



ADF Serials Newsletter

For those interested in Australian Military Aircraft History
and Serials
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July – August 2008

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Editor's Note:

Hi everyone

During April and May I spent six weeks overseas in England, the Channel Islands, France and Belgium. I was able to walk some of the battlefield at Pozieres where my great grandfather was killed and visit the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. I also visited a number of Commonwealth War Grave cemeteries around Mont St Quentin, Peronne and Ieper. Most poignant though, was the sheer number of cemeteries that dot the landscape – some containing only a few bodies and surrounded by fields while others were extremely large and elaborate memorials. I was also fortunate to see the “Last Post Ceremony” at Menin Gate. This commemoration which commenced in 1928 has been performed nightly (with the exception of the German invasion and occupation of Belgium during WW2) and attracted a large range of nationalities and ages.

On 16 May 2008, I was also fortunate to be at Lincoln Cathedral and witnessed the 65th anniversary flypast when Les Munro, the last surviving Squadron Leader, and Richard Todd, star of the celebrated film The Dambusters, took off from RAF Mildenhall for a flypast over Ladybower Reservoir. What a spectacular sight it was from such a great vantage point!

This month's newsletter includes part 3 of Gordon's series on the RAAF Strength; First Units, and their locations as at the 8th December 1941. Gordon has also written an article on the heroes of Telemark and the involvement of RAAF crews during WW2. Rod Farquhar has written a piece on the Orion aircraft.

Would you like to submit some images or an article for the newsletter? We welcome contributions to the newsletter. You can contact us via the contact link at the end of the newsletter.

Till next month
Jan

Message Board – Current topics

The ADF Serials website hosts a number of message boards including:

- **General discussion** -ID of the Catalina (PB28-1) that used to be Catalina Park, Katoomba NSW during the 1950s.
- **Aircrew** – New Air Commodore Australia
- **Army aircraft** – Iroquois retirement – AWM and Army Aviation Museum to receive one each?
- **RAAF aircraft** – Sqn markings disappearing?
- **Navy aircraft** – Discussion on Seasprite cancellation
- **NZ Military Aircraft and aircrew** – New A109 Utility Helios
- **Feedback** – provides a place for feedback, questions etc
- **ADF Serials website updates** – provides information on latest updates.

These boards can be accessed at <http://www.adf-serials.com/invboard/>

ADF Serials Update

Thanks to Dave Masterton

The ADF-Serials team is a large group of individuals who volunteer their time to research Australian aviation history. It is with regret that I pass on the news that Dave Masterton has resigned as a webpage editor with the group. On behalf of the ADF-Serials team I would like to thank Dave Masterton for all of his hard work on the Sea Fury (NA2), Wessex (N7), Gannett (N3), Sea King (N16), Seasprite (N29), Sea Venom (N4) and Sycamore (N5) pages on the site. ADF-Serials users have been able to benefit from your knowledge and expertise. All the best Dave and feel free to join us again in the future ☺

Thanks to Phil Vabre

The April 2008 edition of *Aeroplane* magazine (p17) contained a blurb advertising the ADF-Serials website. Many thanks to Phil Vabre for his efforts with this.

Aeroplane would like to thank Phil Vabre of Australia's Civil Aviation Historical Society (www.airways-museum.com) for his invaluable assistance with the preparation of this article

Australian military serials

An unmissable resource for anybody researching Australian military aircraft is the ADF Serials website at <http://adf-serials.com>. Full of useful information on every aircraft operated by the RAAF since its inception in 1912, this superb site is well worth a visit for enthusiasts with an interest in Aussie military aviation



2008 Airshows

2008 is shaping up to be a busy year for airshows!

RAAF Amberley 4-5 October 2008 more information available via:

<http://www.airforce.gov.au/airshow/index.aspx>

Those interested in keeping up with developments might like to subscribe to the RSS feed.

Temora Flying Dates

August 30th & 31st

October 11th & 12th

November 15th & 16th

<http://www.aviationmuseum.com.au/news/FlyingDates.cfm>

New Books

Song of the Beauforts: No 100 Squadron RAAF and Beaufort bomber operations– 2nd Edition – Col King

This book records the exploits of the airmen of the first Australian Beaufort squadron in action in World War II. Developed as a torpedo and general reconnaissance bomber, the Beaufort was the heaviest, most powerful and most complex aircraft ever built in this country. It entered service with the Royal Australian Air Force at a time when Japanese invasion seemed imminent. As the tide of the war in the South-West Pacific turned from one mostly fought over the ocean to a land-based operation, the original squadron was joined by additional Beaufort units to form the RAAF's No 71 Wing.

