

# The Aussie Mossie

NUMBER 29

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## A few words from Roy

*I want people to understand that these are my personal thoughts and not those of the Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia.*

“With all regards to the Air Force Museum, now that the documentation phase of the restoration of Mosquito PRXVI A52-600 has been completed I feel that more “hands on” work should be conducted. Other Association members and I have become disheartened with the lack of progress. Considerable “hands on” work was carried out by Airforce and volunteer personnel whilst the project was at RAAF Richmond but there has been none since the aircraft arrived at Point Cook.

I agree that the correct documentation is essential before any restoration can be achieved. Keeping this in mind, I also recall that this is the only surviving PRXVI Mosquito anywhere in the world, and with a history of wartime service with the RAAF, I also believe that more effort should be made to help expedite the preservation of this special piece of history.

I understand that the Airforce has commitments to other projects and that all wartime aircraft are important. I was informed that once the documentation had been completed the “hands on” work and cross-referencing of parts would move ahead. This would coincide with moving A52-600 into the hangar space that the Walrus restoration is currently occupying. With the Walrus restoration almost complete I am afraid that other projects will take

precedence and the recommencement of the Mosquito restoration is pushed out further.

Other association members and I have followed this project for nearly ten years. With many of these gentlemen being ex-serving personnel associated with the Mosquito, I feel, as I am sure they do, that we will not see any substantial forward progress for some time yet.”



*Any comments can be forward directly to me confidentially at:*

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*or*

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## FLTLT JT Kearney DFC, RAAF

*The Association's past secretary/editor Allan Davies sent in the following article. He says:*

"Jim Kearney DFC was a late joining member of No 87 PR Sqdn. The RAAF Museum heard his medals were for sale and they purchased them ostensibly for the A52-600 exhibit one day. I knew Jim and he was a real gentleman and a great pilot"

James Kearney served with distinction in the South West Pacific Area and received the following group of medals during WWII:

1. Distinguished Flying Cross, G. VI.R., the reverse officially dated '1943', in *Royal Mini* case of issue,
2. 1939-45 Star,
3. Pacific Star,
4. War Medal 1939-45, and
5. Australian Service Medal 1939-45.

*Following is a copy from the*

*London Gazette,*  
19 October 1943.

Recommendation for DFC states :

"FLGOFF Kearney, after having served as a flying instructor and Staff pilot since 12 January 1941, has been actively engaged on operational flying since Nov 1942. He has participated in 13 raids on Timor and Islands to the North of Australia and in course of attacks has destroyed nine aircraft and damaged another five.

On three occasions whilst taking part in attacks on the enemy aerodrome at Penfoei, Timor, his aircraft has been subjected to heavy anti-aircraft fire and attacked by enemy fighters.

On 31 May 1943, a flight of five Beaufighters lead by FLGOFF Kearney in an attack on, Langgeer was intercepted by three enemy fighters and pursued and engaged by four enemy fighters on their return. During an engagement lasting for half an hour, FLGOFF Kearney was successful in shooting down one enemy fighter and de-

stroyed a further two by strafing.

The courage, determination and enthusiasm displayed by this officer in engaging the enemy has proved an inspiration to all members of his Squadron and is worthy of the highest praise."

FLTLT James Timothy Kearney, DFC, was born in March 1916 and joined the RAAF in May 1940. Commissioned as a PLTOFF on completion of his Pilot's Course in July 1941, and initially engaged as an Instructor, his first operational posting was to No. 31 SQN at Coomalie Creek, NT. The Unit operated Beaufighters on long-range offensive sweeps.

As evidenced by his recommendation, Kearney participated in a number of hazardous low-level strikes. A case in point being a raid on Venilale in November 1942, when his Beaufighter was hit by ground fire and a 'heavy shell or shrapnel' lodged in the aircraft's windscreen but did not quite penetrate it. In addition to some Bofors hits from an enemy airfield during a raid in February 1943.

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## A52-600 Restoration Project

An update by the Project Coordinator – Graeme Coates

The first phase of cataloguing the photo collection is now complete. All photos have been assembled on more than twenty large display sheets which bring together the photos for each area of the aircraft and in some instances also show the progressive dismantling and restoration of some parts. This method of presentation enables the assimilation of the many photos for each area in an easily examined format. At no time have photos been overlapped in a true collage format as there has been no consistent regime in taking the pictures to allow this format to be used. All related photos have been placed in approximate relationship to each other to assist in their examination.



