

Air Power Studies Centre

Command and Leadership
in War and Peace
1914-1975

The Proceedings of the
1999 RAAF History Conference

Held in Canberra on 29 October 1999

Edited by Barry Sutherland

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Papers have been printed as presented by authors, with only minor changes to achieve some consistency in layout, spelling and terminology. The transcripts of the discussions which followed the presentation of the papers have been edited for relevance.

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Barry Sutherland
January 2000

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

AIR MARSHAL E.J. MCCORMACK, AO

Air Marshal Errol McCormack joined the RAAF in 1962 as an aircrew cadet and was commissioned in 1963.

As a junior officer he served in Malaysia and Singapore during Confrontation, Thailand as part of SEATO forces, Vietnam during the war and the United States on exchange duty with the US Air Force.

As a senior officer he completed staff appointments in operations and operational requirements and as Air Attache, Washington and Deputy Chief of Air Force. He has commanded at unit (No 1 Squadron, F111), wing (No 82 Wing, F111) and operational (FPDA Integrated Air Defence System) levels.

Air Marshal McCormack attended both RAAF and Joint Services Staff Colleges and served on the directing staff of both institutions.

AIR VICE-MARSHAL E.M. WELLER

Air Vice-Marshal Mac Weller, AM, joined the RAAF as an aircraft engineering apprentice in 1958 and completed forty years service in technical and logistics posts.

He served in command appointments at the ranks of Group Captain, Air Commodore and Air Vice-Marshal. In staff appointments, he had a leading influence in the development of contemporary engineering policy and the introduction of P3-C and F/A-18 aircraft.

Mac Weller was one of two non-aircrew qualified engineers to serve as AOC of Logistics Command and is the only ex-apprentice to hold a two-star command appointment. Nonetheless, he rates his most rewarding leadership role as the Senior Engineering Officer of No 9 Squadron and officer in charge of technical personnel providing operational maintenance for Iroquois helicopters in Vietnam.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller retired in February 1997 but continues an involvement with the RAAF serving on the RAAF Reserve as the Technical Member of the Airworthiness Board. He describes himself as a keen but amateurish student of RAAF history.

GROUP CAPTAIN MARK LAX

Group Captain Mark Lax joined the RAAF Academy in 1974 and graduated Dux of his class. After undertaking navigator training he flew C-130 and F-111s operationally with 37 and 1 Squadrons. GD Aerosystems course followed in 1982, after which he spent four years at ARDU on flight trials duties. On promotion to

Squadron leader he was posted as Chief Weapons Instructor at the School of Air Navigation and afterwards, to an operations requirements staff job in Canberra, mainly working on F-111 projects.

He completed RAAF Staff College in 1991 followed by a command appointment as CO Base Squadron East Sale where he produced a history of the base. Afterwards, he spent time as a staff officer at the Air Power Studies Centre where he wrote a number of publications including ADFP6 Sup 3 – Operations (Air) Doctrine, the AAP1001 – Condensed Air Power Manual and had a large input into the AAP 1000 Ed 2.

In mid-1996 he attended the USAF Air War College where he was awarded the Commandant's Prize for excellence for his paper on the future of RAAF Air Power. Most recently, he was Base Commander Richmond until the middle of last year before taking up his present appointment of Director of Doctrine and Development at Headquarters Air Command. He has just had his AAP 1003 – RAAF Operational Air Power Doctrine Manual released by Air Commander Australia.

He is a regular book reviewer, has contributed numerous articles to defence publications, and is the author or co-author of six books including *One Airman's War*, the diary of an airman serving in the AFC. His latest, published this year, is *The Gestapo Hunters*, the history of 464 Squadron, RAAF.

DR JOHN MORDIKE

John Mordike was formerly an officer in the Australian Army. His military career spanned seventeen years of commissioned service and included several regimental and staff appointments. During this period, he spent one year on active service in Vietnam with 12 Field Regiment. After leaving the Army, he was appointed in a civilian capacity as a historian in Army Office. He is the author of *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880-1914*. John is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and the Universities of New England and New South Wales.

Mr David Gardner

Mr David Gardner is the Senior Curator of the RAAF Museum. He served on a number of operational squadrons before coming to the Museum, working on such aircraft as the Dakota, Neptune, Canberra, Airtrainer, Iroquois, Chinook, Phantom and F-111. Dave retired from the RAAF in March 1997 after 30 years service.

The hallmark of David's service career was his dedication to duty and loyalty to the Air Force. He was widely regarded as an innovative skilled technician and in 1996, the 75th anniversary of the RAAF, he was recognised as one of the fifty notable personalities of the period.

David was appointed Curator of the RAAF Museum in 1986. During the past eleven years he has taken the Museum from a dusty collection of artefacts to a world class aviation museum, showing the proud history of the RAAF. This development

culminated in 1996 with the opening of the Museum's new Heritage Gallery, designed and produced by David.

Not content with simply developing the Museum displays, he has now directed his drive and enthusiasm into developing and implementing Pegasus, the project to construct a large aircraft display facility at the Museum. In the meantime he continues to work on and restore aircraft.

Dave Gardner holds a Graduate Diploma in Museum Management and a Master of Applied Science degree in Museum Studies. He has recently undertaken further studies to attain a Doctor of Technology at Deakin University.

DR ALAN STEPHENS

Before joining the Air Power Studies Centre, Dr Stephens was the principal research officer in the Federal Parliament, specialising in foreign affairs and defence. Prior to this appointment Dr Stephens was a pilot in the RAAF, where his postings included service in Vietnam and an appointment as the Commanding Officer of No 2 Squadron in 1980-81.

Dr Stephens is the author or editor of numerous books and articles on security, military history, doctrine and air power. He has also lectured extensively on those subjects throughout South-East Asia, Europe and North America. He was one of the principal authors of the third edition of the RAAF's Air Power Manual (1998), and is currently writing a history of the RAAF which will be published by Oxford University Press in 2001.

Dr Stephens other research interests include the nature of conflict and military strategy.

He is a graduate of the RAAF Staff College, and of the University of New England the Australian National University, and the University of New South Wales.

AIR VICE-MARSHAL B.D. O'LOGHLIN

Brendan O'Loghlin was born in Sydney and grew up in Brisbane. Following his graduation from the RAAF Academy and flying training, he flew Sabres and Mirages in Australia, Singapore and Malaysia. He subsequently converted to helicopters (Iroquois), tactical transports (Caribou) and the Macchi and PC-9 trainers.

Following an appointment in London, recent appointments have been Director of Military Strategic Policy, OC RAAF Butterworth (Malaysia), Director of the Air Power Studies Centre, Director-General Military Strategy and Concepts and AOC RAAF Training Command. His last appointment before retirement from the RAAF was head of the Australian Defence Staff in Washington in the rank of air vice-marshal. He took up the appointment of Principal of the Australian Defence College in Canberra in January 1999.

Brendan holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Melbourne University and Master of Arts from the Australian National University. He is an officer of the Order of Australia and of the US Legion of Merit.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Australian Air Corps
ABDA	American British Dutch Australian
ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy
AF	Air Force
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AIS	Aviation Instructional Staff
AN&MEF	Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force
ANZAC	Australia, New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States
AO	Area of Operations
AOC	Air Officer Commanding
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
CAF	Citizens Air Force
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force
CGM	Conspicuous Gallantry Medal
CGS	Chief of General Staff
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
CO	Commanding Officer
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DRP	Defence Reform Program
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HQ	Headquarters
INTERFET	International Forces East Timor
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NASMA	National Air and Space Museum of Australia
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
OC	Officer Commanding
OTU	Operational Training Unit
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RMC	Royal Military College
RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
RTU	Recruit Training Unit
SNCO	Senior Non-commissioned Officer
SO	Staff Officer
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNTAET	United Nations Transition Authority East Timor
US	United States

USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USAF	United States Air Force
VC	Victoria Cross
WOD	Warrant Officer Disciplinary
WRAAF	Women's Royal Australian Air Force

OPENING ADDRESS

AIR MARSHAL E.J. McCORMACK

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen - welcome to this eighth annual RAAF History Conference.

The subject of this year's conference - *Command and Leadership in War and Peace 1914-1975* – is one of enormous relevance to air forces, even as we approach the new millennium. There is no greater evidence of this interest than the large number of people here today. From my briefing on the conference, I know that today's proceedings will be both interesting and informative. Too often, air forces are so enamoured with technology that they pay scant attention to those factors that most contribute to war-winning effort. The primary factor, in my opinion, is well-trained intelligent people with competent leadership, and there are good reasons why this conference's topic is so particularly relevant.

The Australian Defence Force is currently involved in two 'firsts' as part of its operations. One of these firsts is the task currently being conducted by the Australian-led multinational force, INTERFET, on behalf of the United Nations in East Timor. With the majority of INTERFET's elements being of Australian composition, its operations have placed both the Australian Government and the Department of Defence in a strategic leadership role for the first time. In all other conflicts, including those covered by this conference, Australia has looked to its great and powerful friends for strategic direction. For the East Timor crisis, the Australian Government and the Department of Defence have had to make decisions on the allocation and deployment of forces. For the first time, there has been little or no external input in determining the strategic direction. INTERFET's authorisation to meet its mandate is in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter; that is, it is a peace-making operation where there is no agreement between the conflicting parties. For this operation, General Cosgrove works directly for CDF and the Australian Minister of Defence. With the transition from INTERFET to UNTAET, there will be a change in the command chain with the commander reporting to the UN, although it will still be a Chapter VII operation.

The other first is that East Timor is our first significant crisis in the post-Defence Reform Program environment. While our forecasts allowed no surprises, RAAF has encountered problems in the combat support area. The resources provided under DRP allowed the RAAF to support an area of operations with one operational base outside the AO, and one main operating base and two forward operating bases in the AO, all with no rotation of staff allowed. In Australia for the duration of the East Timor crisis, Darwin is being used as a forward support base for UNAMET, INTERFET and, eventually, UNTAET operations. Townsville is being used as the mounting base for INTERFET while Tindal is being used as an operational base. In East Timor, we are using Dili and Bacau as forward operating bases, with Cakung Airport outside Bacau being used as the point-of-entry airfield. All the many, varied and often short-notice

requirements generated by the crisis have been met only through the hard work of all our people under excellent leadership by COs and OCs.

Let me now move to the conference itself. All of today's presenters, with one exception, have served or are serving in the RAAF. All bring with them an interest in the history of the RAAF so I look forward to hearing what they have to tell us. Although the range of RAAF history topics begins historically with the World War I experiences of the Australian Flying Corps, the presentations begin with a characterisation of RAAF command and leadership by Air Vice-Marshal Mac Weller. His presentation opens up the subject and provides a setting for the other speakers. While some papers will deal predominantly with commanders and leaders in peace and war, others will deal with the structure of command, and also the social dimension of RAAF command and leadership. Also as part of today's conference, Air Marshal Evans will launch Air Commodore Garrison's book, *Australian Fighter Aces*, during the afternoon break in the area just outside this theatre.

This is a great day ahead. Unfortunately, I will be absent part of the time at a necessary meeting but I encourage you to participate actively in the discussions. All of today's discussions will be recorded for inclusion in the conference proceedings to be published by the Air Power Studies Centre, so this is your chance to play an active part in this popular event.

Thank you for being here and I declare this conference open.

A CHARACTERISATION OF LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND IN THE RAAF

AIR VICE-MARSHAL E.M. WELLER

May I invite you back in history to a moonlit night at Kiriwina in the South-West Pacific on the 8th November 1943 - the Air Officer Commanding (AOC) of No 9 Operational Group, Air Commodore Hewitt, is huddled with squadron commanding officers (CO) around a map of Rabaul laid out on the bonnet of a vehicle. The question is whether No 8 Squadron Beauforts are to proceed that night on a mission to torpedo Japanese shipping in Simpson Harbour. The performance of the Beauforts with torpedoes has not been all that encouraging and a reconnaissance aircraft that day has shown that the enemy shipping is dispersed but grouped tightly for defence against attack from the air. Moreover, the aircraft reported deteriorating weather.

Hewitt is keen for a big push with 12 aircraft. However, the CO of No 8 Squadron, Squadron Leader Nicol, is not so enthusiastic and without prior reference to Hewitt, announces that 'the show is off'. There is disagreement and amidst tension and as a last resort, Hewitt calls for volunteers; eventually, three crews come forward and they leave at 0030 hours. One aircraft and its crew are lost and one ship is sunk.

Two days later, Hewitt relieves Nicol of his command. But a senior officer in the Group reports an unsatisfactory state of affairs in the Group to RAAF Headquarters. The upshot is that the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) then sacks Hewitt, and reports to the Minister for Air and also the Prime Minister that 'morale and discipline of senior officers in No 9 Operational Group were suffering as a result of Air Commodore Hewitt's administration'.

The Hewitt example is illustrative of at least two RAAF command and leadership characterisations: firstly, difficulties in the very crucial matter of the degree of commitment and employment of RAAF crews and aircraft to combat and, secondly, the propensity for questionable standards of RAAF leadership being drawn to the attention of Government. My task today is to develop a broad characterisation of leadership and command in the RAAF, from the historical record of some 87 years of Australian Flying Corps (AFC) and RAAF service, to set the scene for succeeding presentations to this conference.

I take the liberty to employ the broadest possible interpretations of the terms 'leadership and command'; leadership simply being 'the direction given by going in front' and command simply being 'the exercise of authority'. Since leadership is not the sole prerogative of commanders, I also aim to include the leadership involved in RAAF management functions such as capability development, sustainment, organisation and administration. I also wish to draw some glimpse of the inherent culture of the Australian military aviator because, of course, leadership is fundamentally connected to the attitudes of those who are to be led.

There are some risks in taking this approach. Firstly, I must necessarily be very general and secondly, I must be careful to provide a balanced approach and not over-emphasise the negatives. That is not easy because there are all too many examples of leadership deficiencies recorded in our history and perhaps not too many examples of good leadership. The problem seems to be that good leadership is a bit like the silent majority in politics; that is, good leadership often goes unheralded. Finally, I may appear provocative and, in that, I offer no apologies because I wish to stimulate thought and discussion because leadership and command are so fundamentally crucial as the quintessential elements of the military's business. We would not want our future leaders to be doomed to relive the lessons of the past.

So I plan to skim across our almost 90 years of AFC and RAAF history by covering those years in four blocks: the eras of World War I, the 1920 and 1930s, World War II, and post-World War II.

Clearly, the World War I era marked the embryonic development of leadership and command principles for military aviation forces with the recognition of those unique characteristics required of squadron and flight commanders who had to lead in the air as well as on the ground. For example, we read of the following basic guidelines being developed by squadron and flight commanders:

- A spirit of keenness and cheeriness should pervade the squadron, and grumbling and cantankerous officers quickly removed.
- The spirit of a squadron is the chief factor upon which success and good results depend.
- A flight commander should be keen and 'full out' to attack.
- Flight commanders must train their own pilots, correcting all faults.
- The efficiency of a flight commander can be judged by the behaviour of his pilots.
- Squadron and flight commanders must insist on good formation flying.

You can see the importance that was placed in those early days on the spirit of a squadron, the aggressive nature of flight commanders and flying standards. It was an era that produced many seasoned combat veterans - some had won acclaim for bravery, some were aces of the air and some were skilled in command. We can note:

- Cobby, the leading ace of the AFC, destroyed 29 aircraft.
- Major Richard Williams won the DSO for his command of a half flight in Mesopotamia and also commanded a wing of the Royal Flying Corps in Palestine in 1918.
- George Jones flew in France, achieved ace status by destroying seven aircraft and was awarded a DFC.

- Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald (Toby) Watt was an exceptional commander of No 2 Squadron in France (the novelist Locke said ‘there is not one of Watt’s men who did not confide in me his pride in serving under a leader so distinguished’).
- Lieutenant (later Group Captain) Harrison made the first flight at Point Cook and really was our first officer with the technical expertise to keep aircraft of that era in the air - he was our first leader of capability development.

An important consideration of this era was the extent to which the combat experience, gained both by these leaders and those led particularly at the tactical level, was used in latter years. Interestingly, there were two groups in this era: those who served in Europe and those who served in the Middle East. These groups impacted on the leadership and command. In latter years, Jones would claim that Williams was unreasonably influenced by his Middle East experience, saying that his preoccupation with two-seat fighters led partly to the RAAF going into World War II without a single-seat fighter capability. Some said that Williams also favoured his colleagues who served in the Middle East.

We start to see the emergence of the unique Australian military culture in this era. For example, C.E.W. Bean and John Masefield viewed Australians as resourceful, brave, fine physical specimens who answered the bugle call as bushmen from the outback. They loved a fight and possessed a streak of larrikinism, and were absolutely intolerant of pomposity. Conversely, the British saw Australians as being undisciplined, hard to lead and carrying a certain cringe. Without getting ahead of ourselves, we could recognise here that the RAF consciously avoided forming RAAF crews in World War II; they were considered detrimental to training discipline. I highlight the matter of discipline at this early stage because I will refer later to difficulties in the maintenance of discipline and morale under combat conditions. Overall, AFC pilots gained a reputation of almost mythical status as they responded to the harsh demands of combat in the air; indeed, some observers characterised Australians as ‘cowboys in a flying club’.

Turning to the post-World War I era of the 1920s and 1930s, there are two major questions for consideration: the extent to which the combat seasoned World War I leaders and commanders related to the peacetime challenges of building an Air Force, and how well did they provide for an adequate state of preparedness as the RAAF left this period and entered World War II. On both counts, Sir Richard Williams was a very influential figure. One has to admire William’s leadership in establishing an Air Force in the face of outright opposition, rivalry and wrangling by Army and Navy, and the economic difficulties of the depression years. But as we will see, his leadership was chequered.

It was a time of administrative laxity; some of the RAAF’s combat experienced leaders from World War I had little idea of managing stores, aircraft - or even bases. One flight commander - the legendary ‘Jerry’ Pentland (a good fighter pilot and World War I ace but an auditor’s nightmare) - discovered an aircraft missing during an inventory check. He merely wrote ‘written off’ in the ledger; the trouble was that his flight sergeant had simply taken the aircraft away for maintenance. In another

example on the night before a CAS inspection at Richmond by Air Vice-Marshal Williams, Station Commander Cobby was observed running around in the mess getting pilots' logbooks signed up. Does this administrative laxity perhaps indicate that the RAAF drops its guard after periods of combat and is it indicative that good combatants do not necessarily make good administrators or peacetime commanders?

Williams' answer to the administrative problem was to recruit junior officers from the other two services who he considered as being professionally trained. Mostly Army officers, they became known as the 'Duntrooners'. Their importance from a perspective of leadership and command was that they brought a legacy of Army leadership culture to the RAAF that lasted until the late 1960s with four becoming chiefs: Scherger, McCauley, Hancock and Murdoch.

There were two incidents in this era that illustrate the continuing RAF influence on the RAAF and the lack of Government confidence in senior RAAF leadership: I refer to the Salmond report and the Ellington report. The former report occurred in 1928 when Sir Hugh Trenchard (RAF CAS) was aggrieved that 'none of the Dominions had invited a senior RAF officer to visit them'. Williams picked this up and suggested a review partly because he thought it would 'help get air defence more in proportion to land and sea'. He probably wished he had not because the report by Air Marshal Sir John Salmond was quite unflattering. Notwithstanding the severe resource problems affecting the nation and the Air Force through the depression years, the RAAF was judged to be unfit for war with worn-out equipment and poor conditions of service. Importantly, the report was quite critical of Williams personally as a leader and led to his qualities being brought to the attention of Government.

The report by Sir Edward Ellington, Marshal of the Royal Air Force and Inspector-General of the RAF, was instigated by the Government in 1938 and, apparently, without the knowledge of CAS Sir Richard Williams. Ostensibly, it was provoked by a spate of RAAF flying accidents. As an aside, may I say here that nothing seems to excite the interest and concern more of the Government in the leadership of the RAAF than accidents. And in the 1920s and 1930s, there were a whole series of accidents. One, involving a prominent Labor party official's son - Pilot Officer Fallon who was killed in the crash of a Hawker Demon at Cootamundra - led to the Ellington Report. This report was to have a profound influence on senior RAAF leadership and senior command appointments for 15 years. Rightly or wrongly (and I use those words because Ellington's credentials for conducting the review were at least questionable - for example, he stated to the press, when he arrived in Australia, that Japan could never attack Australia without overcoming British power), he reported that the RAAF's accident rate was statistically worse than RAF with many caused by disobedience or bad flying discipline. Notwithstanding that Ellington's statistical analysis was probably flawed because he simply compared accidents per 100,000 flying hours and did not allow for statistical aberrations of the much smaller RAAF, he concluded that there had been a failure of RAAF authority to enforce regulations.

