

HISTORY
OF
No. 11 REPAIR AND SALVAGE UNIT
ON THE OCCASION
OF IT'S
SECOND ANNIVERSARY
FROM DATE OF INCEPTION 1ST DECEMBER 1942
to
1ST DECEMBER 1944

Wing Commander,
(C.R.TAYLOR)
Commanding Officer.

PREFACE

In every man's life there comes a time when memories of past experiences and associates bring a feeling of satisfaction and mutual content. These experiences commence with school days and follow on perhaps, with days of compatible employment in a civil capacity, but more than anything else, one's service life, especially in War Time leaves indelible traces that somehow can never be forgotten.

We in this Unit have been exceptionally close associates for the last two years and during that time most of us have formed friendships that will remain to our last days. In addition, our adventures in operational and non-operational areas have been somewhat unique and it is for these reasons it was decided to place on record for each and everyone of you an unofficial general history of our Unit from inception date to the present time, as a memento to our second anniversary.

Our Unit has proved itself under all circumstances, some of which at times have tried us to the limit of our ability and endurance, but it is to your credit that always, without exception, we have combated and overcome these problems.

I, as your Commanding Officer, can assure you that no Officer could wish for a better team of men and comrades with which to do an efficient operational task, and my one desire is that you accept my sincere and grateful thanks for the privilege of knowing and working with you.

C.R. TAYLOR
(Wing Commander.)
Commanding Officer.

On the First day of DECEMBER 1942, this Unit, given the title of No. 11 Repair and Salvage Unit, was formed at MT. DRUITT, New South Wales, the camp site being situated about one and a half miles east of ST. MARYS, New South Wales.

Headquarters was established at an old brick building located on elevated ground, overlooking the undulating pasture lands surrounding it. The structure was of three stories and tower, from afar the grand old building with its square and turreted tower, set in a courtyard of trees looked very much like an ancient castle and from the time of our arrival, to the time of our departure, it was known as the "Castle" with the usual prefix.

The advance party consisted of 5 airmen moving in on the 1st December, 1942. Of the 5 airmen two were N.C.O.'s namely SGT. BARRS G.E. and SGT. JOHNS R.F., who gave themselves the titles of C.O. and Adjutant respectively. The self appointed ranks were not to be carried for long, for on the 9th DECEMBER, 1942, the Commanding Officer F/LT. KERR arrived and took over the command of the Unit at MT. DRUITT.

During the month of December, there were posted to the Unit, the following Officers:- F/O. W.C. CLIFTON (3192) Senior Equipment Officer, P/O. H. STEPHENSON (6219) Adjutant, P/O. L.H. WOODFORD (412045) Junior E.O., F/O W.J. WYNNE (2011) Accounting Officer, P/O E.D. FISHER (266052) Cypher Officer.

The Unit strength at this period was Personnel 6 Officers and 46 other ranks and Mechanical Transport 10 vehicles.

December proved a very hot and trying month, comforts had been left behind at old established Units. The Mess was in the basement and tables common to all ranks. The "Castle" was the scene of all Unit activities, the early workings of the Unit were planned there and everyone ate and slept there. Mosquitoes charged around in mass formation and without nets it was almost impossible for anyone to sleep. The officers' Ante-room was the office of the Commanding Officer and the officers would sit at night on boxes etc. telling stories of the past and relating hopes of the future.

JANUARY, 1943 brought to the Unit three additional officers, namely, P/O. R.J. COLE (6772) Engineer Officer, F/LT.L. ELLAS (3736), Medical Officer, P/O W. ALLEN (117550) Transport Officer.

Very little progress in the formation of the Unit was made until FEBRUARY of that year, when an excellent strip (Satellite to Richmond) was completed. During this month the Unit was visited by Wing Commander S. de B. GRIFFITHS Senior Administrative Staff Officer of No. 5 Maintenance Group, who was the first to land on the MT. DRUITT strip flying a Ryan Monoplane.

Our first Salvage job was completed on the 15th FEBRUARY 1943, an R29 aircraft had crashed, this was salvaged and transported to Richmond. Unit strength at the end of February was Personnel - 9 Officers and 133 other ranks; Transport 10 vehicles. At this period Unit material was being housed in Tents, workshops or which there were two being prepared as far as available timber would permit, were for general engineering purposes. Personnel were housed under canvas in the main camp and erection and building up of Unit stores were the chief undertakings. The original plans of the Unit's set up were based upon the necessity of dispersion and according to these

plans a camp site was selected' about a mile and a half from the "Castle". Water mains were laid, kitchen and storehouse were soon in course of erection. On the eighth day of MARCH 1943, after all necessary buildings had been completed, airmen were moved to the new camp site.

During this month aircraft A9..230 and A3..58 were salvaged, A9..143, A9..141 and A9.112 were allotted to this Unit for 240 hourly inspection and incorporation of orders. At last we felt that something was being done, but lack of technical stores and necessary transport retarded the work of the Unit. W/CDR, H. VETCHER visited MT. DRUITT on 15th MARCH 1943.

April brought changes and greater progress, A46-54-9-108 and 16..214 were allotted for repairs, A20-469 and A9-266 were salvaged, whilst 240 hourly inspections were completed on aircraft A46..63 and A9..181. It was during this month that the Unit distinguished itself in using the first RAAF, Unit to establish a camp for the training of guard dogs. Six dogs were posted to the Unit on 22nd April, 1943. These dogs proved reliable in guarding Unit property and replacing guards, that application for more was made. Eventually No. 5 Maintenance Group took over all dogs, approximately 150 from the Army Dog Training Centre at KALGROVE and based them upon this Unit. These canines were moved from Unit to Unit in a similar manner as the movement of personnel. History cards recording numbers, names, medical records and assessment of usefulness, daily ration reports including number of dogs on strength and ration necessities were submitted. War dogs in the first place were loaned to the services by their respective owners and in the event of a dog dying, the original owner was advised of the decease. One example of such a report is shown below:-

"Dear Madam/Sir,

Re War Dog Tony.

It is regretted that war dog number 378 (Tony) died whilst at his post, 19th September, 1943. The dog has proved himself an excellent guard and was valued highly by this Unit.

(signed) Commanding Officer"

Later on in the year it was decided to transfer the dog training centre to Marrangaroo, New South Wales and on the 29th September, 1943 the movement was completed.

On the 20th day of April, 1943 SI/DR. C.R. TAYLOR took over the command of the Unit from F/LT KERR and the former was to see us through our periods of success and disappointments on the Mainland and through the New Guinea campaign. Additional Officers posted to us were F/O R.F. HARTNESSL, Engineer Officer and F/'0 G.W. CLAMPETT, Unit Stores Officer. At this period something like organisation began to take shape and everyone was, as early as then, looking forward to the complete formation of the Unit and an early move abroad, very few imagined that they would still be at MT. DRUITT 6 months afterwards.

The officer's Mess was functioning very nicely, F/O. L.E. WOODFORD proved himself a very capable Bar Officer, messing was excellent, so much so that visitors were more numerous and the reception given by the Unit was being recognised as First Class. Towards the close of April, F/O G.W. CLAMPETT Senior Stores Officer was posted to the Unit, Geof or "Screaming Skull" as he was often called, proved himself a distinct asset, sociable and a good fellow. He had peculiar characteristics, one of which was for him to procure and have around him every possible medicine available to aid in maintaining his good health. His abode was

likened to a Chemist Shop, there were eye drops, tubes of potions, cough medicines, pills of various types, powder galore and numerous other dopes. Geof was to be with us for many months and Unit officers could tell many interesting stories of his eccentricities and romantic escapades.

The 1st day of MAY 1943 brought the posting of F/O. W. C. CLIFTON, who was posted to No. 1 R.P.P. During the month A9-277 was undergoing field repairs by a party at Coffs Harbour. SGT. MOODE being N.C.O. in charge. A9-293 was salvaged at Camden and A29..308 ..29-309 and A9-315 were salvaged at Braidwood.

The latter salvage incident was a most difficult problem, much rain had fallen during the period and all aircraft had crashed in swampy country. Every WT. vehicle became bogged, necessitating the use of other devices, a bullock team was procured and with it's aid all aircraft were eventually retrieved.

Another incident worthy of note was the movement of a detachment consisting of 2 officers, F/O HARTNELL, and F/O WOODFORD, together with 55 other ranks, to COOLMAN, Queensland on the 31st MAY 1943. This detachment was to work as a small R.S.U. in it's entirety, working in co-operation with No. 3 A.D. Amberley. A particular good job performed by this party was the salvage by F/SGT GEALE and party, of an Anson which crashed at Heron Island off the North east coast of Australia. From this time onwards, whilst on the mainland, the Unit operated over an area bounded in the north by Heron Island and to the south, Moruya on the south east coast of New South Wales. Unit strength at this period was Personnel - 10 officers and 330 other ranks, Transport - 22 vehicles.

About this time the organisation created within the Unit, for the expedient salvage of damaged aircraft was running to perfection. Upon the receipt of a signal directing the salvage of an aircraft, a siren was operated, calling to the Castle the Forward Engineer Officer and N.C.O. in charge of salvage duty crew, arrangements were then made for the movement of the salvage party and the preparation of necessary tentage, messing and salvage gear for that movement. With maps, details of roads, bridges, fuel dumps and staging centres, the party would proceed on their journey. It was an order that salvage parties were to be on their way not more than one hour from the time of receipt of the original signal. Special stress was laid upon the necessity of keeping contact daily and irrespective of locality or distance apart, contact had to be made with the Unit at least once daily.

On the night of 1st of JULY 1943, the worst transport accident experienced by the Unit took place at Bulli Pass New South Wales. Transport, consisting of a tender and a 4 wheeled trailer were proceeding to Bulli Pass rifle range on salvage duties under the command of F/O ALLEN, when the accident occurred. It was whilst proceeding down this very steep pass that the transport got out of control and collided with several obstacles on the roadside, coming to rest with the tender lying on it's side. There were 12 airmen seated in the tender amongst salvage gear, jacks and tool boxes. As a result of the accident the tender capsized and altogether there was no one seriously hurt, most suffered from shock and minor injuries. The finding of the Court of Inquiry was that the accident was due, in the main, to the bad corrugations of the road surface at the point of the pass, causing the vehicle to jump out of gear at a time when it's speed would not permit the re-engaging of gears. From this accident it was realised that the sending of salvage parties out at night time, unless under urgent circumstances, was not warranted owing to the added risk to life and transport.

At this stage, July 1943, all sections were functioning exceptionally well, the technical side was more than capable of handling any work allotted them, the workshops were a model of orderliness, a good deal of credit for the excellent work accomplished and team spirit created was due to the untiring efforts of Warrant Officer MCKENZIE K.C., F/SGT CLARKE N.L., and F/SGT HOBSON G.L., F/LT CLAMPETT and F/O WOODFORD were doing an excellent job, stores were pouring in and the general administration of this section was very good indeed. Knowing full well that the future of an R.S.U. depended to a large extent upon the gear obtained, the good work of this section was appreciated.