The printed lists of the photos indicate the general area of the aircraft (corresponding to each display sheet) and the particular area, equipment, disassembly or restoration as appropriate.

A later phase will be to record in fine detail each and every item shown in the photos; this will be done in conjunction with the packing lists from the boxed equipment. This will then allow for the retrieval of drawings and photos of areas like 'tailplane attachment' or 'fuselage equipment located between bulkheads 3 & 4'. The former in this instance would provide references to both drawing and photos and the later references to only photos.

It should be noted that there are almost no drawings of installed equipment (and very little of mountings for same) and our total reliance for equipment placement is from the photo collection. The photos also constitute the only known catalog of installed equipment that was with the aircraft originally as practically all equipment has been removed from the airframe. The photos of the equipment, and the progressive removal of that equipment, are a valuable record of what material is - *or should be* - in all the boxes in the warehouse.

All together there are about 350 photographs which have been processed. There are about 500 drawings, over 300 microfiche of drawings and about thirty manuals in our collection. The microfiche are yet to be printed. At some stage this whole collection needs to be duplicated to ensure the security of the collection.

This of course is no where near enough to build a plane from scratch but we are starting with an almost complete aircraft, and an aircraft that also had a great deal of its equipment in place as well. Before any work commences on any given part of the aircraft a review of the available information we have on hand (drawings, photos and manuals) will be performed to determine what further documentation is required before progressing with dismantling or restoration or repair. Much of the time this will only be available by making drawings and notes from the airframe as it currently exists – especially in the area of detailed woodwork. We will never assemble a complete set of drawings.

Formal contacts need to be established between this Association and other organisations and museums who have Mosquitoes (or parts and/or documentation) to enable us to arrange viewing, photographing and copying material from these collections.

A presentation is being prepared to show to the senior museum staff the work performed to date, and to lay down the procedures for the next phase of the work which is the cataloging of the collection of parts from A52-600 and any other Mosquito components that the museum has in its collection. This will be a pure cataloguing process and no assessment or restoration will be performed.



Work continues.

## John Mills Recalls

*This is the fourth and final paper by John Mills who was Chief Engineer of de Havilland Aircraft Proprietary Ltd. before, during and for sometime after the Mosquito (D. H. 98) was manufactured in Australia.*

John Mills' contribution towards a definitive history of Mosquito production in Australia.

Enthusiasm in the project caused all to work seven days a week until we found that it was taking seven days to do six days work and we then nominally reverted to a six-day week. But the pressure was great and this pressure came from each person.

Bill Isbister took the heavy work job of Chief Inspector for the Mosquito and he was supported by Sid Smith, who became quite an "institution", and many other dedicated inspectors who performed an outstanding task which is one of the most difficult. The inspectors have to ensure that nothing "gets through".

Steve Newbiggin was a stalwart in the subcontract field, as he had previously been in the Tiger Moth project and was later joined by Vic Webb from the Aircraft Production Commission. There was a large force of talent. Recruiting was considerable and constant and the subcontract area became a large part of the project.

Cec Fordham, the backbone of prewar civil aircraft electrical work at Mascot, moved from his business to take over the complete electrical side of the Mosquito and it is probably this fact which is responsible for the complete absence of any electrical problems with the Mosquito.

Jim Kirby (later Sir James) whose machine shop was of the highest standard and had

been used by civil aircraft operators pre-war constantly, took over the Australian production of hydraulic jacks that operated in an exemplary manner. Jim Kirby also took the management job for aero-engines at the APC Lidcombe factory.

Automatic Totalisators turned their machine shop over to Mosquito work.

Wunderlich developed the skills for Australian manufacture of the highly stressed aluminium castings used in the Mosquito for control surface hinges and many other components. The product, developed with x-ray control was of the highest standard.

Wood working firms such as Rickett and Thorp (makers of first class furniture) made spars, ribs and other wooden components.

Chrysler in Adelaide using their motor car expertise made engine cowlings and fairings. Mervyn Waghorn, who had had experience with engine cowlings produced in England, expressed the view that the Australian cowlings fitted better than the English made.

Our shops made the first Mosquito wings. We took over a factory at Forest Lodge, where we made the spars, ribs and skins to try our tooling and methods, and the assembled the wings. We did not have the resources for wing production that required considerable area.