When the press got hold of Ellington's report, the RAAF's top leadership was roundly condemned. The Government felt that the CAS should be held responsible but - and quite unwisely it would seem - Williams argued to Government that he could not be held accountable for the actions of pilots. We perhaps should pause here to observe that if a Minister of the Government cannot establish a professional uniformed leader

who will accept responsibility for military matters, to whom does he then turn? Conversely, Williams' view was: 'how could a member of Air Board pursuing his duty at Headquarters be held personally responsible for an error of judgement of a pilot'. Coming on top of the criticism in the Salmond report, the Government lost confidence in Williams and Goble replaced him.

The RAAF's organisation of this era was really a fairly simple matter of a headquarters at Victoria Barracks in Melbourne, with training and general-purpose squadrons at Point Cook until the mid-1920s when the bases at Laverton and Richmond came on line. By the outbreak of World War II, command was a regional arrangement and it remained so for another 12 years - we will see that the RAAF had difficulty breaking the shackles of regional command. Importantly, base development beyond south-east Australia lagged with Darwin, for example, only being established in 1939. But leaders and commanders of this era must also be judged on the capability and preparedness of the RAAF for World War II. In reality, the state of preparedness was of a very marginal standard. In later years, Jones expressed some firm views about this and the accountability, he felt, should have been accepted by the senior leaders of the day. He said:

Hudson's and Wirraways were no match for Japanese Zeros ... It was a situation in which Australia should never have been placed and I always felt that those responsible were never properly called to account. We had concentrated too much on training, neglecting to build up adequate operational strength. When the Japanese attacked Darwin we had hardly a feather to fly with.

Again, of the capability at the outbreak of World War II, Wing Commander Dick Cresswell also had some firm views:

We were virtually a training organisation - we were caught with our pants down when the Japanese came in - we hadn't built up an operational strength in Australia.

Before leaving this era, we should note that the reins of leadership for capability development and engineering infrastructure had largely moved from Harrison to the Wackett brothers, firstly to Wing Commander (late Sir) Lawrence Wackett in the 1930s and then to Air Vice-Marshal E C Wackett whose influence continued well into the 1950s.

Within a couple of months of the outbreak of World War II, Goble resigned as CAS after he was left in an untenable position when, in the face of his recommended expeditionary force for Europe, the Government announced its commitment to the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). He also fell out with an RAF exchange officer on the Air Board. Goble had a naval aviation background, and was gregarious and affable whereas Williams was stiff-necked and authoritarian but, in reality, Goble failed to handle the pressure of the RAAF's senior command appointment and the political environment. Thus the government, showing a lack of confidence in senior RAAF leadership, appointed an RAF officer, Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles Burnett, as CAS in 1940. So, led by an RAF officer and with limited operational capability,

how did the leaders and commanders of the World War II era respond to the challenges of leading an air force in battle?

At the outset, most would accept that Australians generally perform well in the tactical leadership environment. That was largely the case in World War II. We would note fine examples of leadership at the tactical and operational level as illustrated by the following examples:

- Lerew at Rabaul with his handful of aircraft against the might of Japan and his famous gladiatorial signal;
- Jackson, Turnbull and Truscott as commanders of fighter squadrons in New Guinea;
- Caldwell in the deserts of Africa, and of whom Air Marshal Tedder said, ‘a fine commander and an excellent leader’;
- Wing Commander Bennett – Commanding Officer No 77 Squadron RAF - described as a brilliant rarity and the almost perfect combination of pilot, navigator and engineer;
- Wing Commander Ratten - the first RAAF pilot to command a Wing of RAF Fighter Command;
- Air Commodore ‘Bull’ Garing and others who planned and led superbly in the Milne Bay and Bismarck battles, and Air Commodore Steege who commanded No 73 Wing in the Pacific;
- Air Marshal Drummond and Air Marshal McCloughry who became effective RAF senior commanders;
- Air Vice-Marshal Hewitt as a very effective operational commander of No 9 Group in the South-West Pacific Area and Air Chief Marshal Scherger as a fine commander of No 10 Group; and
- Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, despite his relations with Air Marshal Jones, as a very capable operational commander at the senior level (for example, General MacArthur said Bostock’s Labuan campaign was flawless).

It could be acknowledged, however as Hewitt has said, that some commanders performed better as leaders in the air than on the ground. Conversely, though, we would have to be realistic and balance that positive record with other examples where leadership was in question. In that regard, I would raise issues of the evacuation from Kuantan in Malaya, the Darwin bombing raid, together with several controversial matters of morale and discipline in squadrons and wings such as the so-called ‘Morotai mutiny’, the Rabaul incident which I referred to at the start, and of course the feud between Jones and Bostock. Whilst there were some very courageous efforts by RAAF aircrew as the Japanese swept south through Malaya in 1941, it must be said that there was also much confusion, and loss of morale and direction particularly amongst ground troops at Kota Bharu and Kuantan. The chaos surrounding the

evacuation of Kuantan, where RAAF members simply appropriated all manner of means of transport and set off in disorder, moved Flight Lieutenant Bulcock, a RAAF officer, to write:

Panic had spread like wildfire - for the first and last time, I felt ashamed of being an Australian.

Several months later, similar disorder occurred during the air raids on Darwin. The shambles at Darwin attracted the attention of the nation and a Royal Commission was held with considerable criticism being directed at the RAAF and its leadership. Notwithstanding that many RAAF members performed tirelessly and heroically throughout the raids, it is also clear that much panic and disorder occurred amongst the RAAF personnel with many fleeing south in what became known as the 'Daly Water stakes'. Officers and NCOs broke into their respective messes and lounged about drinking.

Interestingly, Group Captain Scherger was on the ground during the raid as acting AOC of North-West Australia Headquarters; only a few months earlier in fact, he had been the Station Commander of RAAF Darwin. Group Captain Scherger's testimony to the Royal Commission, however, merits our particular interest. In response to an observation from Justice Lowe that some RAAF officers had demonstrated a lack of leadership, Scherger said:

I put the blame on the Air Force system because in the Air Force very few officers know anything about leading men. It is not part off their training.

Now those remarks carry enormous significance from a man who was one of the RAAF's outstanding leaders and, of course, became one of our two Air Chief Marshals and Chairman of the then Chiefs of Staff Committee. It begs a number of questions concerning leadership and training, which I will return to later. Scherger's comments did not help him in the first instance. Noting that he, together with the other two service commanders at Darwin, had all been sacked after the raid, one can imagine the view at Air Force headquarters in Melbourne. He was ostracised by the Air Board until the Minister, in agreeing with Justice Lowe that Scherger acted with great courage and was deserving of the highest praise, directed that he be posted to a 'suitable and honourable post'.

As I outlined earlier, the outbreak of World War II saw a RAF officer almost immediately appointed as CAS. The problem was that the CAS was not a commander at all; he was in fact a chairman of a high-level committee known as the Air Board. Burnett recognised this limitation for command of an Air Force at war and believed strongly that the Board should be disbanded and a single commander-in-chief appointed in a manner similar to the Army. We should note here that the Army Board had been disbanded and General Blamey appointed as a commander-in-chief. At the time, Bostock was Burnett's Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and also strongly believed in the need for a commander-in-chief and the Air Board's disbandment. As an aside, this problem of CAS not effectively being a commander continued until quite recently; it continued even after the disbandment of the Air Board in 1975 and was

not finally resolved until the Chief's title changed from 'Chief of the Air Staff' to 'Chief of Air Force' just a few years ago.

In considering leadership and command during World War II, we must address the appointment of George Jones as CAS because it is yet another example of a lack of confidence by the government in the RAAF leaders of the day. There are, of course, a variety of stories surrounding the appointment of Jones as CAS in 1942. There have been rumours of an inconsistent and flawed selection process with the Government being presented with a list of candidates containing errors in seniority. But in reality, neither Williams nor Bostock, as the two senior candidates, had strong Government support. Minister Drakeford did not favour Bostock because of his support for the disbandment of the Air Board whilst the Prime Minister was resolutely opposed to Williams 'because of the Ellington affair'.

In fact Jones was not a bad choice in the sense that what the RAAF needed at this time was organisational and administrative competence. But the appointment of Jones draws us inevitably to the feud between him as CAS and Air Vice-Marshal Bostock as the AOC of RAAF Command in his appointment to the Allied Air Forces South-West Pacific, in turn under the command of General Kenney USAAF. Much has been said about this feud that raged across the RAAF in full view of the Government and our US allies; these two quotes give you an idea of relations between the two:

Jones – I take strong objection to the insubordinate tone.

Bostock – I take strongest exception to your unwarranted and misinformed interference.

You can see that a lot of strong objections were taken!

Fundamentally, the main area of disagreement was that of command and the division of command responsibility of RAAF forces assigned to MacArthur's allied air forces. Jones believed that MacArthur and Bostock had control only of operations and that policy, administration and supply were matters for CAS. Conversely, Bostock believed that control of operations in the theatre of operations also should include administrative functions. Bostock's problems were also compounded by the fact that he was faced with various policies coming from the variety of sources that constituted the Air Board. Now I do not want to drag this issue out and some observers have noted that the RAAF got on with its business anyway. Nonetheless, we cannot lose sight of the destructive and deep-seated influence that the Jones/Bostock feud had on the RAAF and the nation. In respect of the impact on the RAAF, Air Vice-Marshal Hewitt observed that 'it did nothing to stimulate the unity of the RAAF - it was a sad situation which rocked the discipline of the RAAF'.

Its effect on the Government was also serious because it left a legacy of distrust of RAAF senior leadership by the Government, superimposed on the lack of confidence already felt through the Salmond and Ellington reports. This distrust continued for another 30-odd years until corrected by the undoubted political adeptness of Scherger and, more latterly, by the wisdom and astuteness of Sir Neville McNamara. It is interesting to note that the Government was very close to forcing its own solution to the Jones/Bostock dilemma in 1945 by proposing to appoint an RAF Air Marshal to

sit above both of them. It did not do so because of the imminent end of the war and because Jones had won grudging authority from Bostock after the so-called Morotai mutiny affair. Perhaps the Government should have taken some decisive action on the Jones/Bostock affair but it had other pressing priorities; the Government also might reasonably have expected that the RAAF could itself sort out a matter of professional leadership.

There remains a national perspective to the Jones/Bostock problem. Shortly, I will deal with the RAAF's problems in responding to the garrison role as MacArthur went north to the Philippines and ultimately Japan. As Hewitt noted, if the RAAF was to be part of MacArthur's advance, then it needed long-range fighters and bombers. Hewitt says in relation to the RAAF gaining such capability:

There was just too much mucking around for them (sic – Jones and Bostock) to generate the forceful action required.

In other words, the feud compromised national strategy and the attainment of national objectives.

As the tide of the war in the Pacific turned against Japan, the strategy was for the US to go on to the Philippines and Japan, and Australian forces would stay behind 'mopping up' in the islands in a garrison role. Whilst he did not like this situation, Prime Minister Curtin knew that inevitably that was to be Australia's role. Although he would have liked Australia to be involved in the advance north to Japan, Curtin realistically noted:

Could not escape logic that Australian troops should garrison the islands which formed an outer ring of security for Australia and which effectively were our territory.

The upshot was that MacArthur decided that the Fifth Air Force would go to the Philippines whilst the RAAF's No 10 Group would undertake garrison duties. It was not a very glamorous role for the RAAF but it was nevertheless important for the security of the Australian continent and in MacArthur's Pacific war strategy where his island hopping tactics left quite long, exposed flanks. This role did not sit all that well with many RAAF commanders. After all, some had fought valiantly in North Africa and all had performed stoically in the battles through New Guinea, and into Borneo, Labuan and Morotai. By 1945, some squadron commanders and staff officers in No 10 Group felt that their tasks were simply not worthwhile and a number collectively resigned their commissions in protest. Wing Commander Clive Caldwell stated: 'no fighting in the air and pilots brassed off with inactivity'. Air Commodore Cobby was the AOC of No 10 Group; in fact he had only been in the post for some months, taking over from Scherger who was injured in a vehicle accident. At yet another judicial inquiry, Judge Barry later assessed that some operations were in fact wasteful and that the AOC had failed to maintain proper control. Jones felt that Cobby had lost the confidence of his commanders and removed him from the post.

It is difficult to be critical of anybody over the Morotai incident. Eventually, the officers withdrew their resignations and 'got on with the job'. Judge Barry said that everybody acted with the highest motives. What is significant is that the officer who

replaced Cobby and got the group back into business was Scherger; he did it by realising that the war had largely passed by the RAAF, streamlining the Group, and focusing on essential tasks using essential resources. But we should try to draw the leadership, command and cultural issues from the events.

The real problems of the Morotai incident were twofold and not so much related to the behaviour of the local squadron commanders. First, it is questionable that senior RAAF commanders could adequately express the national will to troops under command that required Australia to adopt the garrison role in the Pacific. Indeed, it is possible that as CAS, Jones did not understand the national strategic requirement. Second, senior commanders had lost sight of the RAAF's redefined role and the effect of the associated resource requirements on the national economy.

Lest it is thought that I have ignored the RAAF in Europe in this era, we could make a few observations of questionable leadership. For example, there were ongoing disputes with the RAF over the manning of Australian squadrons and the placement of Australians in RAF squadrons; it moved the Australian but RAF Air Marshal Drummond to write to staff in his Command.

The messing about of the Australian Air Staff at this HQ that is going on between you and the Air Board (sic - RAAF) is most unsatisfactory.

In the Middle East, No 451 Squadron went through some really difficult times where poor leadership caused frustrating periods of inaction and they seemed to be largely forgotten by the RAF. In other words, even in Europe, the commitment and employment of RAAF aircraft and aircrews were problems.

From a cultural perspective, we see examples here of the difficulties of leading Australians and maintaining discipline, particularly in combat, together with a very fundamental need that Australians must understand that the cause for which they are fighting is worthwhile. In the Morotai issue, the RAAF had an unexciting role but which nevertheless needed to be fulfilled. The issue illustrates that if RAAF personnel do not feel they are doing something important or that they are not at the centre of the action, then leaders might have to exercise particular skill to ensure the continued motivation of these personnel. Hewitt had some interesting words to say about this issue:

Australians are not easy to command - a commander must earn their loyalty by looking after their welfare and sharing their risks. They always want to know the reason why.

Air Vice-Marshal 'Hughie' Edwards, a fine leader in Europe and the first to win VC, DSO and DFC in World War II, also recognised that Australians are not always considered easy to lead but he knew how to handle his people by maintaining a relaxed atmosphere whilst retaining a sensible level of discipline. He said:

They have fierce national pride and are conscious of ANZAC traditions and they are consistently brave. Their main concern was to do their stuff and go home. I did not think they were fighting for King or country or hold high principles on policies of war.

Across World War II, a strong culture of empire existed amongst the people of the RAAF. For example, Hewitt made the curious point that Australians might have preferred to fight in Europe:

In substance everyone was keen to fight the Germans and Italians in Europe rather than Japanese in New Guinea and the South-West Pacific.

Wing Commander Bennett (later Air Vice-Marshal in charge of the RAF Pathfinder Force – the brilliant rarity as you will recall) much preferred to have a hybrid crew of the empire, rather than an Australian crew, in his squadron. He said: ‘it was grand to be British’. In other words, did the Australian and RAAF cultures of the 1940s have greater affinity for the defence on an imperial basis, of the empire and Europe rather than the Australian continent?

We see a continuing Army influence on RAAF culture not only through the ex-AFC leaders such as Williams and Bostock, but also through Williams’ specific introduction of the ‘Duntrooners’ in the 1930s to correct deficiencies in administrative competence. Of course, with Burnett as CAS, the RAF influence also was still strong. But the era also marked the commencement of the US influence on the RAAF. That influence came about through the introduction of American aircraft and the RAAF’s joint command arrangements with the US in the Pacific. Interestingly, that influence extended to a questioning of the RAF maintenance system used by the RAAF in comparison to the American approach in 1944. The problem was that the RAAF had difficulty in meeting aircraft availability targets. It needs to be said, as an aside, that the RAF system nonetheless held sway until the 1960s. We should also acknowledge that in the evacuation of Singapore, RAF commanders made some unwholesome comment about the spirit and moral fortitude of No 453 Squadron.

It was a time also when, with the huge influx of civilians into the RAAF through the EATS, opportunity was presented to assess the relative merits of the leadership potential of permanent RAAF officers with their more temporary counterparts. Hewitt makes the point:

Here was leadership potential of which I was to find no adequate counterpart in the potential of some of their seniors in the PAF [Permanent Air Force].

I will now turn briefly to the command structure of the RAAF through World War II. At the start of the war, the RAAF was organised on its traditional area command principle for the defence of Australia and integrated into the so-called American British Dutch Australian (ABDA) command to the north of the continent. As Japan swept south through Singapore and New Guinea, the ABDA arrangement fell apart and the RAAF joined with the US Army Air Corps’ and MacArthur’s Fifth Air Force.

The RAAF maintained its area command arrangement for the continent and committed No 9 Operational Group to MacArthur and the Fifth Air Force.

As the tide turned in favour of the Allies, the No 9 Group became rather static in the Northern Australia area and MacArthur then asked Bostock for a mobile force. No 10 Operational Group was then formed expressly in 1944 with a firm requirement for 'compactness, high mobility and clean cut channels of command from top to bottom'. Consisting of two wings - No 77 Wing for ground attack and No 78 Wing for air defence - the Group was commanded by Group Captain Scherger and performed sterling work in New Guinea (such as Shaggy Ridge, Noemfoor Island). Whilst Bostock and Jones continued to argue about roles and the name of the organisation, Scherger and his group got on with the job.

Before we leave the World War II era, and to balance the ledger so to speak, we should acknowledge that the RAAF's commanders took the force from some 12,000 in 1940 to almost 200,000 at the end of the war with over 70 squadrons. In the space of 12 months, its leaders then demobilised that force. Perhaps we should let Sir George Jones' words speak; he clearly felt that the growth and then the reduction of the RAAF through World War II were significant achievements for its leadership:

The RAAF had constantly been in action. From 12 ill-equipped squadrons, the RAAF in the Pacific had grown to 137,000 with front line aircraft strength of 4,000 operational aircraft. I look back on that record with pride. ... It was masterpiece of organisation. In one year, the RAAF was reduced from 137,000 to 7,000 and this remarkable effort was due to AIRCDRE Hewitt.

Do not get me wrong; these leaders were good - from the larger perspective, Jones performed well if somewhat stolidly in the business of administrative and organisational command whilst Bostock was a very effective operational commander. In 1945, for example, Bostock was commanding a force of many squadrons with operational elements often assigned from three Air Forces. Conversely, one cannot leave this period without making a couple of observations:

- An extraordinary degree of petty jealousy, acrimony and rivalry existed amongst senior levels of RAAF leadership. It was so deep-seated that, in my opinion, there must have been some cultural issues involved.
- Senior leadership had failed to recognise that the RAAF had become inefficient, over-resourced and a serious burden to the economic well-being of the nation in respect of its defined role.

The post-World War II period was characterised in an operational sense by the Korean and Vietnam wars, and the Malayan Emergency; we should therefore be able to make some judgements of operational and tactical leadership. Conversely, the period also covers the longest interval of peace that the RAAF has enjoyed (some 40 years) and we should thus also see some leadership issues in respect of organisation and capability development in peacetime. Generally, the two wars saw again fine performances in operational and tactical leadership, although there apparently were still some problems.