During the months of June and July 1943, a considerable amount of work was given the Unit to undertake. Salvaged jobs completed were:- A27-224 and A9-285 at BUNDABERG; A53-12 at BULLI; A9-325 at MORUYA; A46-10 at STRATHPINE; A20-310 at ROCKHAMPTON; A29-83 at BUNDABERG; A29-377 at ALBION PARK; A27-90 at GULGONG; A29-261 at WILLIAMTOWN; Anson W12638 at FOSTER. A 240 hourly inspection was completed on Vengeance A27-2 and Beaufort A9-325 was allotted for repair. During this period the movement of salvage parties was extensive. On one occasion all three parties were in the field at the one time, at points approximately 1300 miles apart.

During the month of July F/O A.G. COLE (1145) Engineer Officer and P/O G.S. SMYTH (1502) Forward Engineer Officer were posted from and to the Unit respectively. Unit strength at this time was - Personnel - 10 Officers and 383 other ranks. Transport - 27 vehicles.

It was about this time that SGT. COGSWELL, Aerodrome Defence Instructor, was posted to the Unit. Immediately upon his arrival, he commenced the erection of a Commando Course, ropes were strung across the creek which was situated about a half a mile from the "CASTLE" and ropes were draped from trees, trenches and hazards were prepared and this was followed by extensive training in unarmed defence, rifle and bayonet exercise. From this period to the 9th October, 1943, the Unit completed repairs, modifications, engine changes and salvage of nineteen aircraft. One particular plane is worth, of mention and that is the Northrop DELTA A61-1 allotted this Unit for repairs. This aircraft was the original aircraft used by the famous explorer LINCOLN ELLSWORTH on his Antarctic expedition. At last, the much awaited signal arrived, advising the Unit of a pending move, this was the 13th October 1943. Within a matter of hours the Unit was instructed to have all gear deposited at No. 9 Glebe Wharf, Sydney within four days and to be prepared to march out. By working airmen in shifts throughout day and night, the task of moving the Unit's gear by road over a distance of 31 miles was completed within the stipulated time. Then followed a period of indecision, plans were changed over night and method of conveyance to our next destination was in doubt.

The 22nd October 1943 was to be a big day in the history of the Unit as it was on that day that an advance party consisting of 1 Officer and 19 other ranks from our Goolman detachment, left Amberley by air for NADZAB NEW GUINEA. The party comprised F/LT R.F. HARTNELL Officer in charge F/SGT GEALE, CPL. PEARCE, CPL UOD, L.A.C.'S LEAR, YOUNG, WALKER, CHAPMAN, ZUBER, BARNES, McPHAIL, SLEEP, DAVIDSON, BOYLE, GARDINER, PASCOE, RIDLEY, REASTON, BELLINGHAM. SGT. COGSWELL (A.D.1) arrived at Amberley from MT. DRUITT on the day of departure and joined the party. The balance of the Goolman party in charge of F/O WOODFORD, arrived at MT. DRUITT, returning to the Unit in time for it's pending movement. This movement is

worthy of praise to all members concerned and is an example of perfect co-operation and untiring effort against almost impossible odds.

On the same day as the advance party left Amberley for New Guinea, we at Mt. Druitt said goodbye to the old place, goodbye to happy times, goodbye to the many trying days of mud and non-operational work and goodbye to old friends. It was a great day, the airmen overburdened with war accoutrements marched proudly to the sound of the Unit's band and with all Mt. Druitt's inhabitants there to see them off with salutations and hand waving's, we entrained at Mt. Druitt in record time, commencing our journey to distant lands.

The first staging, Bradfield Park (2 E.D.) was not so far away, there we arrived 494 strong on the evening of the 22nd, October 1943, feeling like strangers among strange people. Our lads were tough, they were past the stages of Rookie camp and although well disciplined, did not settle in too well to the ritual adopted at No. 2 E. D. Brandford Park were unprepared to accommodate and to provide the necessities for a Unit of this type. Airmen were barracked over a wide area, food was not up to standard. One hut devoid of telephone was allotted the Unit for Headquarters. During the whole of the period which we were to spend there, we felt that we were unwelcome and each day we wished for the order of onward movement. Numerous changes in our Officer's strength was taking place about this time, Transport Officer F/O ALLEE was posted to No. 1 R.P.P. for transport duties and two additional Officers joined us, namely F/O D. S. HURST, Transport and F/O T. HALLICK, Cypher Officer.

During our sojourn at Bradfield Park, we were not altogether idle. Issuing personnel with tropical clothing was completed and after learning, to our disappointment, that we were not to sail immediately for overseas, but that our next staging would be at COOMINYA, Queensland, arrangements were made for the loading of rail trucks of the Unit's gear deposited at Glebe Wharf, Sydney. This work was completed by our own personnel, and guards were despatched with each 10 trucks consigned. Not until the 19th November 1943 did higher authority decide to move us further afield.

The advance party consisting of F/LT. W.J. WYNNE and 69 other ranks departed Bradfield Park for Coominya on the 19th November 1943. The following day F/O T. HALLICK and 32 others left Bradfield Park by rail and road for SANDGATE, this party was to be the off-loading party at MEANDAE siding. Two officers and 17 other ranks, F/O C.S. SMYTH Officer in charge, departed Bradfield Park for Coominya by road convoy on the 21st November 1943. On the 26th November 1943 the main party under command of the Commanding Officer S/LDR.C.R. TAYLOR, departed Bradfield Park for Coominya. All movements were carried out expeditiously and without incidents. Arrangements for receiving and storage of the Unit gear at MEANDAE were totally insufficient. This gear, approximately 2000 ships tons, was dumped in an open paddock, sodden with recent rainfall and without any cover whatsoever. The camping facilities for our off-loading party were a disgrace, filthy beyond description. The Officer in charge of the party refused to house his troops there, necessitating there being convoyed to and from Sandgate each day. The Unit soon settled down at Coominya, where there was only one building which housed the administration section. Prior to arriving at this out of the way spot, we were advised that water for drinking and washing could be drawn from two dams located on the spot. This water proved to be useless, cattle being allowed to use the same for drinking, however we were able to locate an excellent well between Coominya and Lowood.

On 4th December 1943, Staff Officers of No. 77 Wing visited the Unit on general inspection. The chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshall G. JONES, O.B., C.B.E., D.F.C., visited the Unit about this period. Whilst at Coominya, our troops were being trained in the use of firearms, hand grenades and explosives. Daily route marches of up to 16 miles were common, eventually when the time arrived for onward movement the troops were fighting fit. Storms were prevalent, on three occasions the camp was flooded and tents blown down, in some parts of the camp water was a foot deep and it was during one of these storms that two trees were blown down over the tent of F/O T. HALLICK and F/O.L. WOODFORD, fortunately no one was hurt. At Meandah the off-loading party were busy re-crating Unit gear where cases had been damaged. At Coominya, F/LT W.J. STEVENSON Medical Officer and P/C. W.F. POTTS Engineer Officer were posted to us, whilst F/LT ELLIS was posted to No. 1 B.T.T. for Medical duties.

On the 25th day of December 1943, the first party consisting of one Sgt. and 32 others marched out. proceeding to Archerfield for onward movement to New Guinea, where they were to join a works Unit at NADZAB. After twelve months of hope and anticipation, January 1944 brought to the Unit that for which we had been working for so long. On the 13th January the Unit moved to Yeerongpilly Army Camp, and on the 17th January departed from Yeerongpilly for Meandah Wharf where No 11 Repair & Salvage Unit (strength 10 Officers and 454 other ranks) under the command of S/Ldr C.R. Taylor embarked for overseas service.

After 11 days of uneventful sea voyage, aboard one of America's liberty ships, we first sighted LAE, New Guinea, the location of disembarkation. Looking at the strange land of green clad mountains terraced one behind the other, one wondered what future it held for us. Our journey from the mainland to Lae ended on the 28th day January, 1944, the ship was tied up to the wharf and from then onwards for four days everyone of the Unit's personnel worked all hours of the day and night unloading, transporting, personnel and stores to Nadzab which was approximately 33 miles inland.

There were numerous trucks waiting to take the valuable gear from shipboard and unloading of the cargo commenced almost immediately on arrival. Unfortunately someone seemed to have overlooked the fact that a gangway was necessary to enable the troops to land, necessitating undue delay, troops having to wait about four hours before a gangway could be constructed and put to use. Troops were then moved to Nadzab, with the exception of one Officer and 55 airmen of the Transport Section, who were detailed to assist in off-loading, guard Unit's property and to relieve the drivers of transport. Where possible an airman was placed on every truck leaving the ship. Owing to lack of information of route and location and the fact that many Allied trucks were used, much confusion existed. The Unit was not responsible for this movement of road transport, however the experience proved valuable and future moves will be carried out more efficiently as the result of lessons learned on this occasion.

In preparing the new camp at Nadzab, much thought was exercised, hygiene ranking first, kitchens and latrines were made flyproof, showers were erected, efficient grease traps and soakage pits constructed and every tent had it's floor-boards raised two feet from the ground. The special precautions taken proved to be efficient, resulting in a minimum of Malaria, no scrub typhus or snake bites and very little Dengue fever. We were very proud of our small sick parades, this being due to the strict hygiene discipline and co-operation of the troops. Three weeks after arrival at Lae the camp was erected and operations commenced at the Working Area. The working area was four miles from the Camp Site and an extensive building programme was undertaken, buildings were constructed, power house and lines were erected, plant and gear installed. When

completed, this extensive collection of workshops and stores were second to none on the island.

During the first three months of operations at Nadzab, much good work was accomplished, the hazardous accomplishments of the salvage section being particularly note worthy.

The arrival of this Unit marked the first salvage operations attempted in the Markham area which was a vast expanse of swamp country covered with dense Kunai plains freely interspersed with swiftly running rivers. -