This book has been published by the RAAF's Air Power Development Centre.

Wings of Destiny – Charles Page

Wing Commander Charles Learmonth, DFC and Bar, was a well-known flyer in World War II, who was based in Pearce, WA, and involved in the air search for HMAS Sydney. He fought in the skies of New Guinea and was killed at the age of 26 in a crash 30 kilometres north-west of Rottneest Island. Learmonth Airport was named in his honour. In this extensively researched biography of Learmonth, Charles Page fills a significant gap in Australian World War II history. It is, Page writes, 'a story that needed to be told. The deeds of Charles Learmonth and his "band of brothers" deserve more than a shoebox full of aerogrammes held together with rubber bands'.

This book has been published by Rosenberg Publishing (ISBN 97881877058646).

Father's Day is just around the corner so why not drop a subtle (or not so subtle) hint to the family.

Their names also stand high as "Heroes of Telemark" – Gordon Birkett

Some time ago I came across a casualty file with the various reports on two aircrew killed in Europe. This report struck me rather for six as it reported that two RAAF Pilots were missing in the North Sea in two Horsa Gliders during November 1942. Despite representations through the Red Cross in 1943 and in 1944, no details were shed on their fate until much later in 1946. After some research, both NAA Files and Internet, I was somewhat amazed of the results.

The Aircraft

The Horsa Glider was designed to meet specification X.26/40 and built from 1940 onwards. It first flew on 12 September 1941. The Horsa was a high-wing cantilever monoplane with wooden wings and a wooden semi-monocoque fuselage. The fuselage was built in three sections bolted together, the front section was the pilot's compartment and main freight loading door, the main section was accommodation for troops or freight, the rear section supported the tail unit. It had a fixed tricycle landing gear and it was one of the first gliders equipped with a tricycle undercarriage for takeoff. On operational flights this could be jettisoned and landing was then on a sprung skid under the fuselage. The main compartment could accommodate 15 troops on benches along the sides. Supply containers could also be fitted under the centre-section of the wing, three on each side.

Operation Freshman

The battle to prevent heavy water production is the most dramatic chapter in the European secret war. Between 1942 and 1944 a sequence of sabotage actions by the Norwegian resistance movement, as well as Allied bombing, ensured the destruction of the plant and the loss of the heavy water produced. These operations — codenamed "Freshman", "Grouse" and "Gunnernside" — finally managed to knock the plant out of production in early 1943, basically ending the German research.

As part of several operations to prevent this development of the German Atomic Bomb during World War two, the Allies launched firstly Operation Freshman on the evening of the 19th November 1942 to destroy the heavy water plant at Rjukan, Norway.

Two gliders were to be towed by Halifax bombers of 38th Group from an airfield near Wick, Scotland on the evening of Thursday 19th November 1942. This was to be the first operation to be performed by the Horsa Glider since its design and flight in 1941.



The two Halifax, after take-off with Horsas in tow, set course for Norway after 18.00hrs.

Almost immediately the intercommunication system connecting the gliders and the tugs broke down.



One Halifax kept low, seeking to fly beneath the cloud and then to gain height on nearing the Norwegian coast, where the pilot hoped for clear weather.

What happened is not exactly known, but at some moment the tug hit the side of a mountain, crashed, and all its crew were killed. The violence of the shock loosed the glider, which made a very heavy landing close by, killing and injuring several of its occupants.



The other Halifax was more fortunate. It flew high and approached the Norwegian coast at 10,000 feet. Here, as promised, the weather cleared, but it was found impossible to locate the landing zone.

The whole district was covered with snow which made the identification of objects on the ground even more difficult. The pilots of the Halifax made every effort to find the destination, until, with fuel running low, were forced to turn for home. The glider was still at the end of the tow, but on crossing the coast with the combination ran of heavy cloud and icing conditions, the two parted. This glider, too, made land and crashed not very far from the other. Due to the weather and the failure, both gliders and a single bomber crashed in Norway.

Both pilots in each of the gliders, the bomber crew and 14 of the 34 soldiers (All the soldiers were members of British 1st Airborne, Royal Engineers) were killed in crashes.

The Norwegian people did what they could for the survivors but could not prevent their capture by the Germans. Hitler in a blind rage over continued Commando raids on the mainland, decreed the Commando Order in October 1942.