From Korea, we find records where some squadron COs displayed exceptional leadership qualities. Until his tragic loss on operations, for example, Wing Commander Spence was a popular CO of No 77 Squadron who carried great respect as a professional. Wing Commander Cresswell also was a most able commander who led by example, and led a squadron with good morale and good flight leaders, and whose leadership probably has not been adequately recognised. Conversely, commentators have observed that some commanders with fine wartime combat records did not perform all that well as combat commanders. We again see instances of the bogey of commitment and employment of aircraft and aircrews. For example, there was controversy about the commitment of aircraft to combat roles such as whether No 77 Squadron's Meteors should be used in air combat or ground attack.

In Vietnam, our operational leaders were generally excellent; most, perhaps all, were awarded DSOs in that role. However, again we see the problem of the employment of aircraft and differences in opinion between RAAF and Army as to how aircraft (namely Iroquois helicopters) should be used. David Horner makes some interesting comments about the high-level command arrangements in the sense that the Commander Australian Forces Vietnam effectively had political responsibility for the Australian involvement but actually had little command authority at all since Australian Forces were under US command. Allowing for that problem, the command arrangements were even more confusing because the Australian forces were ostensibly under the command of the Chiefs of Staff. From a RAAF command viewpoint, RAAF Vietnam forces were not under command of Operational Command but were directly under Department of Air which did not have an effective command organisation for such operations. As mentioned earlier, it was command by committee.

Turning to the extensive period of peace in this era, the command and leadership had been relatively stable and effective but, we must note, the RAAF again fell foul of the Government in terms of confidence in senior commanders. When the time came for Sir George Jones to be replaced in 1952, Menzies said 'No RAAF person has the experience'. This really was not so. Scherger or McCauley, for example, would have made excellent chiefs at that time. Perhaps what Menzies was really saying was that the Government was tired of bickering and inadequate performance by the RAAF's senior leaders. The end result was that a senior RAF officer, Sir Donald Hardman, replaced Jones. Actually Hardman was an excellent Chief. It is to him that we owe the organisational command arrangements of the RAAF changing from the area arrangements that had existed since 1921 to the functional command that we see today.

One would have to admire the leadership in administration and capability development that occurred in this period. The 1960s saw perhaps the most extensive peacetime capability development in the history of the RAAF where gigantic strides were made in technology with the introduction of aircraft such as the Mirage, the C-130, the P-3B, the Iroquois and the Caribou. It is said that with his experience in commanding a RAF Command in the Malayan Emergency, Scherger recognised the need for the RAAF to acquire tactical transport aircraft (particularly helicopters) just in time for Vietnam. It was also a period when leadership in capability development built a substantial support infrastructure that was needed to sustain these technologically advanced aircraft. There were several visionary developments in

training such as the formation of the RAAF College (to become the RAAF Academy) and the RAAF Apprentice Scheme (which can all be tied to Hewitt). In his book *Going Solo*, Alan Stephens has recognised the leadership of people such as ‘Gel’ Cumming and ‘Ernie’ Hey who, whilst not commanders, exercised great vision in planning for the future together with the management of these quite complex aircraft projects. It is quite another story as to how these very effective technical officers with sound leadership potential were very adroitly ostracised from senior RAAF command appointments.

Across this period, Sir Frederick Scherger stands as an outstanding leader. A man who performed well as an operational commander in World War II, Scherger was the essence of the complete leader by the manner in which he responded to the challenges of senior leadership, as a CAS and then as Chairman, Chiefs of Staff, in the political environment. Interestingly, he had no combat flying experience and no operational squadron command experience. Trouble tended to follow him a bit in his younger days - he was involved in a low-flying incident, implicated in the Darwin raid and moved just before the Morotai incident. But as a senior leader, he showed admirable political acumen, and his vision and understanding of capability requirements and organisational issues in the 1960s were also exceptional. He laid the foundation in so many ways for the RAAF of the 1980s and 1990s.

I now wish to draw some general characterisations. The first is that there have been many fine examples of excellent leadership, particularly in combat and at the tactical and operational levels. Some of the RAAF’s leadership in capability development and sustainment in peacetime has also been first class. But the second is that, at times, the RAAF has struggled with its command and leadership arrangements, particularly in large-scale conflicts. It has had some difficulty in the manner of the commitment and the employment of its aircraft and aircrews to combat and the control of its forces especially when they are committed to an allied or joint force. Sometimes, its tactical leadership has stumbled in combat, and particularly in the control of morale and discipline on bases. On a number of occasions, senior RAAF leadership often has not had the confidence of its Government and sometimes its credibility has been strained before the nation. At times, it appears that senior leadership has not always accepted total responsibility for the performance of the Service. At the highest level of strategic leadership and in respect of national imperatives, Australian governments might have stumbled in providing direction and guidance, particularly in the provision of funds for capability development. Governments always have not taken the decisive action when faced with leadership problems.

In respect of the Australian airmen and airwomen who are to be led, they can be difficult to lead and to command. They always want to part of what is going on, they need to be assured of the value of what they are doing, and perhaps their morale and discipline can slip either under pressures of combat or when they are not at the centre of the action. Combat experience does not necessarily lead to good leaders or good administrators in either peace or war. Also, it is not clear that Permanent Air Force officers have always made the best leaders - remember Hewitt’s words about the quality of civilians coming into the RAAF in World War II compared with the Permanent Air Force officers. Our most able General, Monash, was a citizen soldier and had grave doubts about the capability of the permanent officer.

There is some evidence to suggest that RAAF leadership and command seems to slip after conflicts and periods of combat. Scherger's comment to the Darwin Royal Commission - that in the Air Force very few officers know anything about leading men - demands our serious attention. A number of questions naturally follow that must ultimately be continually challenged at every command level in the RAAF. First, what must be done to ensure that our leaders do know about leading people? Second, are RAAF leaders blinded by their aircraft business such as flying and maintaining them; as Alan Stephens has said, is there a tendency for air forces to concern themselves with the machines at the expense of people? Finally, is the culture of the RAAF conducive to good leadership? For example, the RAAF consists predominantly of technocrats required for the business of operating aircraft. These requirements arise from the technological basis of weapon systems, the largely methodical and regulated business of flying and maintaining aircraft, and the recruiting and training systems that support an air force. Overall, do technocrats necessarily make good leaders?

I feel that we should close on a positive note. That note is, over the last 40-odd years, the RAAF seems to have corrected some of the leadership and command problems, and the bickering and petty jealousies of earlier years. Perhaps our leadership training and development have improved or have we just been fortunate in the sense that many of our leaders, particularly at a senior level, have not been really tested in conflict for the last 30 to 50 years? Now the literalists will note that I have taken some liberties with this final quote from Landor's *The Crimean Heroes* such that I have replaced the word 'generals' with the word 'leaders' partly to avoid censure from my fellow generals but also to leave a challenge to all leaders:

Hail ye indomitable heroes, hail! Despite all of your leaders ye prevail.

I do not suggest that we have had leadership calamities on the scale of the Crimean War. In fact, my parting remark is that all in all and considering the leadership disasters throughout military history, RAAF leadership has not been all that bad.

DISCUSSION

Air Commodore Norm Ashworth: Mac, I've a different set of criteria which I've looked at for leadership and command issues in relation to history. To me there are two sets of characteristics. One, I use the term 'leadership' to describe it which is essentially what you are talking about. The second one, I use the word 'command' to describe it and I'll come back to that very shortly. Leadership, to my mind, has its peak at the squadron commander level. Leadership in that particular sense is the face-to-face leadership of leading your troops into battle and that requires sets of characteristics about people. The other one, that I use the term 'command' for, relates to the operational and strategic level of activities and that is, if you like, the senior commanders. Looking from the point of view of their job of wielding air power, the set of characteristics you need of a person to do those sorts of jobs isn't necessarily the same as those you need for leadership. In fact, you could even have a commander who was very successful at the strategic level but was a poor leader. The characteristic

of leadership, to be able to inspire your people directly, is less important when you get into that command area where far more importance is the ability to understand air power, and about how to apply it and to use it. When you start to look at, for example the RAAF, you mentioned Cobby. Cobby, to my mind, was an excellent example of a very good leader but later on he failed as a commander in that sense of being able to wield air power - to be able to handle air power at that higher level. I think that when you look at the RAAF, it has had over its history a lot of very good leaders right throughout the time. The number of commanders it has had that you could put in that category is very small, not so much because I believe that the commanders weren't there but because the opportunities to command have been far less.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: I guess broadly that I would agree except that I find it difficult to separate leadership up a scale. I think leadership is at all levels including command but not limited to command at all. But I would accept that the general proposition that perhaps some of our senior command has been difficult and, as for poor old Cobby - I would agree with you there as well. He was placed in a very difficult position in 10 Group but nonetheless that was probably so. And maybe it is so, as you say, that there hasn't been a lot of opportunity for command experience. Maybe some of that goes back to limitations in how the Government of the day in World War II developed the RAAF and allowed it fight as it could but also to act as a very large builder of training resources through the Empire Air Training Scheme. I'm not sure either that, at the very senior level or strategic level, there has been all that much experience and skill in the interface between government and senior military leaders. In fact, Monash is probably the only really top commander in that sense that we've had, and that's I guess a function of opportunity.

Group Captain Arthur Skimin: I just like to pick up a couple of points that were made on the performance of Williams and the comments I'm making are really attributed to conversations that took place in the later part of the 1970s with Air Vice-Marshal Wackett and Sir Lawrence Wackett. Their view of Williams' performance of the days - remembering the Salmond Report and the Ellington Report - they felt a lot of his performance as we saw it was driven by politics and Government budgets of the day. What Williams did in those days, the Wacketts thought, was about right for the time. He focussed priorities on development of the infrastructure support, and the base supports in Victoria and New South Wales in Richmond and Laverton as we see today. His other priorities were on people, recruitment and training, and he left the decisions for equipment acquisitions to a later time. He felt, according to the Wacketts, that in an emergency he would be able to draw on equipment acquisitions from the British Empire - from Britain. It didn't work out that way, as we led into World War II. But that was the strategy that Williams was adopting against the political scene of coming out of a depression period with a very limited budget and it's probably not very much different to what our chiefs are faced with today.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: Yes, fair comment, Arthur. I still would pay great respect to Williams for his development of the Air Force and his wars in the twenties to establish the air force. I just wonder, a question really, whether he got the balance right between bricks and mortar, and aircraft capability? In fact I think pretty clearly, from the way that George Jones expressed it, he felt that he didn't. I've also got to form a view that by the end of the thirties, I suspect that Williams had almost exceeded his use-by-date. I'm getting a feeling that in the business of the Ellington

Report, for example, he seemed to have misread that and not accepted the responsibilities that he should have. There's some suggestion also that, in the late thirties, he didn't catch on to some pretty important intelligence information that was coming out of the Japan-China conflict that would have certainly told him how effective the Japanese air capability was. And indeed, I seem to recall reading that some of his colleagues of that era also were saying: 'Well it's time, Sir Richard, you've been around long enough'. So my judgement is he had a rather chequered career towards the end but, then again, I might be judging it rather roughly and generally.

Air Marshal David Evans: I got the impression that you were critical of the RAAF in Europe serving with the RAF. My view and understanding is that they were badly treated - we were badly treated. They split them up when they had an undertaking under the Empire Air Training Scheme to have Article 15 squadrons - Australian Squadrons - yet in 1945, out of 12,000 Australian aircrew in UK, only 1,400 were in Australian squadrons. They didn't get any decent commands; they got a few squadron commands. I think we were shabbily treated. They were deciding when our aircrew could go home for the war in the Pacific and all things that were strategic decisions on the use of people, decisions that should have been made by the RAAF and it was ignored.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: Thanks sir, I would accept that. I probably haven't done enough research in it. I wasn't really meaning to imply that our leadership was bad there, just trying to indicate that it was an area where our forces were working with yet another force, and it seems to me that we always seem to strike difficulties in that area.

Squadron Leader Bill Crompton: Sir, I'd just like to go back to our first comment here about the fact that being a good tactical level leader is not necessarily going to suit you well for strategic command, and I'd have to support Air Commodore Ashworth's comments. And I think that we couldn't use Monash as an example of it. Certainly I remember many years ago now in Staff College reading a biography which, relying on imperfect memory, described him as an abysmal platoon commander, a mediocre company commander and a brilliant general. So maybe the ability to wield the sword is not particularly useful when you should be working out where you should be fighting.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: Yes, I agree entirely. I'm not sure it was those words that described Monash but certainly they've been used and they come out pretty much of the *Psychology of Military Incompetence* as I recall.

Air Vice-Marshal Hans Roser: We've focussed very heavily at the top - the serial end - of the RAAF over nearly 80 years. I'd like to share with you a little example of leadership that has remained in my memory for many years. In those days when I enjoyed life tremendously as a squadron commander, we picked a young corporal to head a servicing team because of his, what we felt was, leadership potential and abilities. That was a job that was normally reserved for a sergeant. Well, this bloke did so well that I thought we should recommend him for a commission. The Warrant Officer Maintenance at the time was a redoubtable individual by the name of Clarke who, I think, is probably well remembered by a number of us in the room. When he

heard about it he stormed into my office and said, ‘Boss, what the hell are you trying to do?’ When I explained to him what I thought the situation was he said, ‘Well I think that’s totally wrong. You can get an officer from anywhere but good warrant officers are hard to come by, and this bloke will make a good one.’ Now the fact that No 75 Squadron won the Kittyhawk Trophy that year was probably more due to ‘Darky’ Clarke’s leadership than to mine. I just want people to remember those sorts of things as well because leadership is pervasive or should be pervasive, shouldn’t it?

Dr Chris Coulthard-Clark: Listening to your excellent paper, Mac, I was struck by the question of whether another element to this debate ought to be whether the RAAF was served or performed any better or worse than the other two Services. The thought that struck me was, of course, the Navy. When you were talking about the circumstances of Burnett’s appointment, the Navy had been under a British Chief from its formation until after the Second World War. The Army went into the Second World War under a British Chief of General Staff [CGS]. I’m also mindful that when Squires was appointed CGS there was something of a revolt on the Military Board with at least one senior officer, General Jess, making formal representations which virtually had him sacked by the Government. So these sorts of ructions are not unique to the Air Force and I wondered whether you had a look at the comparison between the RAAF’s performance and the other Services in this regard.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: Chris, thank you for the comment and, no, and I’m in danger of moving beyond my area of confidence or knowledge. I did make the point of course that Blamey was appointed as a Commander-in-Chief and I wouldn’t want to think that that necessarily was such a great thing. I mean, I think those that would think back to how poor old Sir Sidney Rowell was sacked, after basically getting through to defeating the Japanese over the Kokoda Trail, by Blamey and Blamey really reacting, it seems to me, fairly simply to MacArthur. I’m sorry - I’m not able to comment any further.

Dr Alan Stephens: Just quickly if I could pick up on Chris’ point which I think is a very good one. It is important to assess things comparatively and historian John Robertson, for example in his history of World War II at the end, gave a report card for the three Services. He marked the Army very highly - properly I think. The Air Force got a good qualified assessment - good for its operational performance, question marks about some of its leadership. The Navy, and picking up on Chris’ point, got a really bad report. So you’ve got to bear that in mind. I think it’s interesting, for example, that prior to World War II about 60 per cent of Australia’s Defence budget went on the Navy; in the war the Navy increased in size only to 35,000 people and had a pretty bad war. So, your point is a good one, Chris. What I wanted to pick up on, Mac, was that you very briefly mentioned the RAAF College/Academy. I’ve always found it interesting, from my point of view - my perspective – that the Air Force never developed anything like the Duntroon culture which has been so powerful in Australian Army command and leadership. I appreciate Duntroon is getting on to its 90th year/centenary or that kind of thing and the College/Academy only lasted 40 years. I think it’s interesting though that firstly that culture, to me, never appeared to develop and, secondly, notwithstanding the fact that ADFA [Australian Defence Force Academy] has been in place since 1986 and Point Cook no longer exists as a College/Academy, Duntroon is still going strong.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: That's true, Al. It always interests me a bit when we hear people who say that the Academy and College perhaps weren't all that successful in building commanders and leaders because maybe we haven't had too many Chiefs from it. But then if you look down the next level of command to two-star particularly, I think both of those organisations have had a huge impact on Air Force in the last 30 years.

Air Commodore Norm Ashworth: I think a major element in the history of the RAAF when you look at the quality of people who have factored the scores, and you brought it out: pre-War and Second World War - perhaps questionable; post-War - much better. And the big difference was the promotion system. Pre-War and during the Second World War, for officers, promotion by seniority was the rule. When you look at the Air Force List in 1921 and if you look at the Air Force List in 1945, the order of the senior people hadn't changed very much. So everybody got moved up irrespective of whether they were good or bad. Post-War, thankfully, we moved into the promotion by ability, by the best people getting the promotion rather than by seniority. Now I think that had a big impact on the quality of the senior leadership in the RAAF in the Second World War.

Air Vice-Marshal Weller: In leaving, I'd just like to mark my depth of appreciation to Chris Coulthard-Clark and Al Stephens. Their books *Third Brother* and *Going Solo* make it reasonably easy for people to read into it. I'm also in debt of past chiefs, who, in the last few years have put such an emphasis on our history. I think the only plea I would make is that it's awfully hard reading still in World War I and World War II.

A HINT OF THINGS TO COME – LEADERSHIP IN THE AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS

GROUP CAPTAIN MARK LAX

The passing of 102 year-old Harold Edwards at Brisbane in August last year was in every way the end of an era in Australian military history. He was the last known member of the Australian Flying Corps (AFC). Men like Edwards and his mates made up the leadership and experience of the Corps, and while Army born and Army bred, they helped to forge the Royal Australian Air Force as an independent service. It is perhaps fitting that I now review the legacy that those 3,500 officers and airmen bequeathed the next generation and a new, independent Service. I intend to break my presentation into several sections. I will offer a very brief history of the British Air Services, because they are pivotal in setting the background to the AFC and its operations. I will also talk broadly about the AFC in terms of its history, organisation, command and key personalities and will conclude with how these arrangements affected the developing RAAF.

The Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had lowly beginnings. It was initially the rapid development of French aviation that finally spurred the conservative British Army and Royal Navy into action on developing some form of flying organisation. The British high command - both War Office and Admiralty - were slow in accepting the significance of freedom of manoeuvre in the third dimension. Indeed, a government committee set up as a result of the gathering war clouds in 1911 to study the menace of German airships, recommended the formation of the Royal Flying Corps on 13 April 1912 to meet both army and navy needs. The Admiralty, however, never accepted the committee's decision to have a single, Army-based air arm, albeit with a Naval Wing, so they formed their own protege - the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) - in June 1914. Credit should probably go to General Sir David Henderson, as the first wartime RFC commander and his deputy Frederick Sykes - not the better-known Trenchard - as those responsible for raising and nurturing the force in its infancy. Henderson held the mantle of independence aloft at the Army Council meetings, and it was he who, in 1917, influenced the thinking of General Jan Smuts, a South African soldier-statesman appointed to undertake a further Government review into the aerial services. The Smuts Review looked into amalgamation of the two flying Services, both in an effort to maximise defence against German Zeppelin and Gotha raids and as an economy measure, thus heralding the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918 as the world's first independent air service.

Air Vice-Marshal Edgar McCloughry, an Australian who flew with No 4 Squadron and later remained in the RAF, set the scene when he wrote of that early period:

The beginnings of air warfare, which did so much to shatter the classical concepts of war, created many new problems for the high command. These difficulties were superimposed on the trials which already faced [them] in the rise of national armies whose conflict could no longer be confined to a single area as of old, but spread over the European continent, finally affecting the whole world.¹

This was truly a revolution in military affairs! McCloughry also added that the generals and admirals were slow to adopt this new technology due to a failure to grasp its significance and a fear of its effect on their careers. As I will elaborate, the problem was not helped by the distinct lack of knowledge about aviation matters by anyone in authority - a problem with Haig as both Trenchard and Henderson discovered. Haig, as commander-in-chief, insisted that every aircraft was to be used in direct support of his armies and would neither countenance their use beyond the front, nor for any other purpose for that matter.