Preliminary observations and investigations were anything but optimistic. ANGAU Officials, mostly men who had spent years in New Guinea, were unanimous in expressing the opinion that salvage was an impossibility beyond the distance of thirty miles at most, and then only in a north westerly direction. The only track through the valley was a native path through the Kunai, which it was considered could be negotiated by jeep, but only in the dry season and not further than KAIPIT a distance of little over 60 miles. Subsequent events were to demonstrate that this opinion, although given in good faith, with the object of helping the new comers to avoid unnecessary hardships, was erroneous. The Unit's first detail was not long in appearing, a Vultee aircraft crashed in an, accessible area surrounded by swamp, approximately 50 miles west of Nadzab. Information received from the Unit to which the aircraft was attached indicated that it was practically impossible to reach the spot. The crew had been rescued by a combined force of native police and air force personnel who also reported that the natives in the locality were unfriendly. It was later found that these natives were harbouring enemy troops, which resulted in three of the ring leaders being hung. However, adopting the principal of trying anything once, it was decided to make an attempt to salvage at least portion of the aircraft's instruments. Accordingly, on the morning of the morning of the fifth of February, a small party set out from Nadzab in a Command Car, under the guidance of a Police Boy. The party comprised the Forward Engineer Officer F/O. POTTS, F/SGT GEALE and LAC's RIDLEY and BELLINGHAM. The first obstacle was the swiftly running ERAP River. Being assured by the guide that it was no more than knee deep, the party attempted to cross in the car, but unfortunately the river bed had changed considerably since the guide had last waded through it, with the result that the bonnet disappeared under the water, the engine flooded and the car commenced to sink rapidly as the current washed the river bed away from under it. By the time the windscreen was becoming submerged, the leader of the party decided that it was no time for niceties, so slipped into gear and trod on the starter, when the vehicle slowly emerged from the torrent with occupants clinging to it by tooth and nail. It was at this time firmly resolved (a) never to cross another river without first wading it, (b) to complete water proof of salvage vehicles. A further 16 miles were covered through Kunai grass varying from 6 to 10 feet high, freely dotted with saplings and palms which were overcome by the simple process of knocking them down with the front bumper bar. Eventually the going became impossible for any vehicle except an amphibious tank, so the party left the car, loaded themselves with provisions, arms etc., and proceeded on foot. Forty-five minutes of slipping and squelching through the sticky mud brought the village of TERARIN. sometimes called TALLERING, in sight and here carriers were sought for the rest of the journey. Preconceived ideas concerning the "Dark Angels" and "Friendly Fuzzy-Wuzzies" of New Guinea received something of a set-back here, for the natives were by no means willing to carry, and gave no frenzied demonstrations or affections. After considerable discussion, much waving of arms and one or two oaths, a team of carriers were obtained, nearly all women and children with only able-bodied man. This worthy,

after carrying for twenty minutes, suddenly announced his anxiety to "Go back along a village and Pushpush Mary" and disappeared into the Leaving the erring one fulfil his domestic obligations, the party proceeded along the almost invisible trail through dense Kunai in which the heat was terrific, crossing numerous creeks and rivers by means of single pole bridges, many of them overgrown with moss. The Flight Sergeant after taking a look at one rather slimy and slender hole. elected to cross the creek on foot, but after taking two steps he disappeared to the shoulders in the slime and mud of the creek bed and was only extricated after considerable difficulty, leaving behind most of his gear. Two hours thirty minutes after leaving Terrain, the party walked into CHIVASING village, having covered approximately half the distance to their objective. If the reception at Terrarin had been cool, that at Chivasing was positively frigid.

Furtive glances and scowls were cast towards the travellers, whose last illusions were by this time shattered. The party was not aware that the villagers were in the habit of hiding enemy troops or they may not have squatted in the centre of the village and ate a hearty meal. The carriers were even more difficult to obtain here, but at last, by devious means a team was organised and the second half of the journey commenced. The party soon discovered that the first half had been a picnic jaunt. Immediately on leaving Chivasing, the trail plunged into a veritable tunnel through the Kunai which in places reached 15 feet high and was seldom lower than 11 feet. Bent almost double, drenched with perspiration and frequently tripped by roots in the semi-gloom, the travellers hurried on to keep up with the scurrying natives, whose one desire appeared to be to get the job over as quickly as possible. Dusk was falling as the party came up to the aircraft in the centre of a Kunai field, four hours after leaving Chivasing. Rain started falling while the meal was being consumed and continued without ceasing all night so that in the early morning all were lying in six inches of water. awaiting daylight. The carriers had disappeared immediately after dropping their packs. In the first light of dawn the party set to work on the aircraft and removed the radio gear together with other portable components and instruments and made ready to start back. Every man had a load in the vicinity of 100lbs., after discarding provisions and retaining only arms and water bottles.

The return journey was rendered more difficult by the heavy rain of the previous night and the heavy load carried by each of the party. Fortunately, however, the carriers had been caught in the rain and spent the night in a deserted village along the track, where they were overtaken and the loads distributed amongst them. Where a track had existed on the previous day, it was now replaced by a miniature river, so that the party was compelled to wade through water varying from one to three feet deep, the whole distance to Chivasing, which took considerably more time than the outward trip. Late that night the car was reached to the satisfaction of all concerned and the remainder of the journey completed without mishap. In all, three trips were made to the aircraft and everything of value removed from it, only a mere shell being finally abandoned. Items recovered were Radio receiver, Transmitter, all instruments and engine accessories, oil cooler, magnetos, carburettor, hydraulic gear and controls, to the approximate value of 10000 pounds.

Our salvage parties gained much experience from these excursions up the Markham Valley, aircraft were retrieved from almost impossible locations and transported over territory which necessitated great resourcefulness and initiative to negotiate, there were many inconveniences and hardships and the climatic conditions encountered were a constant danger to the health of the participants.

Administrative control of the Unit up till the middle of June had been exercised more or less harmoniously by both Northern Command and No. 10 Operational Group. During the period of February, March and April, the Unit's record of aircraft maintenance was as follows:-

AIRCRAFT REPAIRED

5 Vengeance
17 Kittyhawks
4 Boomerangs

ROUTINE INSPECTIONS

6 Kittyhawks
1 Hudson

ENGINE CHANGES & REPAIRS

7 Vengeance
14 Kittyhawk

AIRCRAFT CONVERTED

6 Vengeance
1 Kittyhawk
1 Wirraway
1 Boomerang

FIELD RETRIEVALS

2 Kittyhawks
2 Boomerangs

This record of production was accomplished only after long hours of high pressure work, preformed by the troops who were subject to the weakening effect of working under tropical conditions. The Unit was given a period to complete a programme, ensuring the squadrons of having a maximum number of aircraft serviceable on a certain date, when a landing was to be made which RAAF. Flying Units would be given an important task to perform during these operations. The landing was made and due to the excellent work of the RAAF and all concerned, was entirely successful. Squadron Commanders were not slow in showing their appreciation of the sustained efforts by this Unit, in efficiently carrying out the task set them. About this time, the excellent co-operation between sections and the smooth working of the Unit, every man of the Unit pulling his weight and the splendid results attained were obvious to all, the officers were very proud of their troops "Esprit de Corp" reigned supreme. We all believe and know that we were the best RAAF Unit of it's kind, operating in New Guinea.

Administrative control of the Unit up to the middle of June 1944 had been exercised more or less harmoniously by both Northern Command and No 10 Operational Group, with a great deal of overlapping, resulting in a large volume of Signals traffic. Allotments of aircraft to and from the Unit were often duplicated as were Engine Allotments. It was obvious early in the month that the input of aircraft for repair would exceed estimates and this became more apparent as the month progressed. The posting of the Senior Engineer Officer, F/LT G.S. SMYTH and the loss of the two Warrant Officers Engineer for medical reasons further increased difficulties, the Junior Engineer Officer being left with only one Warrant Officer Engineer (a recent arrival) to maintain production. Strength of personnel as against establishment compared unfavourably with the previous month. Changes in organisation policy resulted in a veritable deluge of aircraft being allotted to the Unit from forward areas, with the result that at the close of the month approximately 40 aircraft were held in Reserve Pool, which presented a major problem in maintenance. However, despite the difficulties, 50 aircraft were made serviceable as compared with 29 in the previous month and 28 in April. Motor Transport within the area, due to the rough roads and excessive running, demanded much from the Transport section and great credit is due to it's personnel in maintaining the R.A.A.F transport within the area, in good condition. Together with the abnormal maintenance programme, progress was made in other directions, one particular good piece being the

construction of a mobile store, this was the first major job the body builders of the Unit had undertaken and the workmanship was most commendable. Running Transport Section was very busy during the month, for in addition to meeting the essentials of the Unit, calls were made for transport by Air stores Park, 23 M.C.S., 13 Signals Unit, 5 B.P. S.O., and other Units, as needed for movement. The section personnel were settling down well and doing a good job, fully 80% of the Fitter's strength had very little experience of M/T. maintenance, but at this period, a marked improvement was noticeable and the section was functioning efficiently.

The airmen were not content to rest on their laurels as aircraft artisans, but were determined to show the rest of the Units camped in the area something better in the way of sport. March was almost spent, when one, LAC HARDY S.C., decided to form a Gymnasium and with the support of several enthusiasts construction of a really first class boxing ring was completed and extensive training immediately followed. A committee was formed, P/O MARSHALL being elected as President, LAC HARDY proved a hard task master, but due to his untiring efforts and the enthusiasm of the trainees, five or six boys were showing so much promise after only two or three weeks, that a decision was made to run a programme of boxing, inviting outsiders of all services to join in competition. Once weekly the boxing night was held, each show drawing greater audiences, till at one stage a gathering of between 3000 and 4000 was not exceptional. The success in the ring of our boys was outstanding and astounding considering that they were selected from raw material. Amongst them were outstanding lads like L.C. DOHERTY W.H. a budding "Bombardier Wells" game as a fighting cock and a gentleman of the ring, DARCY POLLARD the unbeatable and then there was "Pluto" PECK, LAC GOVER, LAC MASTERS, LAC JIM HAY, LAC, WOLSON and LAC BUNKER, all worthy of praise and exponents of the art of clean fighting. LAC LES GOVER, idolised by the boys, seemed doomed to failure, in the early stages, a dour fighter - in losing on points to CPL STEWART, No. 2 Mobile Works Unit, he put up a great show, for his opponent was considered the best lightweight in the Valley. Bad luck dogged Gover, whether it was because of training efforts to make of him a boxer and not a fighter for his initial success is open to discussion, but we all knew that he was worthy of greater rewards. The boxing provided super entertainment not only of serious and excellent matches, but there were bouts outstanding with humorous entertainment. We all remember wild arm swinging and puffing BERNARD of big moustache fame and the one and only wrestling bout refereed by "Horse" NOLAN, what a show! "Horse", with cigar in mouth, was balling out until he was unable to make a speech. Great days, those, they will live long in our memories. In passing over this interesting period, we cannot give too much praise to F/O Gordon SMYTH, W/C, Wally TURNER, F/SGT "BARGE" PENDERGAST, the Seconds, the Committee and other enthusiasts, all having done a great job and together with the direct participants were responsible in making the events the tremendous success they proved to be.

Despite the difficulties in procuring stock replenishments, due to the move of No. 25 Air Stores Park and the temporary non-functioning of No. 17 Stores Unit, the Stores section was able to fulfil demands, to expedite and complete the scheduled programme.

Previous efforts made to foster the education of troops within the Unit, were beginning to bear fruit, classes at which mathematics etc, were taught, were being held thrice weekly and applicants for correspondence courses were increasing. Welfare too, had a successful month. A Salvation Army Hut was established on the Unit, the opening night attracting approximately 300 airmen. Through contact with the Army Amenities

Service, the Unit Welfare Officer was also able to enrich the entertainment section by having installed a Moving Picture Show. By this time the Unit was well settled in, all sections were functioning efficiently and smoothly, meeting fresh calls made upon them without difficulty.

Rumours were as prevalent as ever of further movement and about the middle of July we were instructed to prepare for such an eventuality. Aircraft under repair at the 1st July consisted of 16 Kittyhawks and 2 Beauforts. In view of the impending Unit move, a large percentage of manpower had naturally to be diverted to the task of dismantling and packing of machines, tools, aircraft parts and all additional work that such a movement entailed. Despite this fact, work on aircraft was maintained almost up to the time of final packing, with the result that only 7 Kittyhawks and 2 Beauforts were handed over to the incoming Unit. Of this number, 5 of the Kittyhawks arrived at this Unit only 4 days before packing was completed. The pressure of a reinforcement Pool containing approximately 40 aircraft proved a serious maintenance problem, in view of the fact that these aircraft had to be constantly dailied, chocked and batteries tested. As this would have proved a burden on the incoming Unit, strenuous efforts were made to have as many of these aircraft from the Pool as possible, with the result that only 13 aircraft remained in the Pool for the Unit taking over, to service.