General Motors at Pagewood had the area and was keen for the job, but they wanted, as was their custom, to be self-sufficient and be responsible for the task they were performing, rather than being, as it were, under the control of our inspection.

The Aeronautical Inspection Directorate who controlled all inspections for the RAAF undertook to supervise and control this work with care as it was agreed that General Motors would be an "approved firm". Later on we had quality problems so we took a direct interest.

Various areas of buildings became available to us that we were able to use for production or for bulk storage of supplies. As for instance, a factory became available which previously was used for coffin making by Wood Coffil. We formerly inspected prior to taking over, the coffin makers still being at work. One cheerful worker said to us "we always mark down the height of people as they come in here-we know we'll get you sometime!"

Final assembly of the Mosquito would require a special building. This was to be made at Bankstown. Major Murray Jones summoned me to accompany him to Bankstown one day with the purpose of pegging out what would be our assembly hall and flight-shed. Bankstown aerodrome was surrounded by virgin land at that

## John Mills Recalls – contd

time and was in fact, quite a trip from Mascot and Camperdown.

The difference between the Bankstown aerodrome of the day and the Bankstown aerodrome scene at the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mosquito's first flight was quite noticeable!

I had been very impressed with the consolidated "Liberator" assembly line at San Diego, California, which allowed one Liberator to come off the line every hour. This line was about a mile long. It seemed to me that our Mosquito assembly line would need to be a long one, with the assembly hall designed to allow one line, shaped like a "U", two parallel lines of half the length with the area allowed down the middle for stores and engine sub assembly. The hall we designed had accommodation for some twenty Mosquitos.

The flight shed and tarmac were adjacent and the adjoining factory for fuselage manufacture happened later to meet our needs.

In writing these notes some 50 years after they occurred I find it not possible to properly recall names of the great and quite remarkable team whom we gathered around us to build the Mosquito in Australia.

I find it not possible to refer to any of the wonderful and thorough files which was so diligently and faithfully compiled and kept to by my secretary Marion McKillop whilst she supported me in most difficult circumstances, but I would like to acknowledge the wonderful help to me personally.

In referring to the great team again, which helped build the

Mosquito, I recollect the true statement, often forgotten, that the greatest assets an organisation has are its people. I have written a separate note covering "People" for this purpose.

Our initial wooden construction was carried out using casein cement. "Beetle" cement was produced locally by Elliott Brothers, it tested well and we changed completely to "Beetle" cement at the same time as English and Canadian production. It was found that under conditions of low humidity, Beetle cement had problems and accordingly we arranged to measure humidity regularly and, when necessary, we adjusted the workshop humidity using fixed water sprays fitted near the roof.

During the project I did not recall any problems from gluing either casein or Beetle, when the joints had been formed in a proper manner. They were problems with wings when the gluing had not ensured proper fit at the time of assembly, as referred to later.

The sample Mosquito from England arrived disassembled and flew at Bankstown on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1942, the pilot being Squadron Leader Bruce Rose. After fitment later with Packard Merlin engines it again flew on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1943 and later became A52-1001.

The subcontracting of manufacture was a very demanding business because the weakest link limits the strength of the chain. We had many hundreds of subcontractors.

Tooling became a problem when some of our subcontractors found that the tooling for particular machining operations

was inadequate causing scraping of valuable castings and forgings. We obtained help in correcting this aspect.

David McLauchlan as Director of Finance was of great help in assisting with subcontractors financially. A contractor who has financial problems can be a problem.

John Byrne had a fine team in the supply side, John Throsby and Hec Adams and Peter Rockingham were key people.

The first Australian made Mosquito flew as a fighter bomber, Mark 40 as A52-1 on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1943, Wing Commander Gibson Lee being the test pilot, thus making the period from commencement just over a year. The first delivery to the RAAF was March 4<sup>th</sup> 1944, followed by the second that month, and one in April, two in May, one in June.

After the first Australian Mosquito flew, Major Murray Jones considered the production stage had occurred and that the DH 98 divisions ceased to exist, all production groups reported directly to the General Manager.

Major Murray Jones appointed me in September 1943 to be the first Chief Engineer of the Australian company with responsibility for engineering, inspection, experimental and field service sections of our aircraft division. I was moved to the corporate headquarters that were in the Watson House, Bligh Street in Sydney.

The stress of trying to get production going quickly was felt by all those in the project. Problems and disappointments are

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Barrington Tops Mossie

*In a previous bulletin Lindsey Clayton of the Newcastle City Council "Footsloggers" asked us -*

"I am writing in an effort to locate information on a RAAF Mosquito Bomber that crashed in the Barrington Tops of NSW.