Nevertheless, for the entire war, the flying services were generally run according to Army command methodologies and control hierarchies. For 1914 and part of 1915, the only role aircraft had was reconnaissance and observation, tasks the cavalry jealously guarded and it was not until these machines came under threat from the enemy that scout and fighter aircraft were produced as counters. Thus, by 1916, brigades, wings and squadrons quickly formed sequentially to meet the German aerial challenge. The brigades normally consisted of three wings: an army wing, a corps wing and a balloon wing. One RFC Brigade was attached to each army in the field. The army wing included about six squadrons. This meant one or two for long-distance bombing, one or two for long-distance reconnaissance, and two or more single-seater fighter squadrons. No 1 Squadron AFC, for example, under the 40th (Army) Wing in Palestine flew Bristol F2b fighter-bombers on long-range reconnaissance and bombing while sister unit, No 111 Squadron RAF, had S.E.5a fighters principally for air-to-air combat.

Corps wings were generally smaller organisations attached to each Army corps for their direct support. This meant a couple of squadrons of two-seater machines for reconnaissance of the corps front, artillery observation, photography and emergency low flying patrols.² No 3 Squadron AFC, for example, was attached to the First Australian Corps in 1918 and flew R.E.8 two-seater reconnaissance aircraft. 'A' Flight was organised as an artillery flight that was tasked to call the fall-of-shot for friendly fire or report enemy artillery positions so that the gunners could target them. 'B' Flight was designated as the counter-attack patrol flight tasked with the monitoring of any enemy manoeuvring for a counter-attack. 'C' Flight was the infantry or trench flight which performed low flights over the friendly trenches to monitor progress during an advance or over enemy trenches to strafe or pinpoint enemy positions. These 'contact patrols' were dangerous, being flown very close to the ground in all weather, and crews were often sitting ducks for ground fire or fighters sitting high and diving in from the sun. All flights were required to remain proficient at photography, although some pilots showed a flair for this work and were usually the first to be tasked.

¹ Air Vice-Marshal E.J. McCloughry, *The Direction of War*, Jonathan Cape, London, 1955, p. 59.

² F.M. Cutlack, 'The Australian Flying Corps', *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*, Vol VIII, UQP (Ed), St Lucia, 1984, p. 435.

Consequently, as roles matured, the work of the air services fell into three much broader categories: supporting the navy, supporting the Corps (tactical) formations and supporting the Army (strategic) formations. Until April 1918, the RNAS looked after home defence, naval support, coastal surveillance, Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), coastal bombing and reconnaissance, while the RFC had its flying units allocated totally in support of the surface forces. It was not until the birth of the RAF that unfettered roles emerged, such as long-range bombing of German towns and single-seat fighting. These latter scout squadrons, such as No 2 Squadron AFC and No 4 Squadron AFC, were specifically tasked to seek out enemy formations in an ‘independent’ role. Thus it was only in the last seven months of the war that airmen had any independent command structure and this with relatively junior personnel. While these fliers were at the very nidus of air fighting development, they held few positions of authority at the senior level to be of any influence on the other services or in policy development for that matter. Unfortunately for coming generations, the promise of air power made by the early theorists who sprung out of the ashes of the biplane era would go unfulfilled for three-quarters of a century.

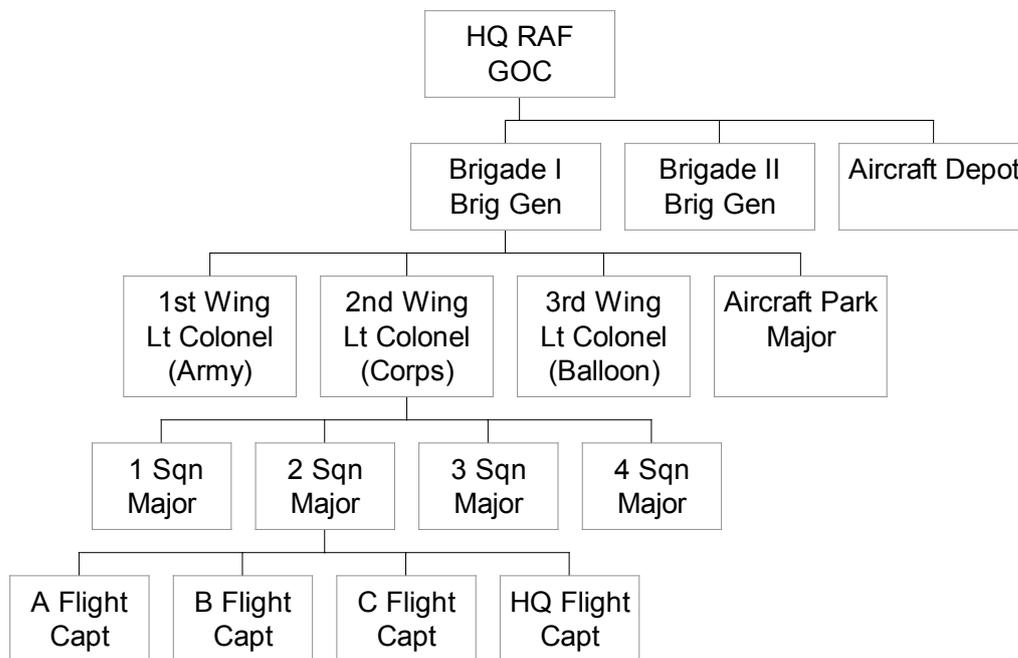


Figure 1. – Organisation of the RAF – mid-1918

The birth of the RAF gave Trenchard the opportunity to experiment with a notion he had personally been developing through 1916 and 1917 – that of a long-range bomber force to prosecute targets deep within enemy territory. Fortune smiled on the circumstances as Trenchard had resigned in March 1918 over disagreements with Lord Rothermere, the new Air Minister. Although Sykes had replaced him as CAS, Trenchard was shortly reappointed to the RAF after Rothermere resigned for other reasons, but to the position of Commander of what became known as the Independent Force. This new organisation was intended to grow into a joint Anglo-French-American bombing force for the strategic bombing of Germany throughout 1919 and would be unhampered by Haig’s demands for direct ‘tactical’ support. Often confused

with the Independent Air Service terminology of the RAF, the Independent Force consisted of four day and five night bomber squadrons, all tasked with long-range or 'strategic' strike well beyond the front lines.³ Their targets were often the German industrial cities of the Ruhr and Western provinces, but their effect was marked. These pioneers suffered terrible casualty rates (sometimes 75 per cent attrition) but brought with them reprisals for the German Zeppelin and Gotha raids of 1917 against London. They created panic in many of the cities bombed, and some observers claimed they were 'barbaric' in their indiscriminate targeting, while forgetting they were simply retaliating for similar, previous German raids. This small force was to foreshadow the birth of the much maligned RAF Bomber Command some 18 years later and influenced a number of post-war theorists and commentators, including our own Henry Wrigley.⁴ The concept of strategic bombing of the enemy heartland, destroying the morale of the population and the concept of area or 'carpet' bombing were developed from this Independent Force experience. I include reference to it here since the instigator, Trenchard, was to be a driving influence over our own Richard Williams' thinking regarding the development of a 'balanced' air force. Likewise, Trenchard's dogmatic belief in the power of the manned bomber to destroy national will was reinforced in the mind of his students, Portal, Harris and Tedder. Theirs is another story, but they were soon to greatly influence the lives of many ordinary Australians in the next major war.

I would now like to turn to early Australian military flying. By the second decade of the 1900s, Australia was well on its way to developing its own path to the skies. Undoubtedly the need for military aviation grew as political tensions mounted in Europe. In 1911, the Minister for Defence, Senator Pearce, attended an Imperial Defence Conference in London. The Senator returned home convinced Australia required an aviation corps to protect its own shores and to support the Imperial Divisions if called upon to do so. With the requirement for an aviation force thus established, the *Government Gazette* advertised for two 'competent aviators and a number of mechanists' (sic) to form an instructional staff under Army command. Though conditions of service were discouraging, two aspiring flyers, Henry Petre, an English barrister, and Eric Harrison from Victoria, accepted appointments as pilots in this new organisation – the Aviation Instructional Staff or AIS.

Before Petre arrived from England in January 1913, the Government approved the formation of the Central Flying School to become the seat of aviation learning in Australia. The first job for the newly appointed Lieutenant Petre was to inspect sites to provide a military aviation base for the new flying school. After visiting several sites, Petre finally selected Point Cooke (the 'e' in Cooke later being dropped), as it was easily accessible by sea and close to Army Headquarters in Melbourne. A tract of wind-swept grazing land was thus purchased as the birthplace of the Australian Flying Corps. With the site picked for the new air arm, the next step was to acquire flying machines. Two B.E.2a biplanes, two Deperdussin monoplanes and one Bristol Boxkite biplane were purchased, but it would be some time before flying operations commenced.

³ The day squadrons were 55, 99, 104 and 110 Sqns. The night squadrons were 97, 100, 115, 215 and 216 Sqns. An excellent study of the Independent Force is Alan Morris' *First of the Many*, Jarrolds Publishers, London, 1968. The squadrons are listed on pp. 172-74.

⁴ Bomber Command formed in April 1936.

With war in Europe on the horizon, tents were erected as hangars on the plains of Point Cook and test flights began in March 1914. Despite the formation of the Australian Imperial Force in August 1914, there was still no Flying Corps – just the AIS, consisting of two officers and about 20 other ranks. However, the first flying training course commenced that same month with four trainee pilots: Captain Thomas White, and Lieutenants George Merz, David Manwell, and Richard Williams. One would become a POW and eventually a politician, one within a year would be the first casualty of the air service, one would become an equipment officer and one would become the founder of the RAAF. As the early aircraft were so prone to damage, flying would only commence if there was nothing more than a slight breeze. Crashes were frequent and students would free themselves from the wreckage and later assist with repairs. Lieutenant David Manwell was the first student to fly solo. Upon landing, Richard Williams took over for his first solo flight. Williams was later the first to qualify for his wings. All students graduated successfully, both earning and paying for their winged brevets.

The first wartime mission for the AIS was to assist with the November 1914 attack on the German Fleet's Pacific Squadron based in New Guinea. Lieutenants Harrison and Merz were to provide air support for the ground forces under the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF). But after a successful landing by land forces and a brief battle, the area was seized and occupied. Harrison and Merz returned home, their planes still in crates without having flown, let alone fired a single shot.

Although Australia pledged to help Britain from war's outbreak, the AFC did not officially form until about April 1915 when Australia was asked to send flying personnel in support of the Indian Government in Mesopotamia. In May, Australia answered the request with an offer to help capture Baghdad. With Captain Petre in command and uniforms scarce among officers and ranks, the AFC 'Half Flight' of four officer pilots and 41 other ranks, without equipment, embarked on a journey into unknown warfare. Equipped by the British with what were intended to be 'modern' aircraft but later proved to be primitive, the unit fought with great courage but suffered grimly. The Half Flight experienced the first death in the AFC with Lieutenant George Merz killed in action, and two officers including White, and several other ranks captured. Later, the Half-Flight was later absorbed into 'B' Flight of No 30 Squadron RFC, with the remaining Australian troops transferring to the then infant No 2 Squadron, AFC forming in Egypt in late 1916. Petre went off to the RFC in England.

Meanwhile, the promise of more forces to the war effort required the formation of No 1 Squadron at Point Cook in early January 1916. The squadron consisted of 28 officers and 195 other ranks, all keen to see action in Egypt. They remained in the Middle East for the duration of the war, serving with some distinction although in what was known as a 'side-show'. Being a sideshow meant less than optimum support from Britain, improvisation and little recognition beyond the thanks of General Allenby and the AIF. Nevertheless, the unit returned to Australia triumphant in April 1919. By late 1917, Nos 2, 3 and 4 Squadrons had been formed to fight on the Western Front. Operating in fighter and reconnaissance roles, these squadrons provided a significant contribution to the war effort in support of Corps and Army formations. In addition, four AFC training squadrons (Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8) based in

England formed an Australian Training Wing under their commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Oswald Watt. These supplied fresh pilots for the European Theatre. In May 1919, all the European squadrons returned to Australia together aboard ship, effectively ending AFC operations.

It is at this stage that I want to introduce the first Australian personality to influence the development of the AFC - Colonel Edgar Hercules Reynolds. I am sure that most of the audience will never have heard of him, but he was extremely influential in the design and development of the Australian Flying Corps. While Petre, Harrison and Williams have claimed or been thrust into the limelight, it was Reynolds who pulled the strings behind the scenes. While he may be perceived to have been more interested in self-promotion as I shall explain, it was Reynolds who gave the AFC its wings. Reynolds had been commissioned into the Army in April 1901 and, by 1914, had risen through the Artillery ranks to the position of Director of Military Operations at Victoria Barracks. Between 1911 and 1913, he had attended the Staff College at Camberley where he was greatly impressed with the potential an air corps offered. He was instructed by, among others, Major Robert Brooke-Popham a pioneer Army aviator and, while on course, he wrote papers on the application of aerial reconnaissance to artillery spotting. Upon return to Australia, he lobbied Chief of the General Staff, Major-General Legge, to investigate acquisition of some aerial capability, albeit against Legge's better judgement. However, the timing was perfect as Senator Pearce was also in favour of such a move - and so it came to pass.

For the first two years of Australian military flying, Reynolds took a fatherly approach to this new capability. Once CFS had started flights, Reynolds was often found on the Point Cook airfield. Indeed, every time Reynolds went aloft, photographers and the press magically appeared and articles in *The Argus* followed the next day! It is partly because of this that we have a good record of developments at Point Cook during this period. Nevertheless, despite the self-aggrandisement, Reynolds personally saw to it that Army requirements would be met. He introduced aerial observation and photography to Australia, and ran an observer's course between the completion of the first pilot's course and the second. Attendance was keen and, of the 38 applicants, six were selected and yet curiously, seven graduated. The unsubstantiated suspicion was that Reynolds, who instructed on the course, added his name to the graduate list. Certainly when No 1 Squadron left for Egypt, he appeared as its commander wearing observer wings! Yet while the Army felt observer skills were the most important, the pioneer aviators saw it differently. Pilots became 'aces' and got the glory - not front seaters! Of the six observers to graduate only two ever served in flying posts and they both as pilots.

Reynolds went off to Europe where he regularly corresponded with Legge and others regarding flying issues (and more of that later) only to reappear in Australia in September 1918 tasked to re-organise flying training. In the event, the original AIS staff were transferred to the AIF, and No 1 Home Training Squadron, No 1 Home Depot and Aeroplane Repair Section formed to replace the CFS. This new organisation was to set the scene for the Australian Air Corps (AAC) and later, the RAAF. It is therefore fair to say that Reynolds clearly influenced the development, selection, standards and postings of the AFC. He held a position of influence both as a leader and commander and regardless of how history has portrayed him, he must take

some of the credit for establishing the Flying Corps and seeing that some ongoing capability remained in Australia. For that, he has largely been forgotten.

Before I attempt further to examine the leadership of the AFC and those others I call key personalities, it is worth first reviewing the structure and organisation of this unique force. We need to remember the AFC was and remained a separate Corps of the Australian Army until disbandment in late 1919. Not surprisingly then, the AFC was organised along army lines. Essentially, for the smallest identifiable unit - the squadron - this meant a headquarters and three flights. By the time the first fully formed unit, No 1 Squadron, sailed for Egypt in March 1916, there was no formal superior AFC organisation or military hierarchy. For Army, no senior command representation - in fact, not even a headquarters existed! This omission was quickly realised and before Lieutenant-Colonel Reynolds, by now the unit's designated CO, arrived in Suez, he received orders to continue on to London to take up a new appointment - that of Staff Officer (SO), AFC to be located at RFC Headquarters. Added to the need to have some superior headquarters' representation, was the fact that having a lieutenant-colonel in charge of a squadron being more senior to the commander in charge of the RFC Wing would also have been untenable.

By mid-1917, a small air staff section was formed in AIF HQ with the SO Aviation post now transferred amongst it. Reynolds, seeing little career prospect in this meagre staff job transferred to the 2nd Australian Division on the Western Front in September 1916. Major Horace Brinsmead replaced him. Brinsmead, a Gallipoli veteran who had also served as a company commander in France, was wounded and posted to London. He was ideal for the SO Aviation post as, being concerned with personnel, there was no requirement for someone with flying experience to hold the appointment as Reynolds had proven. The London office was to have little power and merely acted as liaison and promotion vetting authority. Only two members who served there had any impact post-war: Brinsmead, who became controller of civil aviation, a job within the Defence portfolio which he held for 11 years, and 'Dicky Williams', who briefly held the position post-war after the bulk of the AFC men had returned home.

As well as the London office, it was decided in October 1917 to appoint an officer with the unfortunate title of DAAG AFC - the Deputy Assistant Adjutant General - at RFC HQ in France. This was another supervisory post directly under Trenchard in the field, but it held no real command or directive authority. None of the incumbents were of any influence and none were to help form the RAAF. Trying to find posts of influence, if that was what was intended, seemed something of a dead loss. From a squadron point of view, the units remained subordinate to higher RFC command (see Appendix A) while Australians in British units rarely progressed to appointments of influence beyond that of Squadron CO.

In hindsight, it is unfortunate that none of the headquarters posts had anything to do with operations as higher RFC authority directed even training. One reason for this was the relative lack of seniority by the Australians and the lack of early war experience. Being a 'colonial' did not help either. The best we could manage was four officers promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel: Williams, Watt, Brinsmead and Reynolds and so it was to be from the tactical flying units that Australia drew the majority of its future RAAF leaders.

One further and somewhat unexpected problem faced by the military organisation was the level of officer training received by aircrew. It was the practice to take a cadet, train him as pilot or observer and when qualified, grant him a commission and send him to the front to fill much needed vacancies. This meant that many members went from private to second lieutenant without any officer training whatsoever, let alone grounding in Army doctrine. Even if they survived, there was no time to train them in the field, so many junior officers often had no idea of their officer responsibilities, non-flying duties or staff work.⁵ This was a particular problem, given the education standard of many other ranks that successfully progressed to the cockpit, and certainly did not assist their chances for promotion. Remember, officers were expected to be refined and gentlemen.

Importantly for our understanding of Australian military aviation development, the Australian Government resisted British attempts to absorb the AFC totally into the Royal Flying Corps. However, in July 1916, the British Secretary of State for War wrote to AIF Headquarters in London requesting...

In view of the exceptionally good work which has been done in the Royal Flying Corps by Australian-born officers, and the fact that the Australian temperament is specially suited to the Flying Services, it has been decided to offer 200 commissions in the Special Reserve of the Royal Flying Corps to officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the Australian Force.

No doubt he did not mention that the RFC was reeling from the high losses inflicted by the German Fokker scourge during the period which became known as 'Bloody April' and, as this period extended into mid-year, that they desperately needed to fill cockpits. It took the same time to build an aircraft as to train a new pilot, and while aircraft could be made from available materials, aircrew were another matter. Australia consented to release 200 applicants, of whom 180 obtained RFC commissions, but held firm against any proposal to add the AFC squadrons to the total RFC order of battle. Regardless, the British gave the fully formed AFC Squadrons RFC numbers which the Aussies rejected, until formal acceptance of Australian designations was made in January 1918.

With such pressure, having a separate air service was a significant achievement for the Australians, given the thinking of the time and our closeness (culturally and politically) to Britain. While Canada, South Africa and India each had a formed Corps of their own, they had no individual squadrons, were trained under RFC supervision and rules, and operated as members of the British flying services. This fact indeed can be considered influential in Australia's seeking to form its own, independent air force so soon after hostilities had ceased, and in our becoming the world's second air force.

⁵ AWM 224 MSS 510, p. 13. R. Williams, *These Are Facts: The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, KBE, CB, DSO*, Australian War Memorial and Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977, p. 109 states that there were 410 pilots and 133 observers at the end of the war.

The Australian Flying Corps had at its height about 540 officers, the majority of whom were native born.⁶ Some had joined with British birth certificates and several New Zealanders were also on the books. Those who survived were eventually to make their mark in the Royal Australian Air Force, in civil aviation and in other walks of life. For example, seven members of No 1 Squadron were later knighted, including one who was an air mechanic⁷ and yet another was awarded the Victoria Cross.⁸ The Central Flying School at Point Cook graduated around 120 pilots and six observers to feed the squadrons, mainly on the Western Front while from Richmond's NSW State Aviation School, a private concern, about 50 had obtained their wings.⁹ By far the most pilots came from the four training squadrons in England and the very effective RFC flying training school system established in Egypt. Almost all observers came from RFC schools.