These 20 survivors were executed on the orders of Hitler, in direct breach of the Geneva Convention which protects POWs from summary execution.

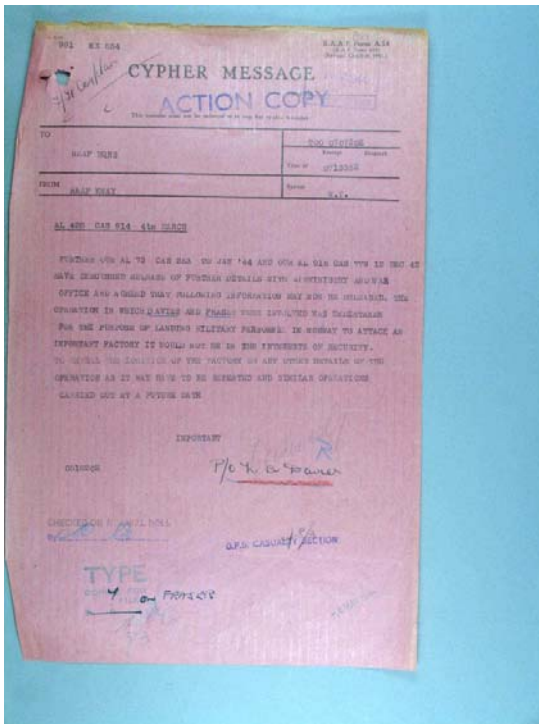
Some 11 had been taken to a German army camp at Egersund and shot, 5 were taken to a German concentration camp at Grini, near Oslo. These five were kept at the concentration camp until their execution by firing squad on 18 January 1943. The other 4 were taken to Trandum and executed by the Germans.



What of the Australian connection?

The crew of the second Horsa Glider (HS-114, built at Christchurch factory), towed by Halifax W7801, was piloted by two RAAF Pilots, **Pilot Officer Norman Arthur Davies Serv#401422 and Pilot Officer Herbert John Fraser Serv#401601.**

Halifax W7801 was piloted by Flight Lieutenant A.R. Parkinson (Royal Canadian Air Force) and Pilot Officer G.W. Sewell de Gency RAF as co-pilot. The other crew members were Flying Officer A.T.H. Howard RAF, Flight Lieutenant A.E. Thomas RAF, Sergeant J. Falconer RAF, Flight Sergeant A. Buckton RAF and Flight Sergeant G.M. Edwards.



The Missing Report and efforts made

The once mighty battleships were made redundant almost overnight by their vulnerability to air attack by the carriers, who in turn are now threatened by the submarine, requiring a large protective screen of planes and ships to ensure their safety.

In recent times the new generation of silent diesels like our Collins Class boats have added another dimension to the plot.

Today there are thought to be around 650 operational submarines in the World's oceans at any time.

Early attempts at Anti Submarine Warfare (ASW) relied mostly on catching the boats on the surface to recharge their batteries, using the less than perfect radars of the day, or simply by visual sighting. The method of attack was by gunnery or rocketry if on the surface or depth charges if submerged. The evolution of the snorkel that allowed the diesels to run while at periscope depth, and later the nuclear boats that remained submerged for months at a time would require a whole new approach.

In the 50s and 60s technology advanced at a rapid pace, new radars capable of picking out a periscope, sniffers to detect diesel fumes from the snorkel, the Julie/Jezebel sonobuoy that could hear submerged boats whether running or lying silent, the MAD detector that measured variations in the Earth's magnetic field caused by the steel hull of a submarine, and most importantly the Mk44/46 torpedoes specifically designed to search for and attack a submerged submarine.

The Lockheed Aircraft Company had developed a patrol bomber for the US Navy, the P2V-1 in the late 1940s and using this basic design ended up with a dedicated ASW aircraft the Neptune P2V-4/5 in 1949/50. This aircraft incorporated all of the ASW technology that existed at that time and would continue to evolve over the years culminating in the highly successful P2V-7 in 1962.

By this time the aircraft had reached the limits of power plant design and available space to house all of the electronics required.

The company had in the meantime produced a short haul airliner for civilian use, the Lockheed Electra, a low winged medium sized airframe using four of the Allison 501 turboprops, (civilian versions of the T-56).

In response to a US Navy requirement for a replacement for the Neptune Lockheed submitted a proposal based on the Electra airframe, shortened by 2.13m, strengthened, with an un-pressurised 3.91m long bomb bay grafted onto the underside of the fwd fuselage, increased internal fuel capacity and more powerful T56-A-10W engines. The internal ASW fit remained much the same as that of the Neptune.