The information I have is the aircraft was on a training flight from Williamtown RAAF Base when at 12.10pm April 16, 1945 it crashed into a mountain now known as 'Aeroplane Hill', killing both pilot and navigator. The wreckage was not discovered until January 1946.

I seek the information to include in the log I am compiling from a recent bushwalk into the area. We try to record historical data as accurately as possible, this will help to supplement the information gathered on the hike."

*One of our members Howard Young of Kununurra in Western Australia, wrote the following response -*

"Thought you may also be interested in an unconfirmed report of the circumstance of the Mosquito crash I have uncovered during my research.

There is an unproven suspicion that the aircraft suffered a problem and was forced to land on the flat surface of Edwards Swamp, (near to the site of Aeroplane Hill). It is suspected the crew made repairs to the aircraft and took off but were unable to gain sufficient altitude before crashing into the treeline of the hill. Official records don't support this stop/start theory and list the crash to be of unknown cause but suspect pilot error, flying too low for the terrain.

If your readers are interested in visiting the site of the crash it is not a difficult bushwalk however it is approximately a 2 hour hike from nearest vehicle access and something that probably shouldn't be attempted during the winter months. A point of interest for intending walkers is the creek water in the Barringtons is the run off, filtered through high swamps of Sphagnum Moss, probably the purest water you will drink anywhere in the world."

*Lindsey has contacted us once again with some more information about the Barrington Tops Mossie -*

"We have been able to locate only a small amount of info on the crash.

I have found that an engine from the crashed plane has been salvaged and restored and is now on display at the Fighter World Museum, (RAAF Williamtown).

Following is a copy of the information (*edited, Ed*) we included for distribution in our log, hope you find it interesting.

"At 12:30pm on the 16th of April, 1945 a mosquito bomber left Williamtown RAAF Base, piloted by Flight Lieutenant Anthony G. Warren, from Perth with Flying Officer George F. Bidstrup, from Broadfoot, Victoria, the navigator.

The aircraft was taking part in a cross-country training exercise to Moree, Nyngan and return to Williamtown.

Contact was lost with the Mosquito soon after takeoff from Williamtown. Three other Mosquitoes, with crews under training, flew the same cross-country exercise that afternoon.

The duration of the exercise was four and a half hours and upon its failure to return the aircraft was declared missing.

A search was commenced at dawn the following day, (17/4/45), and extended for several days without success. Although all Mosquito and Beaufighter crews were briefed to fly that route thereafter and keep a lookout for the missing aircraft, the wreckage was not discovered until the 17th of January, 1946.

Kenneth T. Collison of Stewarts Brook, whilst on leave from the AIF, was out mustering cattle when he came upon the plane's wreckage scattered over a vast area with some pieces high up in the tree tops.

The remains of the unfortunate crew were buried with full military honours in the Sandgate War Cemetery on the 4th of February 1946."

Thanks to Lindsey and Howard for their contributions to the story. Can anybody else add to the

### Spot the Airfield

How many of you recognised A52-600's airfield in the last issue?

Yes, it was Coomalie Creek, N.T.

## Butch and Eddie

A couple of anecdotes from member Wal Sant:

### **Story number one:**

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific.

One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier.

Reluctantly he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet. As he was returning to the mother ship, he saw something that turned his blood cold. A squadron of Japanese Zeroes were speeding their way toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie and the fleet was all but defenseless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor, could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger. There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes.

Wing-mounted 50 caliber's blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy plane and then another. Butch weaved in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until finally all his ammunition was spent. Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dove at the Zeroes, trying to at least clip off

a wing or tail, in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly. He was desperate to do anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships. Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction. Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier. Upon arrival he reported in and related the event surrounding his return. The film from the camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He was recognized as a hero and given one of the nation's highest military honors.

And today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man.

### **Story number two:**

Some years earlier there was a man in Chicago called Easy Eddie. At that time, Al Capone virtually owned the city. Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic. His exploits were anything but praiseworthy. He was, however, notorious for enmeshing the city of Chicago in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder.

Easy Eddie was Capone's lawyer and for a good reason, he was very good! In fact, his skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time. To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big; Eddie got special dividends.

For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all of the

conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it filled an entire Chicago city block. Yes, Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocity that went on around him.