Essentially, the recruitment base sought young, quick-reflexed men with a fighting and survival instinct able to handle the changing pace of aerial warfare. Light Horsemen and bushmen from the outback were often selected for their fitness and character. The other ranks were selected primarily for their trade skills so it is fair to say that the majority of the Flying Corps members were better educated than the average AIF infantryman. Many of these men joined the RAAF when it formed and a large number were commissioned during the Second World War. Nevertheless, there was little attention paid to training AFC officers in leadership and command skills so, not surprisingly, those who had previous army training as militia or members of the Commonwealth forces were bound to stand out. These were few and far between, the key members among them being Williams, Watt, Anderson and McNamara.

Members of the AFC came to acquire a great wealth of tactical experience, yet there remained a paucity of command experience beyond wing level. There are perhaps several reasons for this. Australians naturally sought action and action could not be found in command and staff positions. Captain Ross Smith, perhaps one of Australia's foremost early aviators, as one example, refused promotion beyond Captain specifically to remain in the cockpit. Many others who flew in France did likewise. The early commanders of the Australian units were indeed career army officers such as Reynolds, MacCartney and Broun, but none of these sought operational or high command appointments within the Flying Corps and indeed none went on to higher Army or Air Force careers. Others, like Henry Petre, sought jobs with the RFC and remained in England after the war.

Second, Australians in the AFC were essentially latecomers to the war and by mid-1916, there was much competition for the limited senior positions. Certainly, Australians in the RFC and RNAS had done well; Mitchell, Longmore and

⁶ Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1962, p. 1.

⁷ These were Sir Richard Williams, Sir Lawrence Wackett, Sir Peter Drummond, Sir Hudson Fysh, Sir Ross Smith, Sir John Harris (squadron doctor – knighted for service in Victorian politics) and Sir Albert Chadwick (mechanic who went into Law). Sir George Jones, later RAAF CAS, also briefly served with No 1 Squadron.

⁸ Captain (later AVM) Frank McNamara, VC. Awarded for rescuing a fellow airman forced down behind enemy lines, Palestine, 20 March 1917.

⁹ Of the six courses conducted, the last two graduated students too late in the war. The Student graduates from the other four courses were First Course – 19, Second Course – 12, Third Course – 9 and Fourth Course – 11.

Drummond to name but a few who were to have high command positions, so unsuitability on national or cultural grounds must also be discounted.¹⁰ Third, the AFC remained a very small force with its eight squadrons - less than 600 officers and about 2,400 airmen – hardly befitting a senior level command anyway. Indeed, there is no indication in extant records that the British Government, British High Command nor the Australian Government ever discussed an all-Australian Flying Brigade. So, expectations of high command with such a small force reaching up to only Wing level cannot have been met from within. Finally, the question remains: was high command expected or even considered important? The answer was probably no to all but a few who strove to reach the heights. What mattered were Australian forces being essentially subservient to British forces and Australia being content to be seen to be doing its part at the Empire's time of need. If that thesis is true, then Wing level command was all that was achievable or even desired given that most Australians chose to volunteer for fighting war service - not military careers - anyway.

To many, the RAF was seen as the 'Real Air Force' and certainly a class-oriented organisation. Of specific note to this paper, there appears no social or officer 'elite' within the AFC ranks as was certainly the case in the early RFC and RNAS days. Many AFC officers up to the end of 1917 were recruited direct from the ranks. Several, like Sergeant George Mackinolty, Adrian Cole and Bill Bostock made it to Air Vice-Marshal. We know from letters and diaries left by airmen that there was generally a good rapport between the officers and the men and while satisfactory for flying operations and high morale, it did not sit well with those in authority.¹¹ Many senior British officers perceived that Australians were generally rude, crude and indifferent to authority. Did the Australian reputation – the larrikin attitude as expressed by flamboyant characters such as aces Harry Cobby and Ross Smith – stifle command appointments beyond the control of the Australian authorities? Did social standing affect selection for command within RFC? The evidence would suggest 'yes' and behavioural traits that stereotyped the Australian airmen were traits that no Naval and Military Club general or admiral of His Majesties forces could possibly accept.

The RAAF formed officially on 31 March 1921 but, between the disbandment of the AFC at the end of December 1919 and the formation of the RAAF, a notional aviation force called the Australian Air Corps formed to fill the gap permitting some flying training to continue. It too belonged to the Army but had little direct impact on the formation and development of the RAAF, particularly its leadership. Nevertheless, the matter of appointments to the AAC caused much acrimony.¹² A large number of the experienced CFS staff was ignored for positions, and many chose to seek other employment. Lost among these were veterans Major William Sheldon, the CO, and Captains 'Steve' Oakes and Horrie Miller (who went on to a fine career in civil aviation). Williams was still in England and it fell to Major William Anderson to lead the new organisation. It was during this 'interregnum' that Australia requested Britain provide a loan of several RAF officers to act as Director, Colonel Equipment, two station commanders and several other appointments in preparation for the establishment of the Air Force. This was recorded by Williams as 'a slap in the eye,

¹⁰ AM Sir Arthur Longmore (ex-RNAS), ACM Sir William Mitchell (ex-RFC) and AVM Roy (later Sir Peter) Drummond.

¹¹ See M. Lax, *One Airman's War: The Diary of Joe Bull 1916-1919*, Banner Books, Maryborough, 1996.

¹² C.D. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney, 1991, p. 19.

particularly for those of us of the Permanent Forces who had served in the Flying Corps'.¹³ He added, 'Moreover, some of us had looked at every development from the point of view of its application to Australian Defence, whilst it would be most unlikely that any RAF officers selected would have any knowledge of Australia'. Williams also bemoaned the relative levels of experience in air operations also fell in the Australians' favour. It was only the intervention of Prime Minister Hughes that put an end to the proposal, but this was a precursor to what was to happen some 20 years later. When the AAF did form, the 21 officers initially selected were only granted temporary commissions. The founding fathers of the RAAF were heavily biased towards those with 'piloting' experience – there was only one observer who later became a pilot, and only a couple of technical and stores officers were appointed to the new force. Most of the first 21 officers were 'Williams' pals', and only three were ex-Naval Air Service.¹⁴ Within a year, officer numbers had grown to 44, but little of the general make-up had changed and all remained relatively junior in rank.

There can be little doubt that the AFC members followed classic Army leadership teachings and principles, but these had been learned the hard way. Only a few had formal training and most who rose to squadron command gained their promotion through time in service, flying acumen and pure survival rather than managerial or leadership traits. This issue was one that CGS Legge raised in 1918 against the formation of the Air Force as an independent service. He pointed out that '... despite its gallant pilots and commanders, the AFC had practically no experience before the war in administration and command and that, for some time at least, they must be directed by those who knew what was meant by expenditure under a responsible Government'.¹⁵ By that he meant Army. His words were well placed because it became a matter of Air Board choice, together with consideration of any age restriction, to decide who would form the cadre of the officer corps for the RAAF, and, in particular, who would fly the standard. The lack of a formal officer qualities and leadership training program would also be commented on later by Sir John Salmond in his review of the state of aerial defences. It is not surprising that the RAAF took several hits and was placed a far third for advice when defence policymaking was at issue and decisions had to be made. Perhaps the biggest criticism could be levelled at the 'pilot's club', who were selected for flying skills and bravado rather than astute thinking, political acumen and administrative ability. Arguably, senior Army officers saw this problem coming in 1913. Lieutenant-Colonel Legge, then the Australian Military Representative in London, felt that commissions for recruits Petre and Harrison were inappropriate since '...being a pilot was no more a qualification for a commission in the Flying Corps than a certificate to say that a man could ride a horse would be sufficient for the granting of a commission in the Light Horse'.¹⁶ Regardless, for early RAAF development, the pilot's club ran the show and it was they who selected who would progress and who would not. This legacy was not

¹³ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 116.

¹⁴ These were Williams, Goble, Anderson, Brown, Murray Jones, Harrison, Berryman, Lawrence (medical), Wackett, Cole, de la Rue, Wrigley, McNamara, Cobby, Lukis, Fryer-Smith (observer), Walne, McBain (equip), Johnston, Harman and Rogers. Goble, de la Rue and Fryer-Smith were ex-RNAS.

¹⁵ Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 21.

lost on Williams, who in retrospect, felt it undermined the RAAF's standing on important matters of defence policy, expenditure and force structure, but he could not or would not do anything about it.

In fairness, this is not to say that the infant RAAF did not seek senior officer training to meet the challenges of higher command. RAAF representatives were sent to both the RAF Staff College and Imperial Defence College in England where some intellectual rigour was forced upon students, and matters of Imperial Defence were argued and discussed. Williams, Anderson, Cole and Goble were all products of the RAF system. Yet the recipe for quality leadership seemed to elude all but a very few.

Having set the scene, I now want to labour on a number of key personalities from those tumultuous and formative years. This is because their style and approach to their positions were so different, yet they formed the backbone of the early RAAF and continued to influence its development until the end of World War II. On reflection, the major AFC players turned out to be Williams, George Jones, Bill Anderson, Henry Wrigley, Adrian 'King' Cole, Harry Cobby and Lawrence Wackett. All would make their marks later in life with Wackett going on to greater heights in developing Australia's aircraft industry. I would add Ross Smith and Oswald 'Toby' Watt to this list but sadly neither survived beyond the early 1920s and their full potential was never realised. Goble and de la Rue (to a much lesser extent) appear from the RNAS. Of the RAF members to have influence, Charles Burnett, Donald Hardman and Peter Drummond are worthy of brief mention, but their stories are beyond this paper and I have no doubt, will get coverage by a later speaker. Let me now briefly examine several of these characters in turn.

Undoubtedly, the most influential Australian airman for the RAAF was its notional founder, Air Marshal Sir Richard 'Dicky' Williams. Born in South Australia in 1890, Williams had joined the militia before attending the first pilot's course held at Point Cook in 1914. As previously mentioned, he spent his war years in the Middle East, rising to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, but occasionally acting as Brigade Commander. By 1920, Williams was the Australian military's most senior airman who, as a wing commander, was the RAAF's founding CAS. As to his leadership style, Salmond criticised Williams as short of practical experience in command and staff, stiff-necked and autocratic - perhaps a little unfair given the fight Williams had to establish the RAAF and to maintain its existence. He was also described as pedantic, a stickler for the rule book, and obsessed with 'spit and polish', but those descriptions also belittle somewhat Williams' legacy to his Service. He carried the responsibility for keeping the RAAF alive in the tough depression years and into the late thirties, during a time when the Royal Navy controlled the seas and a strong army would protect Australia's shores. Throughout this whole period, the RAAF rarely received more than 10 per cent of the Defence budget. His book - *These Are Facts* - while often appearing to be misnamed is certainly an eye-opener into the politics of command and the goings-on at the highest levels. If you are an Air Force Officer and have not read it, I urge you to do so. That Williams endured and spent three long tours as CAS is testament to the man's perseverance and is the prime reason we now refer to him as 'The Father of the RAAF'.

Stan Goble's career on the other hand, was very different to Williams. He had joined the RNAS in UK because he failed the physical exam for the AFC and wanted to fly. He completed pilot training in England in 1915 and was immediately posted to Dover to carry out channel patrols – not what a budding aviator had in mind for war service. He was soon posted to No 1 Squadron, RNAS at St Pol, near Dunkirk where anti-submarine patrols, bombing and reconnaissance were the duties required. Despite joining the air arm well after Williams, Goble went into action first. By mid-1916, he had moved onto fighters and was a flight commander. In 1917 he was appointed CO in his own right and became a recognised ace, having claimed and been granted seven kills. He was therefore, a natural choice by Navy as the leader of any new Australian Air Force. Contracting typhoid in August 1918 ended Goble's war service but he recovered, returned to Australia and became the naval adviser to the air board in 1920 – a naval 'in' for the future RAAF and a trump card that Navy was want to play.

Goble was Australia's first student at the Imperial Defence College in 1927, a position of prestige and, while Williams was home playing CAS, it would take him a further six years for his turn. Goble's influence has often been downplayed, but it must be recognised that while Williams stole much of the limelight, Goble was by no means always the 'second cousin'. Goble had undertaken an epic flight in 1924 and been awarded a CBE, a feat William's was forced to emulate some time later. As a Group Captain, Goble was the air force representative on the influential sub-committee formed to review the 1928 Defence Committee appreciation of 'War in the Pacific'. Goble and the Army member, Colonel Laverack, believed a reduction of British sea power made war possible but navy did not. The decisions were crucial to funding of the services, and consequently were to be of great importance.

While acting as head of the new Service in the between-the-wars years, there was little to command. Two operational squadrons, a training school and a seaplane flight were not much in the way of potent fighting force. Consequently, Goble and Williams were to share the CAS position because of constant manoeuvring by Army and Navy to have 'their man' hold the top job. Individually, both held the position three times although Goble's tenure was somewhat briefer.¹⁷ Both alternated as chairman of the Air Board whose terms of reference included 'administering and controlling the RAAF', a situation Williams later felt was untenable.¹⁸ The latent rivalry between Goble and Williams was continually simmering throughout the twenties and thirties, perhaps culminating in Goble's private note to Williams in early 1939 when he accused the latter of running the Air Board as if he were AOC RAAF rather than CAS and merely Board Chairman. That Williams fostered his own ideas and philosophy cannot be denied, but neither he nor Goble were to play important roles in Australia's coming hour of need, both effectively being banished before the outbreak of World War II. While Goble was gregarious and amiable, Williams was the opposite suggesting even the character of the Chief could vary markedly.

Perhaps unknown to most modern Air Force officers was the name Oswald Walter Watt. A pioneer aviator and professional gentleman, Watt was born in England of Australian parents yet considered himself Australian through and through. He gained

¹⁷ Williams held the job for 14½ yrs and Goble 4½. Alan Stephens, 'The Office of the Chief of the Air Staff' in *Australia's Air Chiefs: Royal Australian Air Force History Conference 1992*, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992, p. 4.

¹⁸ Air Force Regulation No 24-30, as under the *Air Force Act 1923*.

Flying Certificate No 112 dated 1 August 1911 at age 32 and owned his own Bleriot monoplane based in France when war broke out. Consequently, he joined the French Air Service where he developed a fine reputation as a flyer and natural leader. With the arrival of No 1 Squadron in Egypt, Watt left the French to rejoin his countrymen in mid-1916. Although appointed a flight commander, he soon found himself back off to England to prepare No 2 Squadron for the Western Front as their new CO. Watt commanded that unit in the field and ‘spoke his mind freely. He did not suffer fools gladly, according to reports, an attitude, which by and by did not endear him to his British masters.’¹⁹ Shortly afterwards as a Lieutenant-Colonel, Watt returned to England to command the 1st Training Wing at Tetbury under which the four Australian Training Squadrons, Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8 served. He, then, is the only other Australian airman from the AFC to have held command of both a squadron and a wing. Post-war, Watt declined an offer to serve in the RAAF or as Comptroller-General of Civil Aviation, the latter position going to Brinsmead. Remembered fondly by his men as caring and supportive, his death from drowning at Bilgowla in May 1921 at age 43 robbed Australia of one of its aviation pioneers, lobbyists and potential high commanders. Perhaps the eulogy left by one of his men best sums up his leadership style:

That he was the best commanding officer we have ever served under was the opinion of every officer and man in the Australian Flying Corps. He had every quality to make him a great leader of men – courage, determination, and an immense capacity for work, a stern and just man of discipline, unfailing courtesy too and thoughtfulness for his subordinates, and above all, the greatest factor in leadership, a genius for endearing himself (without conscious effort) to all who served under him.

He sounds like the ideal Air Force leader – but that was not to be ...

Major William Hopton Anderson had a long and fruitful career, but not to the extent of those previously mentioned. Between 1910 and 1915, he was a permanent officer in the Royal Australian Garrison Artillery until he transferred to the AFC as a Captain. He served in Nos 1, 3 and 7 Squadrons rising to the rank of major and taking command of 3 Squadron in the last year of the war. He ended the war with an exceptional record. On the formation of the RAAF, Anderson was appointed squadron leader and became its third most senior officer. While he went on to have a distinguished RAAF career holding command and staff appointments up to very senior rank, ‘Andy’ or ‘Mucker’ as he was known was not remembered as forceful in character, charismatic or an innovator. One commentator described his long, sorrowful face as complementing his normally silent and retiring manner.²⁰ Yet Anderson’s flair was for administration and, although minutiae may have been his downfall, he made acting CAS on one occasion in 1940 and retired as an Air Vice-Marshal.

¹⁹ C.G. Grey, ‘Oswald Watt the Airman’, in S. Ure Smith, B. Stevens & E. Watt, *Oswald Watt*, Art in Australia Ltd, Sydney, 1921.

²⁰ C.D. Coulthard-Clark, Australian Dictionary of Biography entry for W.H. Anderson, ADB 1940-80, p. 54.

The penultimate Australian I wish to briefly cover is Arthur Henry 'Harry' Cobby. He is best known as the AFC's highest scoring 'ace' with 29 confirmed victories. A bank clerk before the war, Cobby joined the AFC and went to No 4 Squadron in France where he gained a reputation as an aggressive and cunning pilot (sounds like not much has changed!) A born larrikin, Cobby's book, titled *High Adventure*, well illustrates the man's carefree style and devil-may-care attitude.²¹ At war's end, upon return to Australia, he joined the fledgling RAAF and took command of No 1 Squadron when it formed in 1925. He held command and staff appointments until his retirement as a Wing Commander into civil aviation in 1936. Cobby was recalled to service in 1940 and by 1942, held the rank of Air Commodore and was RAAF Commander North-Eastern Area. Within a year, he was the No 10 Group operational commander (later 1st Tactical Air Force) in the Pacific working for Bostock where he made some impression as a reasoned thinker and planner. He faced enormous challenges during this command, the RAAF being essentially left behind by the Americans on their way to the Philippines. The very real issues included lack of transport to move his flying squadrons up to the front, and problems with troop rotations, morale and lack of action. He found work-arounds, was able to relieve the boredom and fought hard for his men. However, it was during this period that he was implicated in the infamous 'Morotai Mutiny' of which I will say no more as I am sure others will cover it, but it effectively ended his career.

As far as his leadership characteristics were concerned, that Cobby was brave is without question. Not only had he earned the DSO and DFC but also, as an Air Commodore, he was awarded the George Medal for a heroic rescue of survivors from a Catalina crash in which he was a passenger. Regardless, Cobby's professionalism seemed to focus on the operational side of AFC and RAAF life. Cutlack, the official air historian for World War I, regarded him as 'one of the most daring spirits in the Australian Air Service' and added to Cobby's reputation with detailed descriptions of his kills. He clearly had time neither for paperwork nor spit and polish. While such an approach most likely endeared him to those he commanded, it tended to upset his superiors. Williams is on record as noting during an inspection of Richmond in the early 1930s that the base under Cobby was 'the worst I've ever seen'. In reviewing Cobby's career and influence on the organisation, it is worth asking the question: Was Cobby selected for appointment in the RAAF because of his fame as an ace and war hero? One is left to wonder. Perhaps historian Bazley best summed up Cobby when he described him as 'always an imp of mischief' – a most unnatural leadership characteristic.

Finally, I want to cover the man who was perhaps the unluckiest of the entire AFC. He was an unsung hero who retired as a Group Captain and, despite what he achieved, received no accolades or awards. Although he put in over 1600 days of service in World War I, his record shows only 45 – the time he spent in New Guinea in 1914-15. He was the founder of the AFC - Eric Harrison. Young Eric Harrison was so enthralled by Bleriot's crossing of the Channel that, in 1911, he took himself off to England to learn to fly. There, he joined the British and Colonial Aviation Company, and in August that year graduated with Pilot's Certificate No 131, making him one of the world's first qualified pilots. While many at the time criticised Harrison's appointment to the AIS, he had by then considerable experience having spent time in

²¹ A.H. Cobby, *High Adventure*, Kookaburra Technical Publications (Ed), Melbourne, 1981.