The proposal was accepted and the first Orion P-3As were delivered in Aug 1962, followed in 1965 by the P-3Bs, this version having more powerful T56-A-14 engines, revised electronics and a greater all up weight. Capable of a top speed in excess of 700kmh, a duration of 17 hours and with a comfortable pressurised crew compartment this was a great improvement on the Neptune.

In 1969 deliveries began of a completely revised version of the Orion, the P-3C. The entire ASW/MR suite was replaced and now computer controlled, the internally loaded/launched sonobuoys were moved to cartridge fired tubes under the rear fuselage, the searchlight was replaced by an IR system for night surveillance and the outer wing stations could now carry and launch Harpoon missiles.

This version soon became update I and then update II in 1977, each update incorporating improvements in the computers and electronics.

As part of the RAAF reorganisation post WWII No 11 Sqn was reformed at Pearce WA in 1950 flying the GR version of the Mk30 Lincoln, in November 1951 they began re-equipping with

P2V-4/5 Neptunes (now re-designated P-2Es) In 1954 they also moved to the Richmond base near Sydney.

No 10 Sqn was also reformed at Townsville and in 1953 began operating the Mk31 long nose MR version of the Lincoln, due to corrosion problems these aircraft were withdrawn from service in 1961 and some nine months later the squadron began to re-equip with P2V-7 Neptunes, soon to be re-designated SP-2H.

November 1964 saw the decision to re-equip 11Sqn with P3-B Orions, ten of which were ordered for delivery 1968, they would also move again, this time to Edinburgh SA.

By 1972 10 Sqn's SP-2H Neptunes were also beginning to show their age and serious consideration to their replacement began. Considering the RAAF already operated Orions the New P3-C was the preferred option.

An order for eight aircraft was placed in 1975 (later increased to ten); they would be of the update II version and would join 11 Sqn at Edinburgh. The first aircraft arrived in Australia 26May 1978.

Following a survey on the desirability of upgrading the old P3-Bs to near P3-C standard in 1980 it was deemed more economical to purchase a further ten P3-Cs and in 1981 a deal was done with Lockheed, the old P3-Bs would be traded in on the new P3-Cs, the first aircraft arriving at Edinburgh on 7th December 1984.

10 Sqn and 11 Sqn with the addition of 292 (training) Sqn formed the basis of 92 Wing. Although individual squadron markings were applied to aircraft they were in fact pooled for general use.

In the mid 1990s studies were undertaken in an attempt to prolong the operational life of the Orions. This culminated in the issue of Project Air 5276; this would require the provision of a comprehensive flight simulator, the acquisition of three refurbished ex USN P-3B Orions for aircrew training and transport duties (To be designated TAP-3Bs), and finally a complete refit of the entire fleet.

Deliveries of the TAP-3s were delayed due to a number of causes, the deliveries were 1997, 1998, and 1999, by Feb 2004 they had all been retired. At the present time they are empty hulks awaiting disposal.

The first P-3C was modified by L-3 Communications (formerly Raytheon) in the USA, subsequent aircraft were completed by that company's base at Avalon. Changes included a new mission computer, radar, acoustics tracking system, navigation system, communications equipment and some cockpit displays. A low visibility colour scheme was also adopted. The resulting aircraft had a much enhanced Electronic Support Measures (ESM) capability, it was uniquely Australian and was designated AP-3C. Again there were considerable delays with the final aircraft not delivered until Dec 2004.

Subsequent to this major refit there have been a number of updates.

The Star SAFIRE III electro optical surveillance system in a retractable chin turret under the nose radar provides real time high resolution colour TV and infrared imaging for surveillance duties, in keeping with the Orion's increased overland intelligence gathering requirements. A missile self-protection suite consisting of infrared sensors, radar lock on sensors and decoy launchers controlled by an on board computer provide a degree of safety whilst operating in a hostile environment (Middle East Area of Operations).

The weapons firing system is being upgraded to enable firing of the Harpoon II missile, with provision for a new long-range precision stand off weapon.

The Mk 46 torpedo is to be replaced by the EUROTROP MU-90 lightweight torpedo and relevant hardware/software.

The Orions from 92 Wing are involved in regular deployments both in Australia and overseas whether on operational duties or training exercises.