The Unit Stores Section was particularly busy too, in view of the added volume of work occasioned by the manufacture of standard packing cases, crates and the despatch of repairable components and engines to the Mainland. All aircraft under repair and replacement Pool aircraft were transferred to the incoming Unit. The handover takeover was successfully completed.

In preparation for the move the Medical Section ceased to handle medical evacuations, this function was taken over by the Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit. The evacuation of patients proceeded moderately well, with the exception of stretcher cases. Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining accommodation on aircraft. This resulted in a number of cases remaining in the area for some time. Walking cases were satisfactorily evacuated through normal DAT channels, carrying a fairly high priority. Owing to the lack of facilities and staff, the evacuation of mental cases was a serious problem. With the establishment of the Medical Air Evacuation Transport Unit and the R.A.A.F Ambulance Unit, many of these difficulties were overcome. The organisation could have been improved if the hospitals who evacuated cases from further north had repeated signals to the Unit relevant to the individual patients. During the whole time evacuations were handled, not a signal was received, responsible authorities were advised of this lack of informative signals. The treatment of Malarial breeding areas were constantly under treatment, all sources of water catchment were as far as possible eliminated. Pools of water were sprayed twice weekly with Malarial. The total admissions to the Unit Medical Section and other hospitals totalled 23 in all, of these cases there were 10 Dengue, 3 Clinical Dysentery, 2 Gun shot wounds, a fractured Fibula and an acute appendicitis. A guard sustained a severe wound of the foot when his Thompson Submachine gun accidentally discharged, he was evacuated to the Mainland. A few cases of second degree burns were under treatment, the burns being caused from contact with the sap of a certain tree in the jungle.

Welfare activities were maintained at a high standard, Football, both Australian Rules and Rugby League, were very popular during the month and games were a weekly feature, mostly played against A.I.F. Unites from the Lae area. Those games have engendered an excellent spirit between the services and particularly this Unit. The

A.I.F. teams found much pleasure in visiting the Unit to play on our Sports Ground, which was acknowledged as the best in the Lae Nadzab area. Football jerseys, shorts and boots were obtained in addition to Cricket sets, baseball, volley ball and tennis gear already held. During the month the Education Section made arrangements for a series of six lectures (Phycology) to be delivered by Padre BURROWS of No. 4 Squadron. Those were attended by an average of 30 men throughout the lectures. The strength of the Unit at this period was Officers 10, Airmen 359, Transport 67 vehicles.

By the 1st of August 1944 all aircraft maintenance work and allotments were handed over to No. 1.0 Repair and Salvage Unit detachment at Nadzab. From this time onwards, there was an air of expectancy, everyone hoping for the order to move. No. 10 R. S. U. were unfortunate in arriving at Nadzab at a period when the camp area was being subject to a very heavy rains and instead of being able to invite the relieving Unit to the orderly and neat surroundings we had been used to, we had little more than a sea of mud to offer them. The 9th of August a party of 52 airmen with F/SGT CLARKE N.L.,C.C.O. in charge, proceeded to NOEMFOOR ISLAND by air to assist No. 22 R.S.U. in meeting the abnormal maintenance programme being undertaken by that Unit. The balance of the Unit moved from Nadzab to Lae on the 18th August where a staging camp had been prepared by F/O POTTS and F/O BROWN, pending the ultimate move of the Unit to Noemfoor.

Welfare activities for the greater part of the month was more or less restricted by the movement of the Unit. However, since settling in at Lae, the Army Educational Services gave great assistance in respect of welfare and educational matters. Numerous entertaining and educational films had been shown to our personnel, together with a series of Classical Musical Recitals.

During the month of September, there was a general exodus towards NOEMFOOR, a further 14 airmen of the transport section leaving to join No. 22 R.S.U. The Unit was instructed to organise an advance party of 50 personnel on the 1st September, to proceed to the operational base at NOEMFOOR. The party consisted of F/O POTTS, F/O BROWN and 50 other ranks departed from Lae on the 11th September on route to NOEMFOOR by sea. The camp site at Lae, although built upon rough earth, with very little vegetation, had it's compensations, alongside the camp ran the clear, swift flowing Butioun River which offered many conveniences and entertainment to the troops. Convenient in that it was unnecessary to construct complicated sewerage or drainage systems, everyone washed themselves and their clothing in the perfectly clear river water. There was necessity for shower construction and taking all in all, it proved an ideal staging camp - there was no costly construction and when the time of departure arrived very little time was to be lost on demolition. The period between moves is always an anxious time, troops getting bored and a loss of moral is usually evident, however, with the river along side the camp and the sea only a mile or two away, the troops were generally content and showed an improvement in health.

During the month, due to transport difficulties, it looked as if we might be staged at Lae indefinitely. Determined once more to get the Unit into an operational area, the Commanding Officer in company with the Medical Officer, F/LT STEVENSON, proceeded to the advance parties location at NOEMFOOR and visited the Group Headquarters, where the necessity for movement was stressed. This visit resulted in the immediate instruction being given to the Unit, that with the exception of sufficient personnel remaining at Lae for the handling and guarding of Unit gear during the anticipated sea voyage, the main party was to be prepared to move to NOEMFOOR by air, as such transport became available.

The 13th October saw the departure of the first of the air echelon, the party consisting of 15 Airmen in charge of the Chief Technical Officer, F/LT W. WILSMORE. On the 18th and 10th of October, the movement of the main party was completed, leaving behind at Lae, F/O Marshall with approximately 100 airmen as the rear party and the major part of transport and heavy gear. Many stories had emanated from the coral island- we were told that the island was poor in timber, unsuitable for camp construction and water was difficult to procure and of poor standard. The resourcefulness of the advance party proved these rumours to be false, they had selected an ideal spot most suitable for drainage and an excellent well of almost pure water was located, providing ample water for all uses. The erection of messes, kitchen, canteen and post office, which were embraced under the one roof, was an excellent job. Owing to the difficulties of procuring timber and other essential items from the ship, woodwork was made up from bush timber and those of the advance party who were responsible for its construction are worthy of commendation.

Looking back to that period of transition which embraced many moves, much credit is due to F/Lt. Woodford, who was responsible for the compilation of logistics and movement and for the smooth transit of troops and gear. Up to this period approximately 30 aircraft had been used to convey the Unit to NOEMFOOR, the job had been done so well that everything needed to place the Unit on an operational footing was to hand and seven days after the arrival of the main party we were fully operational and ready to receive aircraft.

Again we must thank the advance party for the excellent work accomplished at the working area, much heavy work had been accomplished by the above party, under the extreme heat of a tropical sun and torrential down-pours. Almost immediately we began to gather around us our lost children, F/Sgt CLARKE and his party were soon back to their Unit, followed by F/O Carson and his Oxygen Party, and they were glad to be back at their home Unit again. Mention must be made of the good work performed by F/Sgt Clarke's party attached to No.22 R.S.U. who, whilst with that Unit, completed the following aircraft maintenance:

240 hourly and engine changes	14
Engine changes	2
Major Airframe Repairs	3
Minor Repairs	4
Total	23

As a result of this effort and the splendid co-operation shown with No. 22 R.S.U. , S/Ldr De la Rue of that Unit showed appreciation of the parties efforts by sending the following message to our Commanding Officer, "From the time your detachment arrived at this Unit until the present date, the personnel concerned have shown the greatest respect for Officers and N.C.O.'s of this Unit, and have co-operated to the fullest extent in all phases of this Unit's work". "The work of the Senior N.C.O. has been beyond reproach, F/Sgt Clarke proving himself reliable and efficient, and altogether the detachment has certainly set a standard well worthy and in keeping with the traditions of No. 11 R.S.U."

The work accomplished, was carried out under difficulties especially during August and September, adverse weather, heat and glare of the coral surface being very much to the fore, and is most trying at the best of times. On the 23rd October, advise

was received from Headquarters that three Officers from the Unit had been promoted with temporary rank, they were the Commanding Officer, S/Ldr. C.R. Taylor to Wing Commander, F/O J. Wilsmore to F/Lt and F/O Woodford to F/Lt, those taking effect from 1st July 1944. The promotions were well merited, officers and airmen of all sections tendered their congratulations. Early in November, construction at both the camp site and the working area was almost completed, coral roads had been laid, road fences erected, showers etc., were in operation and the camp site was an example. The airmen had made themselves very comfortable indeed, with their tent floors of coral and bush constructed furnishings, they had created a pleasant habitation.

Another field for aircraft salvage was added to our long list of aircraft graveyards - this was MIIDDLEBURG ISLAND, lying approximately 200 miles north-west of Noemfoor. A Kittyhawk had crash landed, F/SGT GEALE N.C.O. in charge of retrieval, flew to the scene of the crash to report on the possibilities of salvage. On arrival at the small coral island, as Middleburg proved to be, the aircraft A29/591 was found to be extensively damaged. Two other R.A.A.F. , Kittyhawks had crashed on the same strip but were damaged beyond repair. Owing to the difficulties of obtaining the necessary components, it was decided to use serviceable parts from the two irreparable aircraft, which would enable the A29/591 to be repaired on the spot and flown back to it's base. Following F/SGT GEALE'S report, a party of maintenance personnel proceeded to Middleburg to carry out the necessary repairs. The party consisted of :- Sgt. Dobson G.L., Cpl Quigley J., Cpl Ash J.E., Lac Nicol A.G., Lac Cullingham D., Lac Robertson L.B., and Lac Mahoney C.

And so the second year of the Unit's existence draws to a close. Soon the 1st of December 1944, the second anniversary of the Unit's formation will have come and gone. Repair and Salvage Units were established to carry out a certain Aircraft Maintenance programme and No. 11 Repair and Salvage Unit was the first R.S.U. to accomplish that task. We have done a job and have done it well.

Looking back on the past two years, one cannot but feel that the difficulties and triumphs experienced, welded Airmen and Officers into one big family and when the "Ships sail home again" and we once again don civilian robes, we are going to long to see those comrades of the past.

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SUSTINIO ALAS

"I SUSTAIN THE WINGS"

These two words (Latin) are the literal motto of the Royal Australian Air Force Ground Staff Personnel, those thousands who serve with spanner and spade, as clerk and cook and those whose only tribute must be the honest sweat of their brow. These are the men to whom is owed so much - for they are the basis and foundation of our service, strong, willing and ready to support any load that may be placed upon them. It is to these men, that this dedication is offered.

"I SUSTAIN THE WINGS"

I am the Air Force Technician who makes it possible for flyers to be heroes and heroes to be flyers. I drill and work and flight. I work that others may fly and fight. I fight that I may work to keep them flying. I am the mechanic, the Machinist, the Radio Man, the Armourer, the Observer and the instrument Man. I am a Technician but I fight like a Commando.

I am one of these three, an unbeatable trio, the Plane, the Aircrew and the Ground Crew - each indispensable to the other two. Without one, the Pilot would be a helpless gladiator, the Mane a motionless machine.