Europe on flying instruction duties, including a period he spent teaching German pilots to fly! Harrison was destined to spend almost the entire war at Point Cook as chief flying instructor and, later, CO. While Petre had helped set up the CFS, it was Harrison who was to graduate the entire AFC's student complement. His caring, personal approach resulted in a fatality free run with high percentage graduation – surely a remarkable achievement for the time. For this, he received no honours or awards and, although he joined the RAAF in 1921, he never got another flying position. Although Williams is now considered the father of the RAAF, at least one saw it differently. The editor of the RAAF's own *Wings* magazine wrote of Harrison's passing '... every man in Australia interested in flying mourned him as "The Father of the RAAF"'. For Harrison's story was the story of Australian flying.²² I hope that we can also recognise his vital contribution.

My point in introducing these very different leaders and commanders is simple. The RAAF had a great pantheon of characters to choose from and, in that regard, it did very well. The future RAAF could draw upon a great wealth of tactical experience together with some stores and technical support so, while it remained a small, tactically focussed organisation, it was well served. However, there was little in the way of serious command experience at the operational and strategic levels and this would become evident in the coming years. While Williams briefly had held the position of commander of an RFC Wing and even a few weeks as commander of the Middle-East Brigade, these positions offered little in the way of development of strategic decision making or practice of the operational art. Likewise, Watt as Lieutenant-Colonel, held a similar level of command but his was of a training wing, which had little real impact on war operations. It thus must be remembered that in the post-War cut and thrust of the Committee room, Williams and others such as Goble had to contend not only with much senior representation from Army and Navy, but also with veteran campaigners from the battlefronts of Victoria Barracks.

Given their circumstances and the small size of the AFC, it is no wonder that the RAAF had no high commanders immediately to choose from. While Australians had generally done well with the British Air Services, the majority of these chose to remain with their adopted force. In retrospect, full credit should be paid to men like Williams and Goble, Anderson and Cobby. That they stuck it out is amazing and, while the second oldest air force that they raised was small, by the end of their tenure, the RAAF was the fourth largest air force in the world.²³ This must be considered a remarkable achievement and a credit to their determination and, in many ways, their leadership. The AFC has gone but its men founded the Royal Australian Air Force and, for that, it must be remembered. These men provided the cadre of leaders who shaped the nascent force, now recognised as professional and accomplished. Their efforts and strength of character developed the new Air Force into a partner with Australia's other fighting services and established a fine tradition that continues today.

My final note, however, is one of disappointment. It is a sad indictment to see where we place the AFC in Australian military lineage order and perhaps an indication of their forgotten efforts. Wander along the Wall of Honour for World War I at the

²² *Wings*, Vol 5 No 13, 2 October 1945, Directorate of Public Relations, Melbourne, p. 15.

²³ In August 1945, the only air forces that were larger were the USAAF, The Soviet Air Force and the RAF.

Australian War Memorial. At the Wall's far end, you will find after all the fallen listed from the Headquarters, Corps, Brigades, Battalions, pay corps, cooks and bottle-washers, there is a blank panel and finally, 203 names are listed in silent testimony to the existence of the Australian Flying Corps.

Appendix A

AUSTRALIAN SQUADRON COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS

AFC Number	RFC/RFC Number	Wing	Date
No 1 Sqn	No 67 (Aust) Sqn	Formed (Point Cook) 5 th (Corps) Wing 40 th (Army) Wing Disbanded	6 Jan 16 14 Apr 16 5 Oct 17 5 Apr 19
No 2 Sqn	No 68 (Aust) Sqn	Formed (Egypt) 24 th Training Wing 13 th (Army) Wing 10 th (Army) Wing 51 st (Army) Wing 80 th (Army) Wing Disbanded	20 Sep 16 30 Jan 17 21 Sep 17 7 Jan 18 4 Apr 18 1 Jul 18 6 May 19
No 3 Sqn	No 69 (Aust) Sqn	Formed (Point Cook) 23 rd Training Wing 1 st (Corps) Wing 2 nd (Corps) Wing 15 th (Corps) Wing 91 st Wing Disbanded	19 Sep 16 28 Dec 16 9 Sep 17 Nov 17 Apr 18 Feb 19 6 May 19
No 4 Sqn	No 71 (Aust) Sqn	Formed (Point Cook) 25 th Training Wing 10 th (Army) Wing 11 th (Army) Wing 80 th (Army) Wing Disbanded	25 Oct 16 2 Apr 17 18 Dec 17 28 Apr 18 1 Jul 18 6 May 19
No 5 Sqn	No 29 (T) Sqn	Formed No 1 (Aust) Training Wing Disbanded	13 Jun 17 15 Sep 17 6 May 19
No 6 Sqn	No 30 (T) Sqn	Formed No 1 (Aust) Training Wing Disbanded	9 Jun 17 15 Sep 17 6 May 19
No 7 Sqn	No 32 (T) Sqn	Formed No 1 (Aust) Training Wing Disbanded	20 Sep 17 24 Oct 17 6 May 19
No 8 Sqn	No 33 (T) Sqn	Formed No 1 (Aust) Training Wing Disbanded	26 Oct 17 25 Oct 17 6 May 19

Appendix B

AFC UNITS, LOCATION AND MANNING, 3 JUNE 1918²⁴

UNIT	LOCATION	COMMANDER	OFFS	OTHER RANKS
AFC HQ	Horseferry Rd, London	Maj. H.C. Brinsmead	6	6
HQ 1 st (Aust) Trg Wing	Tetbury, Gloucs	LtCol. W.O. Watt	12	51
Aeroplane Repair Section	Leighterton, Gloucs	Capt. W.A. Coates	3	152
1 Sqn (67 Sqn, RFC)	Ramleh, Palestine	Maj. S.W. Addison	47	246
2 Sqn (68 Sqn, RFC)	La Bellevue, France	Maj A. Murray Jones	24	171
3 Sqn (69 Sqn, RFC)	Villers Bocage, France	Maj. D.V.J. Blake	44	215
4 Sqn (71 Sqn, RFC)	Clairmarais, France	Maj W.A. McCloughry	24	171
5 Sqn (29 (T) Sqn, RFC)	Minchinhampton, Gloucs	Maj. R.S. Brown	33	121
6 Sqn (30 (T) Sqn, RFC)	Minchinhampton, Gloucs	Maj. G.A.C. Cowper	32 offs 11 cdts	274
7 Sqn (32 (T) Sqn, RFC)	Leighterton, Gloucs	Maj. W.H. Anderson	27 offs 9 cdt	172
8 Sqn 33 (T) Sqn, RFC)	Leighterton, Gloucs	Maj. W. Ellis	15 offs 7 cdt	99
AFC Training Depot	Halton Park Camp, East Wendover	Maj. A.A. Broun	38 offs 30 cdts	594
TOTAL OVERSEAS			362	2272

²⁴ This is a snapshot only. Extracted from AWM 10, Item No 4343/14/23 and other sources.

DISCUSSION

Group Captain Nick Rusling RAF: That was a very broad canvas - very interesting. Can I just pick up on one thing that you said? And that was some of these early pilots were selected for the qualities of bravado and flying skills, and I guess, toughness and virility rather than other qualities. Now these are qualities - bravado - that would be a boon I would suggest in wartime, but could be a bit of a nightmare in peacetime. And does this not underline the enduring problem of command and leadership: that, today ours is a demanding profession. It requires us to be able to respect and respond to the limitations of peacetime operations whilst also at the same time having to discard those limitations, or be ready and able to discard them should we have to go to war.

Group Captain Lax: I think that's an excellent point and it has often been said that the best commanders were the lousiest in peace and the best in war, and I accept that point wholeheartedly. Of course, we're under the pressures of government policy, budgets constrained our actions; we don't often get the training which we desire during peacetime and, all of a sudden, we're often the first one to be blamed when it doesn't happen in war because we're not ready to go. The case in point is happening for both our Services right now in Timor, plus Bougainville for us. But whilst we do a great job, I wonder whether we're really prepared for it. The issue of bravado and virility - I accept the point - I think the other thing is their survival instincts were such that they were the ones who survived and, if you survived for more than six months on the front, you were either a flight commander or the squadron CO. The attrition rate was so high and so significant that even 1 Squadron, in what was seen as a sideshow, had a 16 per cent casualty rate and yet, today, we consider a two or three per cent casualty rate to be extreme. So yes, it was a matter of survival. Whether those leaders and commanders would have been best suited to a peacetime air force? Clearly, fellows like Cobby were not. A brilliant commander at the tactical level, an 'ace' and a tactician, a good leader of men, but in terms of a peacetime air force - pretty hopeless from what we gather.

Air Commodore Norm Ashworth: Just a very quick comment. You made a comment that those people from the AFC and RMC were the leadership of the RAAF during its early years; they were also the leadership of the RAAF during the Second World War, almost exclusively.

Group Captain Lax: Yes, that's true. Of the 540 odd officers that went through the AFC ranks, which includes the equipment officers, technical and supply officers, those who survived and those who were called back during the Second World War often made it to Wing Commander/Group Captain rank. Perhaps the most extraordinary one was Manwell on the first pilots' course. He's the one that most people wonder whatever happened to him. Very shortly, he went with 1 Squadron to the Middle East, and then he transferred into London office. He ended up spending the rest of the war as the equipment/stores officer, retired at the end of the war, and was called back in as a wing commander stores officer during the Second World War. So yes, even though a lot of them may not have been leaders and commanders of squadrons, they did play their role in the Second World War.

BETWEEN THE WARS: THE RAAF HIGH COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS

DR JOHN MORDIKE

This paper is essentially concerned with the interface between political power and military power. It presents an interpretation of the historical development of military command in Australia with the object of understanding the high command arrangements established for the RAAF in the interwar years. It begins by explaining the development of the defence aspects of the Australian Constitution, while introducing the notion of parliamentary control. This discussion takes place against the background of imperial and national interests and concludes that, in framing the defence aspects of the Australian Constitution, Australia's political leaders demonstrated the clear desire to impose national control on the Australian defence forces. It is argued that this desire is an enduring theme of Australian defence developments.

The Australian Constitution empowered the parliament, among other things, to make laws for the defence of the Commonwealth and to impose control on defence forces in executing their functions. Accordingly, after the establishment of the Commonwealth, the parliament enacted the *Defence Act 1903*. Circumstances surrounding the development of this legislation are subject to brief examination, while developing the theme of imperial and national interests. This episode is a prelude to understanding the continuity of these key influences that ultimately led to the failure of the Air Defence Bill in the 1920s and the enactment of interim legislation for the Air Force in the interwar years. Imperial and national interests and the related notion of parliamentary control are also the keys to understanding why the board-system of controlling the defence forces was introduced in Australia. Examination of these issues lays the groundwork for understanding the high command arrangements put in place for the RAAF up to 1939. The paper concludes with a brief examination of senior command of the RAAF in the interwar years.

THE AUSTRALIAN CONSTITUTION AND PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL OF THE DEFENCE FORCES

On 22 June 1897, colonial leaders from throughout the British Empire assembled in London to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign. It was a spectacular celebration of the imperial family under the leadership of the British crown. The premiers of the empire's 11 self-governing colonies all participated in the ceremonies that emphasised imperial pride, achievement and, above all, unity. Two days later the premiers of Canada, the Cape Colony, New Zealand, Newfoundland, Natal and the six Australian colonies assembled for a Colonial Conference chaired by the Secretary of States for the Colonies Joseph Chamberlain. Yet the proceedings of

this conference demonstrated that the carefully polished mantle of imperial unity, while resplendent, was not without blemish; below the pomp and pageant, there were veins of inconsistency, even cracks; excessive stress might lead to fracture.

Chamberlain presented the conference with his vision of a united, strong British Empire. According to the Colonial Secretary, this could be achieved through imperial federation, a formal political organisation that would bind the members together more effectively. This idea of binding the colonies into an imperial federation had its origins in the declining economic fortunes of Britain, compared with nations like Germany, France and the United States. 'If economics are any guide to politics ... ,' wrote British historian Paul Kennedy, 'the Pax Britannica was beginning to rest on shaky foundations'. According to Kennedy:

... one solution which many British statesmen of the period 1880–1914 believed might help them to arrest this relative decline [was] Imperial Federation, the welding together of the disparate parts of the Empire into an organic customs and military unit.¹

Chamberlain, known colloquially as the 'Minister for Empire', was one who was motivated to consolidate Britain's economic and military power in the face of increasing competition. 'In retrospect', Kennedy observed:

the historian can perceive that the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 1897 did not denote the zenith of Britain's power, but constituted rather the defiant swan-song of a nation becoming less and less complacent about increasing threats to its world-wide interests.²

Imperial federation was the major proposal put to the 1897 conference by Chamberlain. He suggested to the colonial representatives that a federal council comprised of representatives from Britain and the colonies could govern such a federation. Its members would enjoy economic advantages through special trading arrangements and enhanced defence would also be a feature.

Chamberlain was an astute politician, carefully choosing the right time for proposing an imperial federation. To use a popular expression of the period, the moment seemed ripe for such a proposal. But the buoyant mood of imperial pride and unity engendered by the Diamond Jubilee foundered on the hard realities of colonial self-interest. The Premier of South Australia, Charles Kingston, asked Joseph Chamberlain whether the proposed imperial federal council would be comprised of two houses, one of them giving equal representation to each colony regardless of the size of its population. Chamberlain did not hesitate. 'I should say certainly not,' he responded. Kingston was equally quick and concise, telling Chamberlain that if that were so, then arrangements should remain as they were.³ And they did. The colonies were willing

¹ P. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, Fontana Press, 3rd Edition, London, 1991, pp. 219-25.

² *Ibid.*, p. 248.

³ J.L. Mordike, *An Army for a Nation: A history of Australian military developments 1880–1914*, Allen & Unwin in association with The Department of Defence, North Sydney, 1992, p. 49; & *Report of a Conference between the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain MP, and the Premiers of the Self-Governing Colonies of the Empire, June and July 1897*, p. 107, Australian Archives, CP 103/12, Bundle 1.

members of the empire but they did not submit to direction from Britain without question, nor were they willing to surrender the ability to act in their own interest, where they thought it appropriate. They jealously protected their right to self-government and all that that entailed.

At this very time, the six Australian colonies were approaching their own federation as the Commonwealth of Australia. Before leaving Australia for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the Australian premiers had attended a four-week session of the National Australian Convention in Adelaide. Here they had participated in the drafting of the proposed Australian constitution, which in its final form would be enacted by the British Parliament. They brought a copy of the draft constitution to London for comments by the British authorities.

When Sir John Anderson, head of the Australia section at the Colonial Office, read the draft on 19 June, just three days before the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, he was alarmed. Anderson recorded that it was 'impossible' to regard the draft constitution as 'entirely satisfactory, especially in regard to the unity of the Empire'. One of his major concerns was that Section 70 of the draft constitution implied that in all cases the Governor-General was to act only on the advice of his Executive Council. The rub was that the Executive Council would be comprised of Australian ministers of state, so preventing the Governor fulfilling his role as an imperial officer who received instructions from Britain and represented imperial interests in the business of the Australian parliament. Anderson's fear was that the unity of the empire was threatened unless the British government retained ultimate control over colonial legislation. John Bramston, Assistant Under Secretary of Australasian Affairs, shared Anderson's concerns, believing that the draft constitution indicated that Australia intended to become 'at once an independent state'. It was all very worrying. The Diamond Jubilee celebrations were upon them and Australia's political leaders appeared to be making preparations to break with the empire. Anderson concluded despondently that:

while everyone is talking of 'unity' and praying and hoping for it, it is discouraging to find united Australia putting forward as the product of its united statesmanship a distinctly disruptive measure.

Joseph Chamberlain shared the concerns of his senior advisers and decided to take action 'against the objectionable provisions [in the draft constitution] pointing out their separatist character but making no threats'.⁴

Chamberlain instructed his staff to prepare memoranda that expressed the views held by the British government on the draft constitution together with suggested amendments. Aware of the potentially explosive nature of direct and open intervention in colonial affairs, Chamberlain took action to attempt to have the imperial amendments incorporated quietly into the constitution. The Colonial Secretary approached George Reid, the Premier of New South Wales, on a confidential basis and asked him to introduce the amendments at the next National

⁴ Comments on the draft constitution by John Anderson, Chief Clerk Australian Section, 19 June 1897, with minutes by John Bramston, Assistant Under Secretary of Australasian Affairs, & minute by Joseph Chamberlain, 29 June 1897, S.A. No. 12012, 7 June 1897, CO 13/152(1), National Library of Australia; & Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 48-53.

Australian Convention to be held in Sydney later that year. As Chamberlain put it, he referred his comments to Reid for his ‘private and independent’ consideration, urging him to give the matter his personal attention because he was ‘anxious to avoid the possibility of friction’.⁵ It is clear that Chamberlain reasoned that Australians would accept the amendments more readily if they believed that Reid was their author.

One of Chamberlain’s suggested amendments concerned Section 68 of the draft constitution. This section declared that the Commander-in-Chief of the Australian military and naval forces would be ‘the Governor-General as the Queen’s Representative’. But Chamberlain wanted the reference to the Governor-General deleted and the Queen instead to be designated as the Commander-in-Chief.⁶ His motive is clear. This amendment would have given the British parliament a constitutional basis to command Australia’s forces; the Queen was compelled to act on the advice of her ministers and in this instance they would have been British ministers. Such a development was an integral part of what Chamberlain had in mind when proposing his imperial federation, a political organisation with economic and military functions that would be directed from its head office in London.

Reid never put Chamberlain’s proposed amendment on the command of Australian forces to the final Constitutional Convention of 1898. There can be little doubt why he did not do so: it would have been quickly rejected. The men who drafted the Australian Constitution were well informed on the realities of constitutional law. The noted constitutional authority, Alpheus Todd, had noted in 1894 that:

... it is now obvious that any attempts on the part of the sovereign to retain in his own hands power, in respect to military administration or diplomacy, would be as inconsistent with constitutional usage as would be the personal and direct interference by the Sovereign in domestic affairs.⁷

Participants in the Australian constitutional convention understood this, but they also held the view that, in Australia, ‘the Governor-General as the Queen’s representative’ would be constrained by the advice of Australian ministers. One prominent participant, Alfred Deakin, succinctly captured the mood of the convention when he concluded that:

In no case is [the Governor-General] to be endowed with the personal power to act over the heads of Parliament and the Ministry, by whom these forces are called into existence and by whose contributions they are maintained.⁸

⁵ B.K. de Garis, ‘The Colonial Office and the Commonwealth Constitution Bill’, in A.W. Martin (ed.), *Essays in Australian Federation*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1969, pp. 98-121.

⁶ Draft of Federal Constitution 1897, Section 68, & Memorandum A, Australian Federal Constitution – Suggested Amendments, Clause 68, p. 2, S.A. No. 12012, & June 1897, CO 13/152(1), National Library of Australia.

⁷ A. Todd, *Parliamentary Government in the British Colonies*, 2nd edition, Longmans Green, London, 1894, p. 17.

⁸ A. Deakin, in *Official Record of the Debates of the Australasian Federal Convention*, 3rd edition, Vol II, Melbourne, 1898, p. 2252.

Notwithstanding Australia's formal position as a member of the empire, the self-esteem associated with perceptions of national status and the autonomy inherent in constitutional democratic government placed clear limits on the ways in which Australian forces could be integrated into centralist defence plans for the empire.⁹ While Chamberlain and the Colonial Office authorities made overtures for imperial unity, Australia's political leaders were committed to the principle that the parliament of the Commonwealth would exercise unfettered control over its defence forces. Ambivalence – the tension between nation and empire – was an ongoing feature of Australian development for more than half of the 20th century. Nowhere is this more evident than in the development of Australian defence.

The Australian Constitution became the cornerstone for establishing, exercising and controlling the nation's military power. Section 119 made the parliament responsible for the protection of Australia from invasion and domestic violence. Section 68 established the notion of military command under national control by designating 'the Governor-General as the Queen's representative' as the commander-in-chief. Section 51 endowed parliament with the power:

... to make laws for the peace, order, and good Government of the Commonwealth with respect to ... [*inter alia*] ... the naval and military defence of the Commonwealth and of the several states, and the control of the forces to execute and maintain the laws of the Commonwealth.¹⁰

The laws enacted by parliament are an exercise in parliamentary authority under the terms of the constitution. We might choose the word 'control', the term used in the constitution, to describe the nature of this parliamentary function in relation to the defence forces. Exercising its control, parliament enacts the legislative framework for the raising and maintenance of military forces while also establishing the basis for the exercise of authority within the forces in accordance with a disciplinary code. 'Command' is the word chosen to describe the exercise of authority within the forces. Such authority exercised under the overall mantle of parliamentary control is described as a 'lawful' command. Indeed, 'command' in current Australian Defence Force practice is defined, in the first instance, as:

The authority which a commander in the military Service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment.