Eddy did have one soft spot, however. He had a son that he loved dearly. Eddy saw to it that his young son had the best of everything; clothes, cars, and a good education.

Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime, Eddie even tried to teach him right from wrong.

Yes, Eddie tried to teach his son to rise above his own sordid life. He wanted him to be a better man than he was. Yet, with all his wealth and influence, there were two things that Eddie couldn't give his son. Two things that Eddie sacrificed to the Capone mob that he could not pass on to his beloved son: a good name and a good example.

One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision.

Offering his son a good name was far more important than all the riches he could lavish on him. He had to rectify all the wrong that he had done.

He would go to the authorities and tell the truth about Scar-face Al Capone. He would try to clean up his tarnished name and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this he must testify against The Mob, and he knew that the cost would be great. But more than anything, he wanted to be an example to his son. He wanted to do his best to make restoration and hopefully have a good name to leave his son. So, he testified. Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street. He had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer at the greatest price he would ever pay.

I know what you're thinking. What do these two stories have to do

## A Mossie at Darwin

The writer was a Cypher person in WW 2 and served at 58 OBU Truscott, the Commanding Officer S/Ldr Rayson and the base being occasionally overnight host to crews of PR Mosquitos and others exploiting the additional operational range which that remote base offered.

The Atom Bombs on Japan, within days, reduced the use of Cyphers and Codes by about 99% and a promising career in that darkly secretive activity

appropriate as I had driven light vehicles on our farm and it seemed to offer the prospect of a wider scene in which to operate.

Then one day I was on a run with a light truck to Adelaide River when an encyphered signal arrived during my absence. Upon returning to the Transport Section I sensed an uncharacteristic tenseness in the air. I was in trouble it seemed for not being avail-

*So what about the mossie mentioned in the heading? Ah yes... the photo of A52-511 was taken at RAAF Darwin on one of the numerous dispersed hardstanding areas late in the war. I understand a RAAF photographer took it. The plane is either going to or returning from Labuan and is a Fighter / Bomber (VI) one of 76 supplied from the UK RAF No HR 450. It was reduced to components in Sept 1946.*



was cut short. With time still to serve in the area I moved through a number of short postings such as No 20 (Catalina) Sqdn at East Arm (Darwin) Operations Room, North Western Area HQ Signals Office, No 5 Radio Installation and Maintenance Unit Orderly Room (58 mile), being used as a jack of all trades in a clerical sense.

None was all that compatible ... until a posting to RAAF Darwin again as a Cypher person. Encyphered signals were rare here too, both incoming or outgoing, but as the arrival of such a signal could not be predicted a Cypher person was required to be reasonably accessible (at the Main RAAF) at all times; the next closest qualified person, I was told, being at Alice Springs.

I was tested, passed and duly approved via DRO's as a DMT. Driving looked like being more appro-

ble to decode the signal for the CO. The DMT Sergeant was in trouble for me not being there and available to the CO and so on it went.. In due course the signal all came out neat and clear and was passed to the now very anxious CO who, incidentally, was S/Ldr Rayson, ex-Truscott, so we had a nodding acquaintance. The text of the signal is now long forgotten and I think had little immediate significance to RAAF Darwin.

The solution to that hiatus was a bit of lateral thinking: I was made the driver of the CO's car and was therefore always available for either purpose... the combination being none too tiresome for me. I also got to drive what seemed to me at the time, a huge car; a left-hand drive Ford V8 Saloon with gear change under the steering wheel ... all that was a new experience.

The Main RAAF then covered some 3,260 acres (1,320 hectares) and by early post war much of the taxiways to and the dispersed parking areas were little used. With the access to a vehicle as mentioned above I was sometimes able to do a complete tour of all of the dispersal areas and taxiways; just prior to darkness it was a very pleasant experience for they were thronged with Kangaroos and Wallabies ... what a contrast to just 6 months earlier. I finally got back to Sydney appropriately enough on April Fool's Day 1946. So that's a small anecdote from a nineteen year-olds' slightly misspent youth. With thanks to all the Aircrews who took care of the rough stuff.

C. Smith. Benowa Waters. Qld.



## FLTLT JT Kearney DFC, RAAF – contd

(Continued from page 2)

But it was not always enemy fire that found its mark, Kearney's outing to the Timor village of Ossu culminating with a 'few friendly rounds from the aircraft behind', hits that 'skinned his legs but caused no other damage'.

