless-Air Gunners) were serving as ‘Special Operators’ in ECM-configured B-24 ‘Liberator’ aircraft of the US Army Air Force.

01 July 1943: 41 Wing Member Lost of Radar Countermeasures Operations. On this day, 41 Wing lost SGT William Mac KAY (Wireless-Air Gunner) whilst serving over New Guinea as a ‘Special Operator’ in a B-17 of the USAAF 63

01 July 1945: Operation OBOE 2. On this day, 111 Mobile Fighter Control Unit and 302 radar Station landed with units of the Australian Army’s 1st Corps in the invasion of Balikpapan, Borneo (Netherlands East Indies), to provide air defence support for the invasion site. This was the last major amphibious landing of World War 2.



26 June, 1794: The World’s First Air Defence Engagement. On this day, the French Revolutionary Army’s Balloon Company launched the observation balloon “*L’Entreprenant*” in support of the French Revolutionary forces at the Battle of Fleurus, where they faced the coalition armies of Britain, Hanover and Austria. The Austrian artillery promptly elevated the barrel of a 17-pounder cannon and attempted to shoot down the balloon - they believed that the use of airborne reconnaissance was against the established rules of war. The balloon survived and the pilot became a hero to the Revolutionary Army.



26 – 31 July 1942: Air Raids on North Queensland. Over this period, Japanese flying-boats carried out raids against cities in North Queensland, with 3 raids carried out on Townsville and one raid on Mossman (near Cairns). A raid on Horn Island (Torres Strait) was conducted by an aircraft that turned back from an intended attack on Townsville (27 July). The raids were conducted by 1 – 2 aircraft and no serious damage was caused. In the Mossman attack, a 21/2 year old child, Carmel ZULLO was slightly injured, becoming the first civilian war casualty on the east coast of Australia.

31 July 1917: Creation of the World’s First Integrated Air Defence System. In response to political reaction to German bomber raids on the UK, a truly integrated air defence system was set up under the leadership of Major-General A.E. ASHMORE – an artillery officer with significant aircrew experience. The system finally integrated warning system with the defences (aircraft and A/A Artillery) Partly due to the political aspect, UK Home Defence Squadrons were finally equipped with more capable aircraft, such as the Sopwith ‘Camel’. This system served as a model for the later RAF air defence organisation that helped win the Battle of Britain in 1940.

04 August 2007 – 07 July 2009: 41 WG / 114 MCRU Establish a Control & Reporting Centre at Kandahar, Afghanistan.



A RAAF Control & Reporting Centre (CRC), established at Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, took over the provision of management of assigned airspace in support of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) battling the Taliban. Following the deployment of a small advance party from 41 Wing, the main group, comprising personnel from 114 MCRU and elements of Combat Support Group units arrived in-country in June 2007. Rotating on a six-monthly basis, the initial contingent from 114 MCRU was replaced in May 2008 and returned to Australia. Over the two years of operations in-theatre, the CRC handled 196,000 coalition movements in support of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). With a deployed strength of approx. 75 personnel, the CRC was manned by only 35 personnel at any one time, but still directed combat aircraft in support of ground troops across Afghanistan, 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week. The CRC handed over responsibility to the USAF on 7 July, 2009.



04 August – 08 September 1942: Milne Bay Battle. The Milne Bay battle commenced with an air raid on 4 August, and lasted until 08 September, when a RAAF strike was conducted against the retreating Japanese convoy. Although not online on 4 August, 38 Radar Station became operational the next day, maintaining surveillance and early warning for the Milne Bay Garrison, and was never off-line until the battle was over. As an integral part of the garrison, 38 RS was subjected to air attack, artillery fire, infantry attack and naval gunfire bombardment.



BIOGRAPHY

Group Captain Nathan CHRISTIE Officer Commanding, 41 Wing

Group Captain Christie was born in a little country town in Far North Queensland. He joined the Air Force in 1990 and graduated from ADFA in 1992 with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Human Resource Management. After a year as a recruiting Officer in Brisbane he commenced Air Defence course. GPCAPT Christie spent the next 6 years as a tactical Air Defence Officer. Upon graduating as Dux of Number 4 Fighter Combat Controller course in 1999 he was posted to Naval Air Station Norfolk, USA, as the RAAF exchange Officer to the E2C Hawkeye AEW&C Training Squadron; VAW120. Here he qualified as an Aviator and Instructor on two types of aircraft.

Upon completion of his exchange tour GPCAPT Christie was posted to the Boeing complex in Seattle in the United States as the Mission Systems Operator for the Australian acquisition and testing of Wedgetail AEW&C. After three years of test flying with the then Defence Materiel Organisation, GPCAPT Christie was posted back to Australia as the Operations Officer at Number 2 Squadron. Upon promotion to Wing Commander he was posted as the Executive Officer at 42 Wing Headquarters.

In early 2008 GPCAPT Christie was posted as the Officer Commanding Number 42 Wing. This position was dual assigned; responsible to Air Force for Raise, Train and Sustain functions and to DMO for Operational compliance and utility for the Wedgetail AEW&C. In early 2009 GPCAPT Christie was the Commander of the 41 Wing Control and Reporting Centre (call-sign 'Taipan') in Afghanistan. Upon return to Australia he moved to Canberra and was the Staff Officer to Chief of Air Force.

After completing the NATO Senior Defence College in Rome in 2011, GPCAPT Christie took up his post as the Australian Defence Attaché to NATO and the European Union in Brussels, Belgium.

In 2015 GPCAPT Christie took command of 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit. Upon completion of his command tour GPCAPT Christie deployed as the Chief of Staff Joint Task Force 633 where he was awarded a Conspicuous Service Medal.

Upon return from deployment Group Captain Christie took up the role of Chief of Staff at Headquarters Surveillance and Response Group. On 16 July, 2018, Group Captain Christie took over as the Officer Commanding, 41 Wing.

Group Captain Christie is married to Jo-anne and they have three young children; Gabriella, Aidan and Jack. He enjoys motorbike riding, golf and most of all being a dad.