'Command' is also defined to include 'the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organising, directing, coordinating and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions'. Furthermore, the function of command 'also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale and discipline of assigned personnel'.¹¹

⁹ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 48-53.

¹⁰ *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol. I, 1901-2, The Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act, pp. 1-25.

¹¹ ADFP 101, C-10.

THE DEFENCE ACT 1903

After the six Australian colonies federated as the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901, the parliament enacted the *Defence Act 1903*. This was the first step by the parliament in establishing the legislative framework for the control of Australian forces, which at that time were comprised of land and naval forces. Significantly, the passage of the bill through parliament illustrated the tension between nation and empire. It was not the first defence bill that had been presented to parliament. The first defence bill had been presented in July 1901 but had been subsequently withdrawn in the face of widespread criticism, not the least of which concerned its imperial bias.¹² The second bill also faced criticism for its imperial bias. Concerned about future involvement in imperial operations, members of parliament amended the bill's provision for dispatching permanent soldiers outside Australian territory. The amendment denied an Australian government the power to deploy any Australian soldiers – part-time or permanent – overseas. It was a provision that was to have a profound impact on Australian military organisation for the two world wars. But there was another important amendment to the defence bill.

At the behest of imperial interests, the Minister for Defence had included a provision in the defence bill that the disciplinary code for members of the Australian Military Forces would be provided by the British *Army Act*, in so far as it was not inconsistent with the other provisions in the bill. The underlying motive was that such a provision would produce a uniform legislative framework and disciplinary code for an imperial force to fight on imperial operations under British control, developments along the lines desired by Joseph Chamberlain. However, during the debate over the defence bill, national interests influenced the outcome. James McCay, a member of the House of Representatives and an officer in the citizen forces, found support from other members when he said that he had reservations about the inclusion of the British *Army Act* because it placed 'our forces under an Act in regard to the provisions of which we have no control'. Charles McDonald wondered whether the provision was 'another plank in the Imperial platform'. He questioned the motives of the Minister for Defence for including such a provision in the first place, observing that the Minister's 'actions prove that he is amenable to any suggestions of an Imperialistic nature'. On McCay's proposal, and with the Minister's agreement, the provision was amended to subject the Military Forces to the British *Army Act* only when on active service. The Australian *Defence Act* and regulations made under that act would apply in peacetime.¹³

The tension between national and imperial interests was not isolated to developments over the Constitution and the Defence Act 1903. As mentioned earlier, it permeated the fabric of Australia's defence developments from the colonial era to the mid-20th century. In April 1921, the situation that arose when Senator George Pearce, the Minister for Defence and an Australian of imperial persuasion, attempted to amend the Australian *Defence Act* was another example. In introducing the amendment, Pearce said that the government proposed 'to make the Military Forces subject to the Army Act in time of peace as well as ... in time of war'. He also assured the Senate that the proposed amendment did 'not give to the Imperial Legislature any control

¹² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 66-84.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-7.

over our Forces'.¹⁴ But the sensitivity of the subject was immediately evident. Senator Elliott, formerly a brigadier in the 1st AIF, observed:

There are, to my mind, very grave and serious objections to the measure now submitted to us. One of the greatest objections is the attempt to import into our Defence legislation the whole of the [British] *Army Act* which relates to the British Standing Army, and to make it applicable, without the Senate or Parliament having a chance to discuss it, to our Citizen Force, a Force which absolutely differs from the regular British Army.

Focussing his comments on his primary concern, Elliott thought that it was 'wrong in principle to introduce into this Parliament, which has the widest of self-governing powers, legislation to allow any other Parliament to make laws for us in matters of this kind'. He thought that the proposed amendments were 'simple enough' but his concern was that they would bring the 'the Military Forces of the Commonwealth at all times within the provisions of the British *Army Act*, and to that extent they abrogate our independence as a self-governing Dominion'.¹⁵

THE AIR DEFENCE BILL

Within a few days of this attempt to amend the *Defence Act*, similar objections were raised when Senator Pearce introduced the Air Defence Bill as the legislative basis for the Australian Air Force. The Air Force had been formally established just three weeks earlier on 31 March 1921 by a proclamation under the *Defence Act 1903-1918*. Section 33 of the *Defence Act* empowered the Governor-General to 'raise, maintain, and organise ... such Permanent and Citizen Forces as he deems necessary' for defence purposes. Raising the new force under the *Defence Act* was simply an expedient that Pearce intended would be only an interim measure. Accordingly, the *Commonwealth Gazette* No. 28 of 31 March 1921 proclaimed that 'a Force, to be called the Australian Air Force, be constituted as part of the Australian Military Forces'. In his autobiography, Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams observed that: 'The word "military" is here used in its broadest sense'.¹⁶

In a similar fashion to his attempted amendment to the *Defence Act*, Pearce's Air Defence Bill incorporated the British *Air Force Act* that, in turn, incorporated the British *Army Act*. This attracted adverse comment because it raised fears of a loss of national control over the force. Senator Pratten, a member of the governing Nationalist Party, protested that the incorporation of the British *Army Act* was:

a dangerous provision ... by which, if we pass the Bill unamended, we shall not only be committing ourselves to the British *Army Act* as it stands to-day, but we shall commit ourselves also to any amendments made by the British Parliament in that *Act*, inasmuch as

¹⁴ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XCV, Senator Pearce, 7 April 1921, CPD, pp. 7367-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Senator Elliott, pp. 7552-3.

¹⁶ R. Williams, *These Are Facts: The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, KBE, CB, DSO*, The Australian War Memorial and The Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1977, p. 137; & Appendix VI, Gazette notice authorising the establishment of the Air Force on 31 March 1921, p. 391.

those amendments will automatically operate in Australia. We therefore have the spectacle of another Legislature imposing legislation upon this continent.¹⁷

Pratten believed that the air force should be developed independently and not be like the navy which, as he described it, had a special relationship with the Royal Navy. He concluded that 'it would be better for us to have nothing to do with the Imperial *Air Force Act*'.¹⁸ The Leader of the Opposition, Senator Gardiner, harboured similar reservations. 'The extraordinary request made by the Minister brings me to my feet,' he explained, 'We are asked to adopt a clause which includes British legislation'.¹⁹

In response to these objections, the Air Defence Bill was amended so that the Imperial *Air Force Act* applied only in wartime and not during peace.²⁰ This amendment brought the legislation into line with the *Defence Act* which applied the British *Army Act* to the Australian Military Forces while they were deployed on active service. The Air Defence Bill was read a third time in the Senate. Introduced to the House of Representatives, it was read a first time on 18 May 1921, but it lapsed soon after when Parliament was prorogued.²¹

The lack of a specific legislative basis for the Royal Australian Air Force was the cause of certain problems, according to a report of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Joint Committee of Public Accounts published in July 1923. Although it had been two years since the Air Force had been established, the committee reported that in the absence of an *Air Defence Act*, only graduates of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, could hold permanent commissions. This was causing a morale problem in the Service and a number of officers were choosing to leave. Furthermore, the committee claimed that, unlike Army and Navy, Air Force administration was hampered by the absence of powers which would give it independence as a force and make it effective. But just four days before this report was published, the appropriate legislation was again presented to Parliament.²²

The Air Defence Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives by the new Minister for Defence, Mr Bowden. It met with strong criticism which, Douglas Gillison noted, was not confined to the Opposition benches.²³ Opponents focused their attack on two related aspects of the Bill: national defence and national control. Commenting on the issue of national defence, Mr Scullin from the Opposition protested that: 'The Bill had been drafted with the idea that our air force shall be sent abroad to fight'. There was a clear perception, embraced mainly by the Labor Party, that the Air Force was a force that was pre-eminently suited to the defence of Australia rather than the defence of imperial interests far from Australian shores. 'It is a Bill for the air defence of Australia' Scullin declared. This was a key concern, but it was the issue of national control that was paramount. The Bill still included the

¹⁷ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XCV, Senator Pratten, 27 April 1921, pp. 7760-1.

¹⁸ Senator Pratten quoted by D. Gillison in 'Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42', Vol. I, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, Series Three - Air, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1962, p. 18.

¹⁹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XCV, Senator Gardiner, p. 7762.

²⁰ C.D. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921-39*, Allen & Unwin in association with The Royal Australian Air Force, North Sydney, 1991, p. 352.

²¹ Gillison, 'Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42', p. 18.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

provision that the British *Air Force Act* would apply to the RAAF, and Scullin protested that: ‘The Government are asking us to surrender our political independence as well as the independence of Australia’.²⁴

Another Labor member, Mr Anstey, addressed this issue, spelling out the Opposition’s objection:

One thing we are definite and decided upon is that if a system of aviation is adopted, the laws and regulations to govern it must be Australian. They must be made by the representatives of the people of Australia. We are definitely and distinctly hostile to the imposition of any British legislation on the Air Force, whether directly or by reference. That is clear.²⁵

Leaving no doubts about where they stood on the matter, Anstey assured the Minister for Defence that ‘we shall fight every clause in this Bill which has the slightest reference to placing the Air Force of Australia in any way under the laws and regulations of any other country’.²⁶

In the face of strong criticism, the Government withdrew the bill and submitted a new piece of legislation. This Air Force Bill was intended to be a temporary measure but, despite the earlier criticism, it still incorporated the British *Air Force Act* and, as a result, the British *Army Act*. The Leader of the Opposition, Mr Charlton, challenged it on this ground. In response, Defence Minister Bowden undertook to insert a provision that the British *Army Act* and the British *Air Force Act* would not apply to the RAAF. This was not a measure designed simply to accommodate the wishes of the Opposition. The Minister realised that he had no alternative. Sir Granville Ryrie, a member of the Government, gave an indication of the political forces at play when he stated that he believed that the removal of the application of the British legislation had the support of the majority of the House of Representatives and the majority of Australians. The Bill was subsequently passed and, on 1 September 1923, the *Air Force Act* received royal assent.²⁷

The *Air Force Act 1923* was conceived as an interim measure. As Air Vice-Marshal Geoffrey Hartnell observed in his 1983 study of command in Australia, the *Act* ‘was very brief’.²⁸ Indeed, the *Act* amounted to only one page of legislation, consisting of just three simple sections.²⁹ It established the Royal Australian Air Force as a part of the Defence Force, subjected it to the *Defence Act* and regulations made under it, and empowered the Governor-General to disband any portion of the Air Force. In its final clause, the *Act* illustrated the strength of opposition that had been mobilised against the inclusion of British legislation by stipulating that:

²⁴ Scullin, quoted by Gillison in ‘Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42’, p. 22.

²⁵ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Mr Anstey, 19 July 1923, Vol CIV, p. 1365.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1366.

²⁷ Gillison, ‘Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42’, pp. 21-23.

²⁸ G. Hartnell, ‘The Problem of Command in the Australian Defence Environment’, *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence*, No. 27, The Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1983, p. 60.

²⁹ *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol XXI, No 33 of 1923, Air Force, p. 76.

... the Imperial Act called the Army Act and any Acts amending or in substitution for it and for the time being in force, shall not apply to the Air Force.³⁰

This was the legislation under which the Air Force operated from 1923 until the outbreak of war in 1939. As Hartnell noted, '[a]nother version of the Air Defence Bill was never submitted to Parliament and the *Air Force Act* was the only legislation specifically concerning the RAAF until the outbreak of war in 1939', with the result that the 'greater part of RAAF law was never covered by legislation but only by regulation' during this period.³¹ This outcome was, in the first instance, a result of the deep-seated desire to retain national control over Australian defence forces, echoing the circumstances that surrounded the defence aspects of the Australian Constitution and the *Defence Act 1903*.

THE ORIGINS OF THE BOARD SYSTEM OF ADMINISTERING THE FORCES

Before dealing with the senior command arrangements for the RAAF in the inter-war years, we need to review the way in which such arrangements evolved for the Australian land forces immediately after the federation of the six Australian colonies as the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. Of course, similar arrangements applied to the naval forces but it was the experience with parliamentary control and the command of the land forces that determined the outcome.

In establishing the Australian military forces in 1901, the Australian government chose to appoint a General Officer Commanding, or GOC, as the senior officer who commanded the Australian military forces. Clearly, the incumbent of such a position was endowed with a great degree of personal power, but the appointment was subject to parliamentary control, in the first instance, by being immediately responsible to the Minister for Defence. However, what appeared to be a straightforward arrangement for the command of the military forces raised serious questions about the strength of parliamentary control over military developments. The reason was that the Australian government chose to import a British Army officer to become the first GOC, and he served the British authorities rather than the Australian government. The period of his command is a rich field of study for understanding the tension between national and imperial objectives in Australian defence developments, as well civil-military relations.

The officer appointed to be GOC was Colonel Edward Hutton, who was promoted to the local rank of Major-General for the duration of his command in Australia. Before leaving London, Hutton was briefed by Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain and his permanent undersecretary at the Colonial Office, Sir Montague Ommanney. Documents contained in Hutton's private papers reveal that he also had a meeting with King Edward, the Secretary of State for War, Mr St John Brodrick, and the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army, Lord Roberts. There could be no more senior imperial authorities for a professional military officer to meet - the reigning monarch of Great Britain, the minister of state responsible for defence, and the commander of the British Army. Hutton gave these men an undertaking that he would

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Section 3(5).

³¹ Hartnell, 'The Problem of Command in the Australian Defence Force Environment', p. 60.

organise a force of 20,000 Australian mounted troops for imperial operations, an undertaking that reflected Chamberlain's wish to consolidate the military power of the empire. And clearly for a professional military officer of Hutton's standing, such an undertaking would not be taken lightly. Indeed, the imperial officer was resolute in attempting to bring his commitment to fruition. Hutton recorded that he went to Australia determined that, even in the absence of support for his proposals from the Australian government or the minister for defence, 'I would initiate a Defence Policy of my own and carry it into effect at any cost to myself'.³²

Soon after his arrival in Australia in January 1902, Hutton attempted to fulfil his undertaking to the British authorities by proposing to organise the Australian military forces into two distinct forces: a garrison force for local defence and a field force which could be deployed into a theatre of operations. It was the field force that Hutton planned would provide Britain with an expeditionary force, but he never spelt this out to the Australian government because of its strong opposition to proposals to maintain forces for any purpose other than the defence of Australia. Indeed, when the Acting Minister for Defence, Sir William Lyne, examined Hutton's proposed organisation for the Australian forces, he quickly deduced that Hutton planned that Australian troops should be sent overseas for offensive operations. 'I at once took an opportunity,' Lyne explained to the House of Representatives, 'to remove from the mind of the General Officer Commanding the impression that the Government or Parliament, would, for a moment, consent to such a proposal'. Furthermore, acting on Lyne's instructions, the secretary of the Department of Defence, Robert Collins, wrote to Hutton informing him that '[t]he Minister does not agree with any proposal to give control over Australian Troops to any but the Commonwealth Authority'.³³

Civil-military relations during Hutton's period of command were volatile. Hutton was a military officer who had a distinct difficulty in taking a subordinate position to his colonial political masters. In an earlier appointment as the Commandant of the Military Forces of New South Wales, Hutton had publicly criticised budgetary decisions of the Premier, Sir George Dibbs, who was also the defence minister. Called to Dibbs' office one night to discuss their differences, Hutton had concealed a revolver in his greatcoat pocket. Judging by the note he left in his private papers, the possibility of usurping the authority of the Premier had entered Hutton's mind.³⁴ Subsequently appointed to command the Canadian militia, Hutton had been dismissed from that post by Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier for insubordination.³⁵ Harbours little respect for colonial political leaders, Hutton provided colonial governments with a profound challenge to parliamentary control. In his appointment as GOC, Hutton attempted to fulfil his undertaking to the imperial authorities in defiance of the directions of the Australian government. When he imposed his radical reorganisation on the militia he also aroused a great deal of resentment in the force and the community. The GOC clashed with a number of militia officers and provided

³² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 92; & Narrative of Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Hutton's Command in Australia 1901-04, Period VIII, *Hutton Papers*, Vol XXXVI, Add. Ms. 50113, f. 208, British Library.

³³ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, pp. 116-117.

³⁴ Mordike, p. 35; & Notes regarding my interview with Sir George Dibbs, Premier of New South Wales, 13 November 1893, *Hutton Papers*, Vol VII, Add. Ms. 50084, ff. 203-4, British Library.

³⁵ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 90.

more than one minister for defence with difficulties. It was a unique episode in Australian history that eventually resulted in an important decision on the structure of the Army's high command.

One of the most controversial issues to arise during Hutton's period of command was the coded telegram incident. In 1904, it was discovered that Hutton had sent a coded telegram to London. Minister for Defence Austin Chapman requested a decoded copy of the telegram from Hutton in so far as it related to military business, a justifiable request because Hutton was responsible solely to the Australian minister on the subject of military business. Responding to Chapman, Hutton confirmed that the message was certainly on a military subject but, as the telegram had been sent confidentially to the British Secretary of State for War, Hutton was not prepared to provide a copy for the Australian minister. Not to be deterred, Chapman again requested a copy of the message, but before he could take the matter further the Deakin government fell. Hutton then informed the Secretary of the Department of Defence, Robert Collins, that he was still not prepared to provide a copy of the message because it would divulge 'the secret code' that had been given to him for 'communication direct to the War Office'.³⁶

The new Labor Minister for Defence, Senator Andrew Dawson, was not about to let the matter die. Only a few weeks earlier, after an incident where Hutton had offended a member of the Senate, Dawson had exploded: 'The Major-General might as well march his regiment into the Chamber and pitch us all out'.³⁷ In relation to the coded telegram incident, Dawson informed Hutton in writing that his position as GOC made him a servant of the Australian minister, in this case Dawson himself. 'The right of the Minister to insist that all official communications as regards the Defence of the Commonwealth shall be submitted to him,' Dawson wrote, 'cannot for a moment be questioned'. The coded telegram issue was brought to a head when a report of the incident was leaked to the press. The *Age* called for the abolition of the position of GOC. The newspaper observed that, from the imperial perspective, Hutton was

... looked upon as a kind of military proprietor, holding authority delegated entirely by his superior officers at headquarters in London, and entrusted with the duty of keeping the Colonists in their proper places from a military standpoint.³⁸

The coded telegram incident was only one of several confrontations between Dawson and Hutton. The GOC gradually came to the realisation that the power he enjoyed in implementing his imperial agenda as GOC was under serious threat. He recorded in his private papers that: 'Fostered by the Politicians, in and out of parliament, the Public and the Press were awakening to the fact that the policy upon which I was building their defence was not that of their own creation ...'.³⁹

The Watson Labor government held power only for the short period of four months, but before relinquishing office, Dawson submitted a report to parliament recommending the abolition of the position of GOC. Instead of a single senior

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

commander, the minister proposed the establishment of a council of defence to assist the Government in developing defence policy, and a military board to control and to administer the forces. In his report, Dawson cited the precedent of Britain's recent abolition of the position of commander-in-chief, but this was simply an obvious attempt to enlist conservative support for his suggestion to do likewise. Despite reference to British command arrangements, Dawson was motivated by the peculiar difficulties being experienced in Australia with the recalcitrant senior military commander.⁴⁰

Within two months James McCay, Minister for Defence in the Reid-McLean government, amended the *Defence Act 1903* to abolish the position of GOC and to establish the Military Board and the Naval Board. McCay explained that the 'administration of the Army will be carried by a Military Board, just as the administration of the Naval Forces will be carried out by a Naval Board'. Taking the case of the Military Forces as an example, McCay went on to explain that the Minister for Defence would become a member of the Military Board because:

[h]e now has to take the responsibility of finally determining any important matter of administration, and he will have to continue to accept that responsibility, because any delegation of his powers to the board would interfere with the principle of parliamentary control and Ministerial responsibility.