Indeed, Kearney rapidly gained a reputation for having a 'special magnetic attraction for gunfire of all sorts', luckily an attraction that never proved fatal. Posted out of the Squadron in July 1943, he briefly returned to operations with No 87 SQN in early 1945, when he piloted photo reconnaissance Mosquitoes until the end of the hostilities.

One of his more notable sorties was the longest one every carried out by the Squadron, namely a 2,300 mile trip to Semarang, East Java, which was completed in nine hours.

Kearney, who had gained advancement to FLGOFF in July 1943, is credited with the destruction of nine enemy aircraft in *Aces High* by Shores and Williams (1966 edition), but he is not among the Aces listed

## Vale

The Association sadly informs the passing of one of its members:

*William (Bill) H Reedy*

of Bull Creek WA, who died on December 15th 2000. Bill assisted the Association for over 9 years.

Our condolences go to his wife Anne on her sad loss.

## MAAA Merchandise

The MAAA in conjunction with *LANDINGEAR Pty Ltd* has produced a line of clothing that pictures A52-600 and identifies our Association.

Items currently available:

### Embroidered Caps \$20.00

Navy/Red suede peak cap  
A52-600 motif embroidered on front  
MAAA across back  
Adjustable – one size fits all

### Polo Shirts \$35.00

Poly cotton with pockets  
A52-600 motif with MAAA embroidered on front  
Sizes – adult small to 4XL

### T-shirts \$20.00

Silver grey  
A52-600 motif print on front  
MAAA print on sleeve  
Sizes – adult small to 3XL

The items listed can be ordered (please state your name and address, a phone contact, the items, the sizes and quantity required)

#### *by writing to :*

MAAA Merchandise  
C/- Alan Middleton  
14 Fitzgibbon Crescent  
CAULFIELD Vic 3161.

or

**phone** Alan on 61 (0) 3 9523 9774

or

**fax** Alan on 61 (0) 3 9532 8115

Payments (**no cash please**) via cheque or money order should be made to:

“The Mosquito Aircraft Association of Australia”

Price includes postage, packaging and GST.

**Note:** Please allow up to 3 to 4 weeks for delivery (after receipt of payment by Alan).

## John Mills Recalls – contd

*(Continued from page 5)*

a constant part of such an operation. Each person worked to the utmost of his or her capacity with only one objective and the bond that was formed in such an experience is lasting and remarkable. It cannot be properly described, but it is real.

The challenge of having some twenty Mosquito aircraft on the assembly line with difficulties preventing them from moving forward caused a great amount of work for parties from other sections.

Groups organised from Mervyn Waghorn's technical group spent nights and days troubleshooting and helping the men on the regular assembly line. Our main sources of trouble were mechanical and hydraulic; the electrical side of production, watched over by Cec Fordham seemed to just flow on smoothly.

We had sad times. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1944 Mervyn Waghorn and I and many others witnessed the breakup of Mosquito A52-12 as it pulled out of a high-speed dive near the ground killing the test pilot – Hubert Boss Walker (who had come to us from CAC) and Peter Rockingham. Peter, our supply manager, was having his first Mosquito flight. Peter had been brought to Bankstown by myself and given my "seat" in the aeroplane which I had arranged with Boss Walker.

A very detailed inspection of each piece of the aeroplane indicated that there had not being any glue joint failures, each fracture having shown timber coming away with the glue, showing the maximum strength had been achieved.

We concluded that there had been high-speed flutter, starting at the wind tip causing the wing tip to pull off and start peeling off the wind surface which continued

quickly at the high-speed and gravity loads. We introduced a modification of the wing tip attachment and did not experience a repetition of this failure. We discussed this with Mr Bishop, designer of the Mosquito.

In mid 1944 we discovered that some wings that had been assembled at GMH Pagewood were defective. Wing MM 121 was damaged due to a crank problem at it was discovered that there had been faulty fitting of the top wing skin to the front spar.

A delivered aircraft crashed due to a wing failure and inspection showed a similar defect. All aircraft were grounded around July/August 1944 for detailed inspection that included samples trepanned from the top skin and Windows cut in the front spar to enable the wing/spar glue joint to be checked.