When I trained, I chafed at the constant stream of repetition of routine, but now I realise I was learning to act on instinct. I griped at scrubbing, shining and cleaning, and now I realise that neatness means a clean job of every task. An unbuttoned pocket seemed trivial, but now I know a forgotten button might be a forgotten Cotter Pin, and that forgotten Pin may mean a plane destroyed and crew killed. Because of strict training, I am good and I know I am good.

The people at home may never know how important I am, the public may never see my name in print. I am the plodding back man of modern football. I make high scores possible for all Australians. I am the batsman that never carries a bat.

But the Pilot knows me. He knows when he climbs aboard, his plane sits ready. He knows those engines are perfect, the Radio his ears, the Instrument his eyes. That Bomb-timer knows his hits are going to make the target. And when they come back, there is something in their handshake no newspaper could describe, no medal equal. It is the grip of men whose lives depend on ME.

The following is an edited extract of the book "I SUSTAIN THE WINGS" written by, Air Commodore C.R.Taylor, CBE, C.Eng, F.R.Ae.S

FULL SPEED AHEAD VIA TARAKAN

On the 7th May 1945, the Germans surrendered to the Allies and V-E day was celebrated on the 8th. The news was received with great excitement in the Pacific Theatre for it heralded a possible early end to hostilities with Japan.

Early in May, the Main Party of No. 11 R.S.U. commenced its move to Tarakan Island travelling by sea on the Australian Troop Ship 'S.S. Westralia' and a mixture of L.S.T's. provided by the Americans. The journey was uneventful and the movement was completed by 22nd of the month.

Indeed, in his May 1945 Report, Sqn. Ldr. Keir found it

'pleasing to record that this movement was most successful in every respect, resultant of excellent co-operation by all sections concerned'.

Historically, Keir's remarks were in stark contrast with the description of events contained in George Odger's 'Air War Against Japan 1943 – 45' concerning the movement of 1st T.A.F. ground forces involved in the initial landing at Tarakan. According to Odgers.

'the RAAF was in trouble at Tarakan from the start. Because of the faulty loading there was considerable confusion and delay during and after the landing of ground parties'

He also states that

'relatively unessential equipment was unloaded from the landing vessels well in advance of the radar equipment. The base plate of the ground-control interception station was loaded in a different vessel from the rest of the station'.

That this was not the case with No. 11 R.S.U. speaks volumes for the state of efficiency which had been achieved by all ranks following the experiences of repeated packing, movement and unpacking that had occurred between Mt. Druitt, New South Wales and Tarakan, Borneo since the Unit was formed in December 1942. Perhaps 'practice does make perfect' afterall!

The location on Tarakan Island was an entirely new experience for the members of No. 11 R. S.U. and, for that matter, the members of the 1st T.A.F. as a whole.

Hitherto, they had been relatively isolated from civilians as previous operational locations north of Port Moresby in Papua/New Guinea had few, if any, European residents and the indigenous population remained relatively inconspicuous.

Prior to the second world war, Tarakan had been a thriving oil producing centre with a production level of some 6,000,000 barrels of oil per year. Moreover, as it was Dutch territory, being part of the Netherlands East Indies, the local native population had been confronted with a large European presence and a good deal of the European domestic and commercial life-style. Accordingly, the natives were more sophisticated and very much a part of the local scene. It was no longer an essentially male preserve and this presented an immediate need for social adjustment, especially after more than a year's experience of isolated living. It also presented some potential problems in relations between military personnel and the civilians, and between the sexes, which would have to be faced now and in any future advancement northwards.

For almost the entire month of May 1945, the activities of the Equipment Section at Tarakan were confined to the post-movement tasks of unpacking and inspecting stores and other equipment, as well as making the necessary accounting adjustments to stock records. This exacting and tedious work progressed very satisfactorily to a schedule based on the objective of having everything ready to immediately function when the new airstrip became available for use by our aircraft.

Meanwhile, the Aircraft and General maintenance Sections were enjoying a light work load -the first break for many months past.

At the commencement of the month, there were no aircraft repair commitments as those still outstanding had been transferred to No. 14 R.S.U. back at Morotai during the early part of April. However, a Pool of seven aircraft had been retained for immediate use as Squadron replacements, but at the beginning of May, these aircraft had been allotted to the Squadrons of No. 81 Wing for routine daily servicing pending their ultimate ferrying to No. 11 R.S.U.'s new working location at Tarakan.

Unfortunately, further progress in establishing a fully active aircraft maintenance and repair support service to the flying Squadrons was of necessity brought to a halt pending the completion of the main airstrip and the allocation of an adjacent working area for our Unit.

Nevertheless, three Auster aircraft had already been allotted and delivered to the Unit and two of them were now in progress of conversion to spare parts while the third was under repair in makeshift facilities.

Just prior to this time, a fourth Auster aircraft piloted by Flying Officer McIntire of No. 16 Air Observation Post Flight was involved in a fatal accident and the Army observer, Captain Stanley A. Ket died of his injuries. Stanley Ket was a boyhood friend of our previous C.O. Wing Commander Taylor, and as a member of the A.I.F. was attached to No. 35 Squadron RAAF.

During the Tarakan operations, McIntire and Ket had been controlling artillery fire and carrying out reconnaissance duties in support of army operations. At the time of the fatal accident the Auster crashed into an obstruction during take-off from a temporary airstrip which had been hastily prepared by Army engineers. Captain Ket was severely injured and he died on 3rd May 1945.

Back at Morotai, the Unit Transport Section was faced with a mammoth workload during the month of May. The task of preparation for the sea movement of our entire fleet of 90 transport vehicles and other items of mobile M/T equipment from Morotai to Tarakan, kept all members of the Section fully occupied well beyond normal working hours.

In addition to the need to protect vehicles, engines and other vital components from damage by salt water, there were the equally exacting tasks of loading, embarkation, subsequent unloading and finally settling-in on Tarakan Island. The risk of transit damage, which is always present during such operations, was aggravated by the extremely poor loading and unloading facilities at both Morotai and Tarakan Islands. That it was achieved so successfully was to the great credit of Flying Officer Bert Marshall and his expert and willing staff of N.C.O.'s and airmen. Once again, this highly professional mechanical engineer and man manager, performed in an exemplary manner, encouraging his men in the quiet but firm way which was so characteristic of him.

Prior to departure from Morotai, motor transport repair and maintenance had, of necessity, been confined to No. 11 R.S.U.'s own vehicles. This was because of the lack of staff and a smooth flow of replacement parts, and the need to ensure the serviceability of our vehicles both during the move and immediately on arrival at Tarakan; for they were vital to the overall efficient operational performance of No. 78 Wing's squadrons. As a result of the decision, no mechanical trouble was experienced throughout the entire operation.

It was our Unit's first major movement by medium L.S.T.'s and the operation provided many lessons in the achievement of efficient embarkation, preparation of vehicles

and most importantly, the effectiveness of preservation procedures for transport by sea in this type of vessel. The information thus gained was later to prove of great value to our Unit and the units of the First Tactical Air Force as a whole.

Fortunately, the inwards posting of M/T drivers and maintenance personnel improved during May 1945 and thereby brought the Section's strength closer, but not entirely up to the approved establishment. However, the increase in effective personnel made it possible for No. 11 R.S.U. to once again fulfil its obligations in respect of the entire No. 78 Wing motor transport fleet.

As a result, the Motor Transport Section became fully operational on Monday, 4th June 1945 and a regular maintenance program for all vehicles in No. 78 Wing combined fleets was resumed after some 11 months recess due to the delay in movement of our M/T maintenance facilities from Lae, New Guinea. It provided a classical example of how vitally important it is to have full logistic control under the command of the respective Service involved. In this case, the Royal Australian Air Force through its operational RAAF Command Headquarters.

Because of the urgency of the move from Morotai to Tarakan, there was little activity in the field of welfare and education during the latter part of May. However, a meeting was held on 24th May 1945 to discuss the possibility of holding post-war reunions of No. 11 R.S.U. members and, even at this early and uncertain stage, a Secretary and an Assistant Secretary were elected as interim organisers for each of the Australian States.

Also, as soon as possible after arrival at Tarakan, the educational classes inaugurated at Morotai were resumed and it was soon discovered that there was a vigorous interest being shown throughout our Unit in the various rehabilitation courses of training. There was little doubt that the smell of peace and a possible early return to civilian life was now in the air!

By the end of May 1945, the first signs of winding down became evident as the Unit personnel establishment was reduced to 16 officers and 375 other ranks and the actual strength was now only 8 officers and 331 O.R.'s.

In retrospect, the main reason for the Allied invasion of Tarakan Island was the importance of the airfield to any further operational advancement in the Borneo and surrounding South East Asian areas occupied by the Japanese.

Prior to the occupation of the Island, Allied intelligence authorities were of the opinion that it would only require a small amount of repair work by RAAF Airfield Construction Units to restore the airstrip and its surrounds to the standard necessary for intensive aircraft and maintenance support operational use.

Unfortunately however, the timing of the landing operations was such that it coincided with an abnormal period of very heavy rain which only served to add to the anticipated problems resulting from an annual rainfall of some 146 inches which was the norm for Tarakan.

Furthermore, the condition of the airfield was such that although a portion of it was well drained, the remainder, under such conditions, very quickly became an impenetrable swamp.

In fact, the deterioration became so bad, that it prevented the use of heavy earth-moving equipment and seriously retarded attempts to effect necessary and extensive repair work.

To add to these difficulties, an on-site inspection by the commanding officer of No. 61 Airfield Construction Wing revealed that not only had the Japanese ceased to use the strip some months earlier, but they had effectively mined the entire area to retard its repair and use by Allied airforces.

It was this combination of near disastrous circumstances which prevented the smooth transfer of 1st T.A.F. fighter and bomber Squadrons from Morotai, and elsewhere, to their planned operational locations on Tarakan Island. Consequently, the

Japanese, who still occupied considerable territory on the Island, and who must have been aware of our predicament, continued to harass the RAAF Airfield Construction teams by effectively shelling and attacking the airstrip and dispersal areas from the air.

They also commenced to infiltrate the area using raiding parties of ground troops with very telling results. In fact, a large party of enemy troops did manage to penetrate the airfield on 31st May and a member of No. 1 Airfield Construction Squadron was killed in the subsequent action. However, work continued throughout the night despite the hazards.

In an effort to stem enemy activity so that the RAAF repair teams could safely proceed with their work, it became necessary for the U.S. Thirteenth Air Force to provide the air support which the RAAF 1st T.A.F. was now unable to do.

The repercussions resulting from the long delay in acquiring a suitable all-weather airfield on Tarakan were widespread and seriously affected the completion of the RAAF Command's air operational commitments to the "Oboe" objective. They also prevented the efficient establishment of the normal functions of all RAAF Units already insitu on Tarakan Island.

In the case of No. 11 R.S.U., pending the completion of the airfield, it was not possible to move the Equipment Section from its temporary location to the allotted position within the airfield working area. Consequently, the work of unpacking and establishment of the Stores Section could not proceed as originally planned.

Indeed, it was not until the end of June 1945, when the airstrip was finally declared serviceable and ready to receive aircraft that we could anticipate the early erection and completion of the approved Stores Building.

Meanwhile however, the Equipment Section had grasped the opportunity to check and adjust all records and stores accounts. Action was also taken to acquire the necessary items of equipment and other stores to cover the anticipated intensified operations that would follow the arrival of the Squadron aircraft of 1st T.A.F. on Tarakan Island.