Australia has an international responsibility for search and rescue (SAR) covering a wide area around our coastline, to cover this an Orion is on permanent SAR standby. Over the years many rescues have been achieved. Probably one of the most notable was the location in Jan 1997 of the upturned hull of Tony Bullimore's yacht, 1500 miles south of Perth in the Great Southern Ocean under less than favourable weather conditions.

What of the future? On 30May2008 I attended a function at RAAF Base Edinburgh to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the arrival of the Orions at Edinburgh. It is planned to replace the Orion fleet by the year 2018 (Project Air 7000) with a mix of unmanned and manned aircraft, probably a derivative of the Global Hawk and the 737 based P-8A MMA Poseidon. Until then upgrades to the AP-3Cs will continue as new technology becomes available.

Rod Farquhar



The RAAF Strength; First Units, and their locations as at the 8th December 1941 Part 3 – Gordon Birkett

The RAAF First Line Units in Australia

A further 15 first line Squadrons (and of those, less detachments mentioned above) remained on the Australian continent for defence. They were as follows as of the 8th December 1941:

Victoria

- No 5 Squadron with 12 Wirraways (Including **A20-143/ 169/ 183/ 189/ 190/ 191/ 210/285/288/376**) and 3 Moth Minors at Laverton (Coded **E** pre-war)
- No 6 Squadron Detachment (4 Hudsons) at Laverton (Coded **F** pre-war)



An underside shot of a RAAF 6Sqn Hudson A16-57 in 1940. RAAF Official

New South Wales and ACT

- No 4 Squadron (11 Wirraways **A20-103/104/106/160/163/173/175/176/207/208 & 423**, and three Moth Minors (**A21-29/30/31**)) at Canberra (Coded **D** pre-war)
- No 6 Squadron (10 Hudsons (**A16-5/35/37/42/46/56/57/73/74/99**) and Moth Minor **A21-19**) at Richmond, including a detachment of 4 aircraft at Laverton Vic (Coded **F** pre-war)
Reinforcement to 1 Sqn Malaya 03/01/42 (**A16-35/37/42/56**) Reinforcement to 2Sqn NEI 03/01/42 (**A16-46/57/73/74/99**)
- No 9 Squadron (11 Seagull/Walrus) at Richmond, with an additional 5 ship detachments afloat (Coded **J** or carried Serial **side number** when afloat pre-war)
- No 22 Squadron (17 Wirraways including **A20-39/51/92/96/198/199 /315/316 /349/350**) and 4 Moth Minors (**A21-1/3/32/38**) at Richmond (Coded **S** pre-war)



A picture of two of 4 Squadron Wirraways and the three DH Moth Minors) seen in their hanger at Canberra, ACT during late 1941. Strange camouflage scheme on the right Moth! RAAF Official via Buz

Queensland

- No 23 Squadron with 14 Wirraways (**A20-88/ 94/ 100/ 109/ 115/ 116/ 128/ 129/ 130/ 154/155/ 290/ 317/318/320**), 3 Moth Minors (**A21-7/8/24**) and 4 Hudsons (**A16-3/38/47/111**) at Archerfield (Coded **T** pre-war)
- No 24 Squadron with 14 Wirraways; (**A20-66/ 71/ 128/154/ 156/ 177/ 178/ 179/ 303/ 304/ 319/ 321/ 436 & 437**), 9 Hudsons (**A16-7*/12/13/18/34/38/39/47/91**), Fairey Battle (**L5794**) and 3 Moth Minors (**A21-25/26/27**) at Townsville, pending transfer of 10 to Rabaul (Coded **U** pre-war) Asterisk marked serials to 13Sqn mid December 1941

- No 11 Squadron's 4 S23 Empire Flying Boats impressed from QANTAS located at Bowen and Darwin.

Western Australia

- No 25 Squadron with 18 Wirraways (**A20-110/ 111/ 112/ 113/ 114/ 123/ 124/ 125/ 127/ 151/ 152/ 184/ 185/ 186/ 188/ 195/ 196/ 197**) and 3 Moth Minors (**A21-9/12/13**) at Pearce (Coded V pre-war)



A Hudson of 14Sqn and a Wirraway of 25Sqn circa December 1941: RAAF Official

- No 14 Squadron (With 12 Hudsons **A16-7/ 22/ 28/29/ 30/ 36/ 45/ 59*/ 60/ 62/ 95/113/ & 116** at Pearce and a detachment at Albany, WA. (Coded was **P** pre-war) Those underlined issued off to 151MU RAF Singapore 19/12/41. Asterich to 13 Sqn RAAF 1/42. Replaced by **A16-101/104/ 115/ 119/121/ 122/124/125/ 135/136/ 144/ 147 & 148** in late December 1941)

A roundup of other RAAF 1st line Units abroad

This summation would not be complete without mentioning three further Squadrons and one Ambulance Unit on the RAAF's Order of Battle at this time.