There was a crash of a T Mk 3 (English built Mosquito trainer) at the Petersham Public School, which fortunately avoided any children, in which we were involved. There was a prior pre-delivery crash of one of our Australian Mosquito's at Bankstown which was, after investigation, put down to excessive speed and pullout near the ground and on his first test flight as the company pilot, Flight Lieutenant Ifould crashed on approach at Bankstown and was killed. This, on investigation was put down as an unfortunate accident,

This was a sad time and John Kerr, Service Manager for D. H. took over all company test flying and continued for many months until relieved by "Titus" Oates. He, in due course was relieved by "Black Jack" Walker who continued as the DH test pilot into the post war era.

Pat Fillingham, test pilot from DH England, came to us in October

1943 to give us the essential detail of the finished product that is so necessary. He spent some months with us and was a most helpful and commanding personality. As a side comment, in a letter this year, when he was told that HDH was putting together a Mosquito for the museum, he said "I have great feelings of affection for the time I was able to be in Australia-if you want your Mosquito tested I would love to come out".

When the faulty wing assembly problem was discovered, Major Murray Jones instructed me to personally move into the Pagewood plant of GMH until the matter could be resolved.

Bill Isbister allocated top line inspectors to be resident at GMH, the Aeronautical Inspection Directorate, RAAF, had a reassessment of staff and the approved firms status. Wings assembled were now under the strictest control.

I remained at Pagewood until the situation was satisfactory and it was then resolved I should travel to DH England to personally confer about our Australian experiences.

The trip to England and return could now be quick and by air. The Qantas Colombo/Perth Liberator flights had now replaced the famous "double sunrise" flights by a Catalina flying boat. Colombo/Karachi was by RAF land plane and Karachi/London and return was by Sunderland flying boat.

DH Hatfield and the London area generally were under V2 threats on a regular basis and it was always more than impressive to see the civilian reactions to this enemy action. For instance, on a side note, a medical appointment in London whilst waiting my turn, surrounded by women and chil-

## John Mills Recalls – contd

dren and some men, an incredibly loud blast, followed by an earth tremor in the room, occurred. No one showed the slightest concern or surprise. The doctor said quietly, giving me one of my shots, "another V2 - quite close" and business went on as usual.

As I drove away I saw that the V2 had landed a couple of hundred yards away. I saw the roads being quietly cordoned off and workers beginning to remove the rubble and carry out their allotted tasks.

DH Hatfield had had bomb damage but not extensive. The spirit to produce aeroplanes was tremendous and now the whine of jet engines could be heard as the DH jet engines were being tested in the nearby tests cells. For very urgent development!

DH 103 "Hornet", twin engine developments of the Mosquito were around with their powerful, improved performance, but the main effort was for Mosquito production.

Some people at DH were thinking about what would happen when Hitler was defeated and David Newman told me of the possibilities seen for a four engine passenger jet liner, firstly with centrifugal compressors and later axial compressors.

This dream subsequently, postwar, became the "Comet" which was surely have swept postwar civil jet airliner field had not been for the problems of fatigue in aluminium alloys, not foreseen by designers or by our air worthiness authorities.

I had long talks with Mr Bishop, chief designer of the Mosquito, telling of our Australian Mosquito experiences, our accidents, our difficulties we had experi-

enced and our beliefs about the causes.

Mr Bishop was a very thoughtful person and a far seeing leader. The consensus concerning our A52-12 breakup in which Boss Walker and Peter Rockingham lost their lives was that it could well have been flutter which initiated the breakup. The evidence being of ply breakup in small fragments growing to larger segments and with all glued joints showing as timber failure and hence full glue strength which was important in this regard. The wing tip attachment modification was considered the final fix.

I had meetings with Mr Richard Clarkson, Chief of Aerodynamics who, in his quiet manner, showed me the curves which confirmed that the Mosquito was still the fastest aeroplane driven by propellers.

As a side comment, it is interesting to read in 1991 how Richard Clarkson, prewar, having read the latest work on engine radiator cooling produced a radiator layout for the Merlin engine which will give a positive thrust.

History shows that that the Royal Aircraft Establishment tested the arrangement (although they were told they could not do so because no order existed for the aeroplane) and were delighted with the positive thrust they obtained which probably added some 15 mile per hour to the aeroplane speed.

I went with the best wing making people to learn their latest and was able to return quickly with valuable information.

In May 1944 the RAAF asked DH to convert six FB Mark 40 aircraft to PRU version with five cameras and extra fuel. A special design group was set up in the working party, supplemented by Manpower from the RAAF,

did the job quickly, the six PRU aircraft being delivered in October 1944.