When it finally became possible to unpack and inspect our items of stores, it was most gratifying to discover that all items in the vast range within the various stores groups, had arrived from Morotai in excellent condition and the reported losses were 'Nil'. This result served to amplify the logistic value of a completely mobile Unit movement supervised by the actual custodians of the stores and equipment concerned.

Turning now to aircraft repair and maintenance work, the non-availability of a serviceable airfield and its associated working areas, very seriously curtailed our progress. An airframe and undercarriage repair was successfully completed in makeshift conditions on one Auster aircraft, and a modification to the mainplanes and a routine inspection was progressing on another Auster. But apart from this small amount of work, June 1945 was a completely unproductive month.

However, on 28th June, a number of Kittyhawk aircraft from several of the 1st T.A.F. Squadrons landed on the reformed and now renamed 'Croydon' airstrip for the first time. It was a memorable occasion for all concerned, and especially for No. 11 R.S.U. as two of these aircraft were immediately allotted to us for major repairs.

The airstrip at Tarakan was never completed satisfactorily and therefore, the majority of the combat aircraft of 1st T.A.F. were forced to remain in situ at Morotai well beyond effective operational time scales. This resulted in a constant movement of aircraft between Morotai and Tarakan with a consequent spasmodic aircraft maintenance workload for No. 11 R.S.U. to perform at Tarakan. In this regard, the establishment of Tarakan as a forward Air Base was a failure, both operationally and logistically.

Even though the lack of an airfield had virtually curtailed a regular input of aircraft repair work, the Unit's General Engineering Section had been kept very busy

indeed. Its function was to provide an engineering back-up, not only to our own Unit, but for all the other Units of 1st T.A.F. that had been established on Tarakan since the occupation by the Allies. Accordingly, by the end of June, 79 jobs consisting of mass production work, manufacturing and engineering repair work had been completed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Likewise, the Motor Transport Maintenance and Repair Section had been able to establish itself with the erection of the main inspection workshop. The carpenters and motor body builders, welders and battery repair workshops, and the oil and 'C' Group stores had also been completed. Furthermore, while all this building work was in progress, the Section had managed to complete a considerable number of vehicle inspections and repairs.

However, although the Inspection and Repair Sub-Sections had been kept busy, they had been greatly hampered by the difficulty in obtaining spare parts when required. It was a difficulty which was expected to increase as stocks within all the resources at Tarakan became depleted due to delays in replenishment from main supplies elsewhere.

The opportunity had also been taken to carry out a Transport Section A.I.U. (articles in use) check and a vehicle schedule check. These detailed and comprehensive checks were the first that had been possible since the Unit first arrived in Nadzab, New Guinea.

Despite the many movements to new locations, and the prolonged delay in departure from the Lae staging camp, it was agreeably surprising to find the position to be quite satisfactory which said something for the conscientious and careful housekeeping on the part of the personnel involved.

By the end of June 1945, the Motor Transport Section was once again functioning in all departments, and the personnel were settling down to a steady routine of work. They now had reasonably good workshop facilities and were able to re-establish the regular system of M/T maintenance inspections and repairs for all the RAAF motor transport vehicles and equipment operating within 1st T.A.F. Units now on Tarakan Island. All of this had undoubtedly restored their badly bruised morale and the prospects for an excellent output of work during July looked very good indeed.

In an effort to combat tropical malaise and maintain physical fitness among all ranks, especially during these periods of reduced functional activity, several badminton courts were laid out and the sport proved to be very popular as a form of mental as well as physical relaxation.

Also education classes continued to be held to a regular program, but regrettably only a few new members were availing themselves of this opportunity to prepare in a positive way for peacetime rehabilitation. Nevertheless, plans were made to increase the number of tutors and it was expected that July would not only show an improvement in attendance's, but the variety of subjects available would increase.

The personnel of No. 11 R.S.U., in the main, had now reached the end of their respective spans of operational service and postings to the mainland of Australia were becoming more frequent and numerous. However, the replacement rate was not in phase and consequently the reduction in effective strength was quite noticeable and resulted in a total loss for the month of June 1945 of 31 members, i.e. 5 inwards postings and 36 postings out.

About this time, on 5th July 1945, Prime Minister Curtin died and on 13th July Mr. Chifley was appointed in his stead. As a result there was much conjecture as to the future of RAAF operations in collaboration with the American Air Forces in the South West and Western Pacific theatres.

It was expected now, with the increased Allied effort towards the invasion of the Japanese mainland, and the fact that the RAAF was so obviously being shunted into a relatively minor air support role in an operational backwater, that the rate of return of

RAAF personnel in general to mainland Australia would increase. If this situation did occur, it would create serious manning problems for operational support units such as R.S.U.'s.

Indeed, it was not long before our fears materialized. With the arrival of the 1st T.A.F. flying squadrons on Tarakan, the workload for No. 11 R.S.U. dramatically increased. A constant flow of aircraft to and from the Squadrons provided an immediate and wide variety of aircraft and aero-engine major maintenance and repair work and once again we were able to build up a substantial serviceable aircraft Pool.

This return to a state approaching operational normality attracted a number of visits by senior staff officers from the various Command Headquarters and by the new Officer Commanding No. 78 (Fighter) Wing, Wing Commander Alan Rawlinson. Also on 17th July 1945, the Air Board Member for Engineering and Maintenance, Air Commodore E. C. Wackett OBE, paid his second inspection visit to No. 11 R. S.U. since it had commenced active operational duties in the S. W. Pacific Theatre. His first visit was during May 1944 when the Unit was still located in Nadzab, New Guinea.

During his second visit, Air Cdre. Wackett was again afforded all the courtesies that his rank and appointment as the most senior Engineering Officer in the RAAF warranted and opportunity was extended for him to make a thorough inspection of the Unit's facilities and the camp-site. From the open discussions which followed concerning the operational role, commitments and functional problems, it was clear that he was not only surprised by the actual situation, but also well pleased with the Unit's efforts and overall operational performance.

By the end of July 1945, three of the Squadrons that were now based on No.11 R.S.U., viz, No.'s 75,78 and 80, had finally become fully operational from the 'Croydon' airstrip at Tarakan. As a result 7 of their aircraft were allotted for major repair and the output for the month was. 3 major repairs and one conversion to spare parts and components.

However, conditions at the 'Croydon' airstrip for the establishment of our Repair and Servicing Section at that location, remained unsatisfactory as all work had to be carried out in a small unsheltered revetment. It was the only hard standing area that could be made available.

To make matters worse, the General Engineering, Electrical, Instrument, W/T, Armament and Coppersmiths Sections were still established in a small area in the town of Tarakan. This meant that all arisings of accessory and ancillary work had to be conveyed to and from the airstrip by a Courier Service which had been raised within the Unit's transport and personnel resources. It was an exceptionally tedious and unsatisfactory situation, for the return journey over a very busy and less than serviceable road was about 10 miles.

Nevertheless, the General Engineering Section was able to cope and function more efficiently than the other specialist sections, probably because of their permanently truck-mounted mobile workshop. Consequently, its output of manufacturing and repair work for July was 149 major jobs.

At the same time, the Motor Transport Repair and Servicing Section, once again under the very able leadership of Flt. Lt. Bert Marshall completed 117 jobs. Particular attention had been directed to the numerous mobile electrical generators (K.V.A. Sets) to ensure that all were up to date with routine inspections and that their general condition and state of serviceability would guarantee complete reliability.

It is still not sufficiently well appreciated that in modern warfare, the success or failure of vital operational activities may very often depend upon a reliable and constant supply of electrical energy to maintain weapons and other essential resources. In this regard, the development between the two Great Wars of efficient and reliable petrol/diesel engine driven mobile electrical generating sets played a most important

part in the success of Allied operations in all theatres of WW2. This was particularly so in the relatively primitive island bases of the South Pacific where adequate local electrical power was a rarity.

In order to maintain the necessary electrical power supply, to meet the demands of all RAAF organisations, regular servicing and repair work on their mobile generating sets became a routine task for No. 11 R.S.U. and it remained so throughout the Unit's presence at Tarakan.

With the restoration of the 1st T.A.F. transport vehicle and associated M/T Equipment maintenance systems first established by No. 11 R.S.U. at Nadzab, it was now necessary for a mobile maintenance party to visit all the Squadrons and Units now located at Tarakan and inspect all relevant items of M/T and equipment. Where necessary, routine servicing and repairs would then be carried out preferably in situ. However, some items were in such a bad state of repair that it was necessary to transport them to No. 11 R.S.U.'s own workshops on the first time around. Of course major work such as body repairs and re-painting etc., which required special facilities and repair equipment, was always undertaken in our own workshops. To this end and during July 1945, additions were made to the M/T Section's buildings to include the fabric Workers and Painters workshops.

With the above-mentioned additions completed, all of the Sub-Sections and their facilities were brought together thus ensuring adequate supervision and control. The delay in the completion of the Croydon Airstrip also prevented the anticipated move of the Equipment Section to the allotted Unit Working Area adjacent to the strip. Consequently, negotiations were opened with the Army authorities for the acquisition of a disused building in the town of Tarakan.

Fortunately, the Army agreed to the Unit's request and the building which they allocated proved to be ideal as it was commodious and centrally situated. This permitted the expedient handling and despatch of all demands to the Unit's Croydon Working Area by a twice daily Courier Transport Service.

As previously mentioned, prior to the Unit's departure from Morotai, its Lae Rear party arrived by sea bringing with them approximately one third of the total equipment stock which, due to the lack of shipping space, had been left behind in very inadequate and make-shift storage conditions. This influx of equipment and spare parts created, in some Groups of stores, very appreciable surplus holdings and the opportunity was seized whilst still at Morotai to conduct a complete review of all surplus stocks. The result was that due to the disposal of all unwanted items through the appropriate channels, the Unit experienced a very smooth transfer of its remaining equipment stocks from Morotai to the new location on Tarakan Island. It was just another example of making the best of an otherwise adverse logistics situation!

This action also proved timely, for during July 1945 a visit was made by the Commonwealth Auditors B.F.O. representative who carried out an inspection and check of all accounts and records. Fortunately for us, he was able to declare that unlike most other Units now at Tarakan, *'the 11 R. S. U. position was very satisfactory'*.

As our Units working conditions became more stabilised, so too did the general welfare activities improve. Our personnel adopted a welfare attitude which was more keen now than it had been for many months past and it resulted in the organisation of a concert which was very well attended. Furthermore, all agreed that it was 'an excellent show'.

This particular concert was organised by the Unit Welfare Committee and staged in the Unit's camp-site area. Nineteen visiting 'artists' assisted our Unit personnel in providing a most entertaining and much appreciated program.

A Euchre tournament was also arranged on a trial basis to gauge potential interest and it resulted in a proposal to make such evenings a regular fixture.

Likewise, swimming, tennis and cricket teams were formed to compete in inter-Unit and inter-Service matches just as soon as the necessary facilities could be completed by combined Army and RAAF working parties. In this regard, an excellent basis of co-operation had been established out of the shared period of adversity during the previous two months.

Also during July 1945, the Welfare Hut was equipped with Card tables and 2 Ping Pong tables and plans were in operation to install and maintain a Notice Board and to provide other attractive amenities.