- No 3 Squadron RAAF, (Coded **CV-*** post 12/41) then based in the Western Desert with 18 Curtiss Tomahawks (re-equipping with 18 Curtiss Kittyhawk Mk1/1a's during late December 1941 as our first true Kittyhawk Squadron)
- No 10 Squadron RAAF, (coded **RB-***) equipped with 9 Short Sunderland Flying Boats in the UK. This Squadron would become the longest overseas serving RAAF Squadron in WW2

- No 9 Squadron detachments afloat on HMAS Westralia (**A2-14**, with **A2-11** being returned from Colombo damaged.), HMAS Manoora (**A2-5**, later transferred to HMS Leander in May 42), HMAS Australia (**L2327**), HMAS Canberra (**Walrus L2293** and **A2-22**), HMAS Perth (**L2319** from 24/12/41 and lost with her), and HMAS Hobart (Nil, possibly loaned RNFAA)
- No 1 Aerial Ambulance Unit, Middle East with 3 Aircraft (**DH-86's A31-3/7/8**)



RAAF DH-86 A31-7 Source: RAAF



Curtiss Kittyhawk Mk1 AK581 of No3 Squadron RAAF Middle East December 1941

Gordon R Birkett @2007Vers4

gordy@adf-serials.com

On This Day

- 4 Jul 1941 Acting Wing Commander H. Edwards, VC Acting Wing Commander H. Edwards, No. 105 Squadron, Bomber Command, RAAF, originally from Fremantle, Western Australia, wins the Victoria Cross in a raid on Bremen.
- 7 Jul 1956 Last RAAF transports return from Korea. The last Australian servicemen did not depart Korea until 1957.
- 9 Jul 1943 3 and 450 Squadrons RAAF and eight RAN corvettes involved in the allied invasion of Sicily Known as Operation Husky the invasion of Sicily was the second largest undertaken in Europe during the Second World War, Overlord being the largest. The operation involved 180,000 troops and 2,590 ships.
- 12 Jul 1943 Beaufort A9-225 100 SQN FLGOFF John Clifton Davis (pilot), FLTSGT Geoffrey Raymond Emmett (Observer), SGT William Thomas Brain (WAG) and SGT George Collins (WAG). A9-225 failed to return to Gurney after a reconnaissance mission near Rabaul. The aircraft was shot down near Rabaul by a US Navy Liberator. Three crew survived the crash and were spotted in a life raft but were never recovered and all were presumed to have been killed on or around 12 Jul 1943.
- 22 Jul 1938 Australian National War Memorial opened at Villers-Bretonneux, France Opening of the Australian National War Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, France. This Memorial lists the names of 11,000 Australian missing from the fighting around Villers-Bretonneux.
- 26 Jul 1940 Formation of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) The RAAFNS was established in response to the need for a greater number of nursing personnel as the RAAF underwent a rapid expansion early in the war. Membership of the RAAFNS expanded from 45 in December 1940 to 616 in December 1945. The service was disbanded at the end of the war, but in 1948 a peace-time service was formed.
- 6 Aug 1945 First atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Hiroshima was chosen as the target for the dropping of the first atomic bomb as it had been, to that point, untouched by United States air raids. It was believed that attacking a hitherto untouched city would demonstrate the awesome power of atomic weapons. The bomb was dropped by a United States B29 bomber nicknamed Enola Gay and was estimated to have killed some 140,000 people by August 1946.
- 13 Aug 1914 Establishment of the Australian Red Cross Establishment of the Australian Red Cross to raise funds to purchase comfort supplies for Australian service personnel overseas. The Australian Red Cross was established by Lady Helen Munro-Ferguson.
- 13 Aug 1940 Air Crash in Canberra The crash killed three United Australia Party ministers and the Chief of General Staff.

Thank you to Dean and his aircrew losses research, the Australian War Memorial's "This Month" and the RSL Diary for dates for this month's On this Day segment- Jan

If you have something for the newsletter or would like to submit an article, query or image, please use the following link:

<http://www.adf-serials.com/contact>