The trials report showed a range of around 3000 miles with 100 gallon wing drop tanks and internal fuel capacity increased. These are unarmed PRU aircraft saw much service reconnoitering the Japanese north of Australia.

I have tried not to repeat material from Martin Sharp's book (though I have made constant reference to it) but the above material is from Martin's book.

I have not tried to cover in any detail the immense amount of work and study by the technical department that resulted from the unfortunate wing assembly situation, briefly referred to above. It was done with the greatest devotion, covering the non-destructive testing and repair requirements that resulted.

Towards the end of 1944 Major Murray Jones arranged that Mr Lee Murray should come to Australia as general manager of the aircraft division. Mr Lee Murray, born in Australia, had been General Manager of the DH organisation in England, prewar and during the difficult times when the production of the Mosquito in England was often in the balance.

When the quality of the Mosquito were recognised, then the demand for production quantities always exceeded the capacity of the original designer/constructor. Over 7000 Mosquito's were ultimately built in England, Canada and Australia of which the Australian number were 103 up to VJ day (209 finally). Australian Mosquitos in the PR squadrons and to tactical reconnaissance squadrons were equipped to use the Mosquito in World War II in ended.

Mr Lee Murray was a great

## What's life like flying in a "cookie carrier"?

From **"Bombers, The Aircrew Experience"** by Philip Kaplan.

Published 2000 by:  
Aurum Press Ltd,  
25 Bedford Avenue,  
London WC1B 3AT.

Page 85.

"Early in the spring of 1944 a Mosquito unlike any we had seen before flew into Oakington. It was standard Mk IV modified to carry a 4000lb bomb, the famous 'cookie'.

To accommodate this large piece of ordnance the bomb bay had been strengthened and the bomb doors redesigned. The aircraft looked like a pregnant lady, because its belly was markedly rotund. Our CO announced that we were to fly the cookie-carrier as much as possible and the most experienced crews were detailed to take her on normal operations.

The night arrived when Bill Hickox and I were ordered to try our hand with this new machine on a target in the Ruhr. Take-off was not difficult, but quite definitely she was not a scalded cat. As soon as her

tail came up I pushed the throttles quickly forward to the gate (plus 9 pound boost, 3000rpm) and then clenched my left hand over the gate catch releases and eased the throttles to the fully open position (plus 12 pounds boost, 3000rpm).

In G-George this would have resulted in a glorious acceleration and a hop, skip and jump into the air. Not so with our pregnant lady; she waddled along and took most of the runway before she deigned to unstick.

Moreover the climb was a sedate affair and we took much longer to reach 25,000 feet than with our usual steed; and when she arrived there she took a long time to settle to a steady cruise. However, we eventually sorted ourselves out and headed resolutely for the Ruhr.

In the target area I felt distinctly nervous - there we were, with the bomb doors open and Bill droning away with his 'Left, left - right - steady' and I knew that every gunner in the Ruhr could see the enormous bomb we were carrying and was determined to explode it and blow us to smithereens.

I looked at the bomb jettison handle in front of me - no delicate lever this; it was a solid bar of metal which, if moved, would manually release the massive catch holding the 'cookie' and down the bomb would go. If the bomb doors had not been opened, that was hard luck - the 'cookie' would still drop away and take the bomb doors with it!

However, no such inglorious thing happened.

Bill suddenly announced 'Bomb gone', and as he did so the Mossie shot up like a lift. There was no delicate porpoising, as with four 500-pounders; the altimeter moved instantly through 500 feet of altitude. I had never seen anything like this before. More importantly, as soon as I closed the bomb doors our fat little lady became almost a normal Mosquito and accelerated to a fast cruising speed."

*J. R. Goodman, formerly with Nos 37, 99, 139 and 627 Squadrons, RAF.*

**Our thanks to a regular contributor of articles and host of the MAAA's Internet Web Page -**

**member Brian Fillery**

**for this item.**

### New Member

The Association wishes to introduce and welcome:

**Sapper Stephan Papsdorf**

who is an army lad in:

**17 Construction Squadron**

stationed at:

**Holsworthy Barracks, NSW**

## The Ninth Annual General Meeting

Will be held at: **Caulfield RSL  
St Georges Road  
Elsternwick, Vic**

On: **Saturday 11th August 2001**

Commencing at: **14:00**

All welcome and bring a friend

(Please read loose leaf sheets for more information and nominations forms for the Executive Committee)