It was now becoming obvious that the Welfare Committee had been well chosen and that its members were keen to develop the many good ideas which were being presented. One such idea was a Unit Library for collecting and lending books and other items of special and general reading matter to meet the growing needs of the increasing numbers of literary enthusiasts among the Unit's personnel.

However, along with these developments a major turnover of our personnel was taking place, for during the month 2 new officers and 70 other ranks had been posted into the Unit whilst 2 officers and 62 other ranks were posted out. The resulting personnel strength at the close of July was 8 officers and 330 other ranks, some 167 members less than the total strength in December 1943 when we were about to leave Australia for Nadzab, New Guinea.

In a way, July 1945 was a sad period, for among the members returning home to the mainland, were many who had been with the Unit almost since its formation back at Mt. Druitt. Furthermore, the 2 officers who were leaving were among those who had become the most respected and best known, not only within the ranks of No. 11 R.S.U., but throughout the 1st T.A.F. as a whole.

The inimitable Flying Officer W. F. (Wally) Potts (14918) had developed a style and personality which had become something of a trademark for man management and technical excellence in aircraft maintenance engineering at the working level. He had been an expert tradesman as an N.C.O. and commissioning had developed his natural skills and initiative to a degree which now placed him among the very best of the RAAF's Forward Engineers during operations in the Pacific Theatre. Indeed, a good deal of the Unit's functional success resulted from his talents and personal example and he deserved the respect in which he was held. He departed by air on posting to No. 2 Personnel Depot on 7th July 1945.

The other officer to depart by air on posting to No. 2 P.D. on completion of his operational tour of duty was the much respected and venerated 'Stevo' alias Flight Lieutenant Harold Stephenson (266219). He had been the Unit Adjutant since its formation and his loyalty and devotion to the RAAF in general and No. 11 R.S.U. in particular, was unquestionable and well above what was expected in the normal course of duty. Deeply respected friend and trusted confidant of Wing Commander Taylor, and later Squadron Leader Keir, he was a true 'father' to all members of our Unit. Not only was he by far the oldest and longest serving member, but his sincerity of purpose, moral example, strength of character and ever kindly manner, set a pattern of behavior for all ranks to follow. We who were privileged to live so closely in his company, have great reason to remember and treasure his friendship and mature guidance. He was a man among men and a 'rock' to those who needed support and assurance to overcome the many trials that confronted us all during our operational service.

Both 'Wally' and 'Stevo' were deserving of some form of official recognition for their sterling service during WW2. But despite continual exemplary reports, such recognition did not eventuate. This decidedly negative action on the part of the Labor Government and higher RAAF authority, must ever remain a matter for considerable criticism and lasting regret.

The two replacement officers were Flight Lieutenant J. G. Hendy (256089) for administrative duties as Unit Adjutant, and Flying Officer R. F. Young (3361) for engineering duties as Forward Engineer.

Among the 62 other ranks who were posted out at this time were 47 who departed by sea on 9th July. It was the first time for members of our Unit that this mode of transportation back to Australia had been used and it clearly signified that a 'turn in the tide' of events in the Pacific had begun at last.

During the first week of August 1945, 7 serviceable Kittyhawk aircraft were allotted from the Unit to Nos. 75 and 80 Squadrons. It was a positive indication that No. 11 R.S.U. was once again fully productive at its new location, Tarakan Island. At the same time, 5 P.40's were allotted in from these Squadrons for conversion, repair and routine major maintenance work.

It was during this period that the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Ian Keir, flew south to Balikpapan on the mainland of Borneo to inspect a crashed aircraft and determine its state of repairability. He returned to Tarakan on 3rd August 1945 and four days later, the World was to learn of an event that would change the course of history and the welfare of humanity for all future time.

On the 7th August, news was officially released that a bomber aircraft of the American Air Force had dropped an Atom Bomb over the city of Hiroshima in the south-east of Honshu Island, Japan. It was staggering news, especially for the many thousands of Allied servicemen and women serving in the Pacific, for they had been steadily fighting their way north towards the ultimate invasion of the Japanese home islands. Now it seemed all the operational plans and preparations would need to be drastically changed.

Away to the south-west in remote Tarakan, reports began to drift in which indicated, and later confirmed, the colossal destruction, enormous loss of life and the horrific injuries that had been sustained by the Japanese civilian and military population of Hiroshima and the adjacent areas of this large provincial city.

For the post-atomic world population, the event was completely beyond comprehension and the initial boost to Allied morale soon turned to a mood of intense horror and revulsion. Very soon it was realised that mankind with its rapidly developing technology, had managed to create a fiendish weapon with such destructive potential, that it was clearly outside human ability to control. We had deliberately entered the 'atomic age' without a full knowledge of the tremendous consequences that would follow in the years to come.

IT'S OVER AND WE MAY BE GOING HOME

In his report for the month of August 1945, Squadron Leader Ian Keir wrote,

'On the following day (8th August) Russia declared War on Japan and brought the forces of all Allied powers to conclude an early defeat of the Japanese Military Nation. At 2100 hrs. (9.00 pm) on the 10th August, a news flash was broadcast from Tokyo indicating the willingness of the Japs to accept the Potsdam Surrender Terms, subject to a few provisos'.

Within 10 minutes of this news flash, terrific excitement had spread among the troops on the island of Tarakan. Anti-Aircraft guns, Flares and other noise making arms were fired to give vent to all the pent up feelings of the great mass of troops who, in many cases, had spent almost six years of their lives helping to bring about the defeat of the aggressor nations.

At 0800 hrs. (8.00 am) on 15th August, a simultaneous announcement was made by the leaders of the Allied nations to the effect that the Japanese had accepted all of the Surrender terms.

A muster parade of all personnel was called and members of our Unit showed their relief, pride and elation with three resounding cheers. To a man, they were indicating that at last there had been a successful conclusion to the job that had prompted each and everyone of them to enlist in the Royal Australian Air Force. It was now really over!

By now, the daily average effective strength of No. 11 R.S.U. had dropped to 291 with an average of 31 non-effective members. Movements of personnel continued with Flying Officer R. F. Young (3361) proceeding to No. 80 Squadron on posting and Flying Officer P. Johns (24780) arriving from No. 1 Airfield Construction Squadron on posting, for equipment duties. In addition, 74 lucky airmen departed by air on posting to home Personnel Depots on completion of their operational tours of duty.

The end of the hostilities however, did not bring an end to the functional commitments of No. 11 R.S.U. and the other operational support Units. With the beginning of September 1945, the task of winding down and preparing for the progressive return of Squadrons and Units and the respective personnel, functional equipment and other stores to Home Bases in Australia, began in earnest. In the case of No. 11 R.S.U., 5 serviceable aircraft were allotted out to Squadrons and 4 unserviceable aircraft were allotted in for major repair work and engine changes.

Much work of non-operational value was also commenced in preparation for the movement of personnel and equipment and this resulted in an entirely new emphasis on internal overhaul and repair of the Unit's own major and minor equipment items.

Also, there was a decided increase in the number of urgent and normal demands placed on No. 11 R.S.U. for the supply of equipment, spare parts and general stores items as well as for motor transport and other support services which had become a routine part of our overall support and maintenance work for all Units of the 1st T.A.F. in the Morotai and Borneo areas.

For example, a Catalina shuttle service was inaugurated requiring the complete refitting of a 35 foot (11 metre) oceangoing motor launch to carry personnel to and from the flying boats. This work was entirely performed by the expert tradesmen of No. 11 R.S.U. who were also required to establish safe anchorage's for the rapidly increasing flying boat operations in and out of the Tarakan harbour. As a result, they not only constructed a number of moorings, but they also manufactured the necessary rubber shielded mooring buoys and put them into place in the sea. It was a job which they had never tackled before and the results proved to be completely successful. The moorings were constantly in use until the requirement for them ceased.

With the reduction in the need for transportation of war supplies during September 1945, much larger quantities of fresh food began to arrive at Tarakan. In order to cope with the increasing demand for refrigeration facilities, an Army refrigerator barge needed urgent repairs and No. 11 R.S.U. was called upon to undertake the necessary work. It was completed in record time to the total satisfaction of all concerned.

Meanwhile, a serious incident of major corrosion in the oil tanks of Kittyhawk aircraft had been discovered in many of these aircraft now based at Tarakan. The defect required either complete replacement of the tanks, or extensive repair work, which had to be undertaken immediately.

As replacement tanks were not available within the necessary time scales, complex welding repairs were carried out as an interim measure and all affected aircraft based on No. 11 R.S.U. were thereby made serviceable enough to return to the mainland of Australia in due course.

In all, 120 jobs of a major nature were completed by the General Engineering Section during September 1945. It was yet another example of the great value of Repair and Servicing Units to the operational efficiency of the RAAF during WW2.

Likewise, the Equipment Section had been kept very busy throughout the month of August and it was, therefore, quite alarming during early September to receive a posting advice to the effect that the entire equipment staff of the Section would be immediately posted back to the respective Personnel Depots. However, to soften the blow, it was advised that the affected personnel would be replaced with the same priority of movement and, with the exception of a few non-arrivals, the new staff did arrive in due course but too late for a proper handover/takeover.

No. 11 R.S.U. had not received any prior warning of this drastic, thoughtless and completely unnecessary act of logistic planning and the change-over presented considerable difficulty at a time when our Unit was already over committed in direct support tasks essential to the operational and administrative effectiveness of the 1st T.A.F.

Notwithstanding the enormous task of stock-taking and the resultant adjustment of accounts which had been commenced by the outgoing members during the last two weeks of August, every effort had to be made to prepare massive quantities of equipment and spare parts for return to Australia. It was therefore, not unreasonable for Squadron Leader Keir to be highly critical of the apparent lack of knowledge and understanding of the forward operational situation displayed by the equipment and personnel planning staffs involved in this decision. To those on the spot, the inference must have been that the responsible staff officers several thousand miles away, were completely unaware, or totally ignorant of the magnitude of the numerous major tasks now confronting the personnel of all operational Squadrons and support Units based outside the mainland of Australia. For them, the benefits of the return to peace were still a long way off!

Fortunately for No. 11 R.S.U., a farsighted review of all stocks held had already been made and a list prepared on a 30 day holding basis for the return of surplus equipment to respective mainland major holding Units.

Furthermore, a considerable quantity of surplus equipment had already been returned to an Air Stores Park. As a result, the stock-take was completed with the exception of 'D' Group Stores (tools) which had of necessity been delayed by the constant return and re-issue of items. This situation was due to the heavy demands resulting from the numerous inwards and outwards postings of technical trades personnel.

In order to complete the overall task by the end of September 1945, it was necessary for the equipment staff to work long periods of overtime under most unpleasant climatic conditions, and at a time when the incentive to respond to such demands was reaching a low ebb. Under such conditions the man-management abilities of Officers and N.C.O.'s are really put to a severe test.

Meanwhile the Transport Section was also experiencing the full effects of a rapid reduction in available personnel. However, all of the transport vehicles throughout No. 78 Wing had been maintained in a very satisfactory condition as a result of the excellent quality and quantity of work which the much reduced staff had managed to achieve. It was thus possible for them to check all machine tools and other equipment held in the Section workshops and bring them into a fully serviceable condition as well. All this work was achieved without interruption to the normal routine program of motor vehicle maintenance support provided to other Units and Squadrons of No. 78 (Fighter) Wing.

As was to be expected, welfare activity rapidly increased with the declaration of peace. The main bulk of our personnel were now keen to participate in the various pursuits that were being arranged for their immediate relaxation and enjoyment.

On 1st September, a party of 55 men accompanied by the Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Hendy, departed at 7:30am by an L.C.M. for a small island off the coast of Tarakan. The L.C.M. was not able to sail any closer than 300yds. (274 metres) off shore so the troops stripped off their clothing and waded ashore carrying tents and supplies for a two day camping holiday.

Tent lines and a kitchen facility were quickly erected and the troops then engaged, on a personal choice basis, in swimming, fishing, crab catching, various sports or just plain spine-bashing. Their rest and recreation (R & R) was well earned after a three month period of unrelenting and intensive work on aircraft repair and maintenance under most trying tropical conditions.

This highly successful episode was repeated over and over, until all members had taken their turn. Indeed, it was so beneficial that the newly elected Welfare Committee was encouraged to develop other R & R projects so that all personnel could share in the mental and physical benefits on the basis of first priority being offered to the longest serving members. The resultant program not only restored the general Unit morale, but it also improved the sense of individual wellbeing among those members who had been severely affected by the overlong separation from their loved ones and the debilitating conditions imposed by a near equatorial climate.

In the latter half of September 1945, there was a great amount of uncertainty regarding the future of No. 11 R.S.U. with regard to its duration on operational commitments at Tarakan, and to its functional role now that hostilities had actually ceased. It was assumed that a progressive movement back to the mainland of Australia would soon begin and to this end, Squadron Leader Keir decided to commence some basic preparations.

Accordingly, all the Sections were instructed to make a thorough check and compile a detailed inventory of their equipment holdings. The aim was to bring the maximum amount into a fully serviceable condition so that eventually, disposal could be commenced with the least possible delay following an order to move.

Some indication that repatriation was about to begin came on 4th September when volunteers for an Occupation Force to go to the mainland of Japan were called for. Thirty applications were received from personnel of No. 11 R.S.U. and after a preliminary interview within the Unit, these airmen and N.C.O.'s were later interviewed by a Board from the Headquarters of 1st T.A.F. Finally, 24 of our members were chosen and subsequently posted to Units which would comprise part of the total Australian component of the British Occupational Forces.

As previously mentioned, the 'posting out' of Unit personnel began to accelerate during September 1945 and the total amounted to 3 officers and 41 other ranks. This loss was balanced by the 'inwards' posting of 2 officers and 58 other ranks so that broadly, the total effective strength was maintained. But of course, the valuable experience gained from many months of operational duties in the tropics was seriously diminished.

Among the outgoing officers was Flight Lieutenant L. H. (Les) Woodford (412045) who proceeded to No. 2 Personnel Depot on 10th September.

Les Woodford was a remarkable young Equipment Officer. He arrived at Mt. Druitt during the very early stages of the Unit's formation and his intelligent and skilful approach to his assignment as the Junior of the two Equipment Officers was soon apparent to all ranks. Les, who was of rather short and slender stature, was a ball of energy and his cheerful and extremely willing personality soon won for him the nickname of 'The Little General', a measure of respect and popularity which remained

throughout his long service with No. 11 R.S.U. Indeed, he became a trusted friend and confident of Wing Commander Taylor who, along with all the other members of our Unit, was greatly saddened to learn of his untimely death some years ago. We could pay him no greater tribute than to say that he was one who really did help to '*sustain the wings*'.

Other officer postings at this time were the Unit Medical Officer, Flight Lieutenant W. G. Norman (283250) to No. 4 Personnel depot on 10th September, Flight Lieutenant P. W. Reid (257475) from No. 3 Reserve Personnel Pool who arrived for Medical Duties on 6th September and Flight Lieutenant F. W. Orrell (11872) from No. 22 R.S.U. who arrived on 13th September for Engineer Duties.

By the beginning of October 1945, the task of closing down and finally disbanding No. 11 R.S.U. was well in hand. As each section ceased to function for Unit purposes, its equipment was overhauled and packed awaiting instructions for movement. The General Engineering Section's Welding Workshop and one of the two Mobile Workshop Tenders had already been treated in this way, but the other Tender was still in operation to cope with any requirements arising from further packing activities.

In particular, the Engine Repair Section had been kept very busy preparing equipment and spare aero-engines for shipment back to Australia. In this regard, instructions and counter instructions from RAAF and Command Headquarters staffs had caused much more work than would otherwise have really been necessary.

Aircraft Repair Section and the associated aircraft Reserve Pool Section did excellent work in restoring ten aircraft to a fully serviceable condition and maintaining them in a state of 100% serviceability pending the ferry flight back to Australia. However, Sqn. Ldr. Keir reported that a great deal of unnecessary work had resulted from repeated changes in movement policy instructions. Indeed, the frequency of these changes served to illustrate the high state of confusion existing at all levels concerned with the enormous logistic problems of repatriating RAAF operational squadrons and support units to mainland Australia.

On 26th October 1945, the newly appointed Officer Commanding No. 78 Fighter Wing, Group Captain Alan Rawlinson, D.F.C., inspected the Unit and his visit did much to encourage all ranks at a time of intense frustration. As an officer of the pre-war regular RAAF, Rawlinson was an able administrator and skilful man-manager and his appointment could not have been more timely or appropriate.

Two of the major Sections of No. 11 R.S.U. at this time, were facing a particularly onerous task.

The Motor Transport Section was heavily involved in ensuring the serviceability of all vehicles within 78 Wing as well as their readiness for onward movement at the scheduled time. This Section was also kept fully employed with packing all its support equipment and spare parts which were no longer essential to the repair and maintenance work in hand. In this latter regard, all M/T vehicles and electrical generating equipment (K.V.A.'s) had been subjected to a 'D' or where necessary, a more comprehensive inspection. Batteries had been repaired or replaced and a program of repainting of vehicles had commenced and would continue for as long as stocks of paint and thinners remained available.

At the same time, a complete schedule check of all vehicles and associated equipment, including articles in use, (A.I.U.) within No. 11 R.S.U., had been undertaken and had proved to be a 'no loss' situation. Accordingly, there was no necessity for discrepancy reports (D.R's) or other equipment accounting action to be taken. This very satisfactory situation greatly reduced the overall administrative workload of the Section.

With regard to the Equipment Section, during the month of October the staff was seriously depleted. Two equipment assistants and two storehands were posted out and a

Corporal equipment assistant who was an inwards posting had not arrived. Moreover, whilst the 'D Group' (machinery and hand tools) stock-take had been completed and discrepancy reports had been raised to cover all surplus and deficient items, considerable extra work had been entailed due to changes in policy regarding disposal of equipment and the eventual return of the Unit to Australia.

The problems of accounting for the great quantities of equipment and spare parts associated with the functional and domestic activities of RAAF operational Squadrons and Units spread throughout the Pacific and S.E. Asian theatres, had never been adequately addressed during WW2. Staff Officers of the RAAF Headquarters based in Melbourne continued in the belief that equipment accounting and control procedures, established to meet relatively static conditions and environments of pre-war mainland based RAAF Units, were quite appropriate to a war time situation of Squadrons and Units operating from bases and locations temporarily established outside of continental Australia.

In reality, not only were the environmental and climatic conditions vastly and dramatically different, but the ability to afford adequate security and preservation measures to vast quantities of equipment stored mainly under canvas was usually extremely limited. The result was the imposition of a wholly unsuitable and time consuming labour intensive accounting system which achieved little, if any, economic or useful purpose. In hindsight, the RAAF might well have been better off following the more liberal 'theatre accounting' policies adopted by the U.S. Armed Forces in the same areas.

Despite these difficulties and frustrations, progress generally during October 1945 had been steady and satisfactory results had been achieved in all Sections towards preparations for the final evacuation of our Unit from its Tarakan Island base.

In an endeavor to maintain morale under such trying circumstances, competitive sport on an inter-service basis was organised and No. 11 R.S.U. was prominently represented in most of the competitions.

Another diversion for some members of the Unit was the evacuation of a Special Reconnaissance Detachment from an area in central Borneo.

A party of No. 11 R.S.U. personnel proceeded to a village called Mabulau located some 130 miles up the Sesayap River, where the S.R.D. members had spent periods up to six months on reconnaissance duties in and about the central areas of Borneo.

The adventure for our members was a most exciting event and some stirring tales were related on their return to Base, especially about the Dyaks who have been romantically referred to in fiction as the, 'wild men of Borneo'.

As the month of October drew to a close and preparations for departure of the Unit accelerated, some 38 men were posted to respective mainland Personnel Depots as being surplus to Area requirements. How lucky they were as subsequent events would prove!

Another important happening in the Unit's history was the completion by the Senior Engineer Officer, Flight Lieutenant J. A. Wilsmore, of his operational tour of duty.

Jack Wilsmore had given sterling, loyal and faithful service to No. 11 R.S.U. over many trying months. His quietly efficient manner was a continual inspiration to all ranks and his superb man management skills were responsible to a great degree for the Unit's excellent performance in its functional role ever since the early days when we were so active at Nadzab, New Guinea.

The departure of this fine and gentlemanly officer on 6th October 1945, served to highlight that he was one of many RAAF commissioned officers serving in the Pacific area, whose personal efforts were deserving of appropriate official recognition which, regrettably, did not eventuate.

From that time on, events moved very quickly indeed. The Unit strength had by now been reduced to 7 officers and 206 other ranks and postings out were occurring almost daily. It was clear that the time was fast running out for No. 11 R.S.U. and soon it would no longer remain as an important Unit of the RAAF First Tactical Air Force.

THE END OF A JOB WELL DONE

By the end of October 1945, No. 11 R.S.U. had virtually ceased to exist for all practical purposes and the final Unit History Sheet (RAAF Form A50) was despatched by the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader I. M. Keir at the conclusion of that month.

Thereafter, no official record of the Unit's activities was submitted to higher authority and the only reference remaining today is that No. 11 R.S.U. was 'officially disbanded at Tarakan Island on 24th November 1945 under the terms of Air Force Confidential Order (AFCO) B 497/45 by the disbandment Commanding officer, Squadron Leader Ian M. Keir'. The Unit strength on disbandment being 7 officers and 206 other ranks awaiting repatriation to their home States in Australia.

However it is known that under last minute orders, the C.O. was instructed to progressively vacate the Unit's administrative accommodation and buildings, destroy the camp-site tent lines and workshop area facilities and transfer the remaining stocks of general equipment, stores, spare parts and M/T vehicle equipment to other nominated custodians.

Thus ended the existence of No. 11 Repair and Servicing Unit which began so modestly on 1st December 1942 at Mt. Druitt, New South Wales and provided such meritorious active operational service in the defense of Australia during a period just six days short of three years.

Whilst there were numerous occasions when the Unit's achievements were gained Per Ardua, the results of the dedicated efforts of its Officers, N. C.O.'s and Airmen were, to say the very least Ad Astra and fully in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Australian Air Force in peace and war.

Sustineo Alas