In addition to the Minister for Defence, the Military Board would include a Chief of the General Staff and other senior military officers responsible for discrete areas, such as personnel issues and equipment. An additional member, who brought another dimension of parliamentary control that also had its origins in the Constitution, took a seat on the board: a civilian finance member.⁴¹ The board system of administering the forces was not the only new development. McCay explained that the senior defence policy-making body would be the Council of Defence. Membership included the Minister for Defence, the Treasurer, and senior officers from each of the Services. An Inspector-General of the Military Forces would also be appointed.

There was an important national dimension to the new arrangements. They were not simply an attempt to enhance parliamentary control; rather, they were an attempt to gain national control over military matters while preventing the exercise of imperial influence in military matters. Hutton understood this important design. When Hutton began to suspect that the Australian government was contemplating either the appointment of an Australian officer to replace him as GOC or, alternatively, establishing a board to administer the forces, he wrote to Sir Montague Ommanney at the Colonial Office explaining that:

... the control of the Military Forces if placed in the hands of a local officer, or in the hands of a Committee composed of local officers, must necessarily ... be entirely subordinated to the local political and personal influences.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴¹ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XXIII, 2 November 1904, Mr McCay, pp. 6383-96.

⁴² Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 158.

Hutton also wrote to the Governor-General, Lord Tennyson informing him that:

... there is a faction headed by Captain Collins [the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Defence] and other ignorant or malevolent people who would do away with an Imperial General and substitute a small committee controlled by and under the political party in power.⁴³

Trying to head-off such a development, Hutton argued for the preservation of the authority of the GOC, unmistakably for the express purpose of enabling imperial influence to be exerted in Australian military matters. But Hutton's efforts were in vain. While introducing the enabling amendments to the *Defence Act* for the new command arrangements, McCay explained that, through them, Cabinet would be brought into 'more direct touch with the defence policy of Australia', and the implementation of the policy would be more sympathetic to parliament and the people. McCay explained that he was committed to introducing 'Australian feeling' to defence policy formulation and dropping the practice of importing 'large numbers of officers from the Imperial Army'.⁴⁴

The board system was introduced in Australia to strengthen parliamentary control of the defence forces and to dissipate the function of military command at the most senior level. The regulations promulgated under the *Defence Act 1903* demonstrate the determination of the Government to ensure that the authority of parliament was paramount. In listing the constitution of the board, the Chief of the General Staff was designated the 1st Military Member, the Adjutant-General the 2nd Military Member, the Quartermaster-General the 3rd Military Member, the Chief of Ordnance the 4th Military Member. The Finance Member alone was accorded no designation which indicated a numerical ordering. But did these designations indicate precedence in authority? No, they did not because immediately after conferring a numerical ordering on the military members of the board, the regulations stipulated that: 'The designation of these officers shall not thereby confer any seniority on the holders thereof'. The members of the Military Board were intended to share equal authority. They were members of a committee. The regulations prevented individual officers from exercising unfettered influence in reaching decisions by stipulating that: 'Three Members of the Board shall constitute a quorum'. Furthermore, the regulations emphasised that the Board was 'subject to the control of the Minister'. The regulations that prescribed the way in which the Military Board functioned amounted to a radical departure from the traditional model of military command where authority was placed in the hands of one senior military officer who commanded the forces. Rejecting this model, the regulations avoided using the word 'command' and instead charged the board 'with *the administration* of all matters relating to the Military Forces'.⁴⁵

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁴ Mordike, *An Army for a Nation*, p. 163; for the amendments to the *Defence Act 1903* see *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol III, 1904, No. 12, pp. 13-15.

⁴⁵ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1901 – 1914*, Vol I, Defence (Military), Military Regulations (General), The Military Board, pp. 518-521.

Effectively, the Minister for Defence had assumed a more direct role in exerting control over the Military Forces. The military power enjoyed by the former GOC had been taken out of the hands of one senior military officer and shared among the members of a committee who, as a group, administered the Military Forces under the authority of the Minister for Defence. But the Minister was, in the first instance, accountable to Parliament for his actions, an accountability that Hutton had defied. And, ultimately, the Minister was also answerable to an Australian constituency, a responsibility that Hutton had ignored in attempting to fulfil the wishes of the imperial authorities. Yet, despite these new arrangements, within the constraints of parliamentary control, individual officers still exercised their military authority within their spheres of responsibility. In effect they still commanded within a defined range of responsibility, but, in contrast to the former arrangement, no one military officer commanded the whole force.

One important question remains. Were the new arrangements appropriate for wartime? McCay clearly thought not. While explaining the new arrangements to the House of Representatives, a former Minister for Defence, Sir John Forrest, interjected with the question: ‘Who is going to take charge in time of war?’ McCay answered that:

... The man who knows what the officers can do and what the men can do is the man who should command, because he knows to what extent he can try them. The man who best knows that is the Inspector-General. Therefore, he would be the Commander-in-Chief in time of war.

If war broke out, the Minister thought that ‘all you require ... is an Order in Council which changes the Inspector-General into a Commander-in-Chief, and makes the members of the [Military] Board his staff’.⁴⁶ It was intended that a traditional GOC command arrangement would apply in wartime. Accordingly, one further amendment to the *Defence Act* empowered the Governor-General to ‘[a]ppoint an officer or officers of the Defence Force to command the whole or any portion of the Defence Force in time of war’.⁴⁷ The only Australian Service to see this provision implemented was the Army in World War II.

The arrangements, which were introduced in 1904, remained in place until 1920, when they were subjected to some amendment. At that time, Senator George Pearce, the Minister for Defence, told the Senate that he had taken the advice of senior Australian military officers ‘[I]n determining how best to create organise, train, and administer the Forces’, developments which undoubtedly drew on the experience of World War I. ‘The Military Board, as the means of control and administration, will be retained,’ Pearce explained, ‘but it has been so reconstituted as to impose upon it a full measure of responsibility’.⁴⁸ The First Military Member of the board, or Chief of the General Staff, was elevated in authority to the position of chairman of the board, and the ruling that each member had equal authority was deleted. At the same time, where the Military Board had been formerly charged ‘with the administration of all matters relating to the Military Force’, it was now charged ‘with the *control and*

⁴⁶ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XXIII, 2 November 1904, p. 6392.

⁴⁷ *Commonwealth Acts*, Vol III, 1904, No. 12 of 1904, pp. 143-215.

⁴⁸ *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Vol XCIII, 17 September 1920, Senator Pearce, p. 4710.

administration of all matters relating to the Military Forces'. One pre-eminent military officer, although still constrained by parliamentary control, would again exercise a degree of authority over the Military Forces. Effectively, the Chief of the General Staff would command the Military Forces. While these developments signalled a shift back to a more conventional military model of command, parliamentary control was not relaxed. The need to conduct each meeting of the Military Board with the minimum of a quorum of three members also remained. The Military Board was to control and administer the forces 'upon the policy directed by the Minister' and the Minister still retained his position as president of the board.⁴⁹ These were the prevailing control and command arrangements when the RAAF was established in 1921.

THE AIR BOARD

An Air Board was first established in January 1920 but, as Chris Coulthard-Clark points out in his history of the RAAF, it had no administrative function. Indeed there was no Air Force to administer at that stage. This first Air Board's function was to consider an air policy for Australia. It was later that year that the second Air Board was established and it was intended eventually to fulfil the functions that the Military and Naval Boards fulfilled for their Services.⁵⁰

In one respect, the Air Board enjoyed similar status to its military and naval counterparts. The board was 'charged with the control and administration of the Air Force', but then there was one significant difference. Where the Military Board, for example, was charged 'with the *control* and administration of all matters relating to the Military Forces' it was on 'the policy directed by the Minister'. But, in the case of the Air Board, it was to answer not directly to the Minister but to another body known as the Air Council. This added a broader dimension of control to the Air Force that was not applied to the Military Forces or the Navy. The regulations that established the Air Board stipulated that on 'all matters which the Air Council so direct the Board shall submit for the approval of the Council its conclusions, recommendations or decisions'. Furthermore, the board was to refer to the Air Council 'such matters as it deems necessary should be approved by higher authority' and, confirming the committee-like approach to business, the Air Board was also to refer matters to the Council on which there was 'a want of unanimity of opinion'.⁵¹

Why did the Air Board have to answer to an Air Council? It seems that the sheer novelty of establishing an Air Force is sufficient reason. There was a need to draw on knowledge and experience from a range of people. But, as Coulthard-Clark points out, the junior ranks and young ages of the new service's leaders were other obvious reasons. 'At the time the Air Board was constituted,' wrote Coulthard-Clark, 'Williams was a 30-year-old major (honorary lieutenant-colonel) while Goble was a squadron leader (honorary wing commander) aged a year younger'.⁵² The Air Council was clearly intended to hold a tight rein on such youthful leadership.

⁴⁹ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1920*, No 56, p. 189. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 354.

⁵¹ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1920*, Defence – Air, No. 223, Air Board Regulations, pp. 248-250.

⁵² Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 354.

The membership of the Air Council included the Minister for Defence as the president, the Chief of Naval Staff, the Chief of the General Staff, two members of the Air Board, and the Controller of Civil Aviation. The council was responsible for the development of air policy in Australia, while exercising its authority over the Air Board.⁵³ As president, the Minister imposed parliamentary control over the Air Council, as was the case with Military Board and the Naval Board, but, because membership of the Council included the CNS and the CGS, it also drew on the experience of Australia's senior defence personnel. In doing so, however, it provided the other two Services with a degree of influence over decisions taken to develop the new force. This was an inevitable development, but it also introduced a degree of undesirable inter-Service rivalry.

In his autobiography, Richard Williams recounted a story when one day in 1920 he was summoned for discussions with the Minister for Defence. Arriving at Senator George Pearce's office, he found the Minister for the Navy, Sir Joseph Cook, was also present. The two ministers had been discussing the question of who was to be the senior officer in the new Service - Williams from the Army or Goble from the Navy. The final decision was what Williams referred to as 'a compromise'. Williams wrote that: 'Goble and I were both to have the rank of wing commander from the date of the formation of the Service but I was to be the senior'.⁵⁴ With this seniority, Williams would have become president of the Air Board, according to the regulations which determined the Board's constitution and functions.⁵⁵ But, at the outset at least, this was not to be the case. Williams wrote that Pearce and Cook 'directed that I should chair the first meeting of the Air Board and that after that Goble and I should alternate in that capacity'.⁵⁶ The statutory regulations governing the Air Board were amended accordingly. Where the regulations had originally stipulated that the 'Senior Officer present' at Air Board meetings 'will preside', they were amended to read that the 'Director of Intelligence and Organisation [that is, Williams] and the Director of Personnel and Training [that is, Goble] will preside at alternate meetings of the Board'.⁵⁷ So politicians again intervened to modify the standard model for the exercise of military authority, but this time they acted unwisely. Referring to this arrangement, Williams observed that: 'If it had been designed to create the wrong sort of atmosphere to start a new disciplined Service, it could hardly have been better'.⁵⁸

At the beginning, the Air Force's senior officer did not have the designation of chief. Williams explained that: 'There was an objection to the senior member carrying the title of Chief of the Air Staff and indeed I agreed that this was rather a high-sounding title for a Service which would be very small for some time'.⁵⁹ Within two years, however, the position of CAS was established. It enjoyed similar status within the Air Force as the CGS did for Army and the CNS for Navy.⁶⁰ Indeed, with the exception of having the added control dimension of the Air Council, by 1922 the Air Board was

⁵³ Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 354; & *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1920*, No 222, Air Council Regulations, Section 2, Section 7, p. 251.

⁵⁴ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 137.

⁵⁵ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1920*, Defence – Air, No 223, Air Board Regulations, Section 4, p. 248.

⁵⁶ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 137.

⁵⁷ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1920*, Defence – Air, No 269, p. 250.

⁵⁸ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁶⁰ *Commonwealth Statutory Rules 1922*, No 161, Air Board Regulations, pp. 292-294.

endowed with the same authority and status as the Military Board and the Naval Board. But the influence of the Air Council diminished rather quickly. Coulthard-Clark reveals the Air Council 'became increasingly redundant' after about the first two years of the Air Force's life. The council met on 19 days in 1921, eight days in 1922, 2 days in 1923, not at all in 1924, and twice in 1925.⁶¹ After that the Air Council never met again. In 1926, Williams wrote to Sir Hugh Trenchard, informing him that 'I have been trying to get the Air Board on a similar footing to the Naval and Military Boards ie. entirely responsible for the administration and control of the Air Force'.⁶² When the Air Council was formally abolished in January 1928, the Air Board with the CAS as the senior member controlled and administered the RAAF with the same status and authority enjoyed by Australia's other two Service boards.⁶³

It was in 1928 that Air Marshal Sir John Salmond inspected the RAAF and he did not form a very high opinion of Williams' ability as a commander. As Coulthard-Clark reveals, while in Australia Salmond wrote to Trenchard informing him that:

Williams is due for the Imperial Defence College next January and to my mind it will be a sheer waste of time to send him there. He is very short of practical experience in command of anything more than a small unit, he is rather theoretical and does not realise where or how to get a move on, and does not like making a decision.

Salmond obviously shared this opinion with Prime Minister Bruce and Bruce seems to have agreed.⁶⁴ But Williams was not finally removed from the office of CAS until 1939 – more than 10 years later - when Marshal of the RAF Sir Edward Ellington reported adversely on the RAAF. What are we to make of such a development?

Even if Williams were considered to be a competent commander, it seems irrefutable that he remained far too long in the top job. This fact alone could only limit the effectiveness of the senior command function. But Williams was not the only CAS in the inter-war years. RAAF Historian Alan Stephens has pointed out that Williams and Goble shared the position of CAS for the 19-year inter-war period. 'Each held the post on three separate occasions,' wrote Stephens, 'Williams for a total of about 14½ years and Goble for about four and a half'.⁶⁵ This remarkable situation was attributable in no small part to the young age of both Williams and Goble when the Air Force was established.

Quite literally, the Air Force grew under these two officers. At the outset in 1921, the new force had an initial strength of 151, of whom 21 were officers. By 1939, the Air Force strength just topped 3,500, including a Citizen Force element. But Stephens has concluded that, apart from being in command for so long, the fact that the senior command post was alternated between the two men 'almost inevitably fostered an

⁶¹ Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 355.

⁶² Williams to Trenchard, 26 August 1926, RAAF Historical, Department of Defence, Campbell Park.

⁶³ Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, p. 357.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁶⁵ Alan Stephens, *Power Plus Attitude*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 27.

unproductive rivalry', thus establishing 'a tradition of self-interest at the highest levels of the Air Force'.⁶⁶ Such an outcome was hardly likely to enhance respect for the senior levels of Air Force command.

But, in commenting on the quality of command in the RAAF in the inter-war years, Australia's political leadership should be called to account. There are a number of developments that indicate that Australia's political leaders failed to establish an environment in which RAAF command could operate effectively and develop in confidence. Stephens has written that, in 1925, Williams seemed 'disturbed by the lack of direction and government interest in the Air Force'. As CAS, Williams submitted a detailed plan to the government for air defence of Australia. Included in this submission was a blueprint for the development of the Air Force over a 10-year period. This plan was ignored by the Australian Government.⁶⁷

A further problem arose out of the British connection. Air Force development was stifled by government commitment to the Imperial defence strategy.⁶⁸ From this perspective, the Air Force was perceived largely as a force that would contribute to the immediate defence of Australia, and, therefore, was relatively unimportant as a defence capability.⁶⁹ A related aspect of the imperial focus was the deference shown to British officers when seeking advice on the performance and development of the Air Force. Williams wrote that: 'Commonwealth Governments of the period between the wars were always hesitant to accept the advice of their own officers if they differed from views coming from the United Kingdom'.⁷⁰

There is another dimension of political indifference and disinterest that needs to be exposed: that concerns the constitutional responsibility for parliament to enact legislation for the establishment and control of Australian defence forces. In 1935, the Senate Standing Committee on Regulations and Ordinances reported on the lack of an adequate Act for the Air Force. The committee thought substantive legislation was required which would be the subject of parliamentary enactment. The committee believed that there was no reason why there should be a distinction made between the Air Force and the other two Services in this matter. An attempt was made to draft a bill but it was subsequently shelved.⁷¹ Only in December 1939 – after war had broken out – did the Government finally act decisively. 'At this stage,' commented Douglas Gillison, 'it became imperative for the Government to take action to formalise the constitution of the air force'.⁷²

The Air Force had been left to muddle along without real support and direction from the nation's political leaders since its establishment in 1921. There was an inevitable affect on the quality of command in the RAAF. Military command was never intended to exist in a vacuum in Australia's constitutional democracy. It is very much

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

⁶⁸ Williams, *These Are Facts*, p. 177.

⁶⁹ J. McCarthy, *Australia and Imperial Defence 1918-39: A Study in Air and Sea Power*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, 1976, pp. 64-92.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁷¹ Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-42*, p. 42.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 67.

an extension of parliamentary control and depends on adequate legislation to enable it to be exercised properly. Australian governments of the inter-war years had failed in this regard.

DISCUSSION

Dr Chris Coulthard-Clark: I'd like to make a comment on your paper, John. My memory is a little bit hazy on one point, but you're absolutely right in everything you said about the politicians' dissatisfaction with the experience with Hutton. My recollection is, though, that the British had also gone to the Board model before Australia actually opted for this course. I think it was a result of the 1903 Esher Committee and I think January 1905 is the start of the Military Board - I think the Army council had been established in Britain in 1904 - I may be a little bit out with my dates so you may care to correct me. The other thought I had listening to your paper - you were talking about the relative status of the Air Force versus the other forces, and you're certainly right in pointing out the junior rank of the RAAF on its formation. I'm talking about the senior officers of course. The point that really comes across is Williams, as CAS, did not finally achieve two-star rank which put him on an equal basis with the other chiefs until 1935.

Dr Mordike: Chris, thanks very much for those observations. With that last observation. I think that that is another reflection of relative status of the way they perceived the services. But to go to your first question about the Army Council - now that's absolutely correct. If you look at it chronologically, Britain introduced the Army Council a couple of months before we introduced the Military Board. That fact and the report submitted by the Minister for Defence at the time, Senator Andrew Dawson, on the needs to establish such a board, are two factors which have led historians to deduce that all we did, in introducing a Military Board, was to copy what Britain had done. To me, that's operating from the colonial mindset that is all too prevalent. In fact, Senator Dawson's report argued the reason why we needed a committee but he did say in that [report], as an example, that Britain has just introduced a committee itself. That has inclined historians to say, 'Well, all we did was copy Britain'. Well we didn't, I don't believe, and I would argue strongly that, from 1902 to 1904, the newspapers and the parliamentary debates and departmental files are full of the confrontation with Hutton.

As GOC, Hutton was a problem. We had to get rid of him. Our parliamentarians were not as isolated and uninformed as you might imagine, or some people might imagine. They were well aware of the fact that most advanced countries in the world had already introduced councils or boards, and that Britain was one of the last to do it. They were well aware of that. You only have to go to James McCay's speech when he's introducing the concept of the Military Board to Australia. The reasons just leap out at you. He as good as says 'we've sacked Hutton'. But then he explained why the government and parliament had to get control of military developments. He did mention - as an aside - that Britain had also done it but that is to get the conservative waverers on side also, and that's why Dawson did it. That would be my argument. Ever present in Australia, we have the imperial influence and politicians ready to do the imperial bidding without asking any questions at all. But they're only part of

Australia; there was a lot of other who didn't – Alfred Deakin and eminent men like that of course. But that's why he does it – to get those people on side. If Britain has done it, we can do it, and that's the end of the story.

Group Captain David Glenn: I find it remarkable that we were able to tell the history from 1921 to 1939 without any reference to the commander-in-chief - the Governor-General - and I wonder whether that has any relevance. How will we manage to put the Governor-General and presumably the possible Australian president to one side as a commander-in-chief?

Dr Mordike: Well I made the point that under the terms of the Constitution, Australia's political leaders were determined that the Governor-General would be commander-in-chief. That's quite correct and of course it's entrenched in the Constitution and, under constitutional practice, he would be operating under the advice of Australian Ministers. There might be other people in this audience who know – I certainly don't know of any instance whereby any Australian politician or any Governor-General has acted in any other way. There would be no need to comment on it, in my opinion.

Group Captain David Glenn: I would simply point out that governor-generals were not Australian until Sir Isaac Isaacs.

Dr Mordike: Well, that's correct. I think it was King George that said 'Sir Isaac who?' when the name was announced to him – the first Australian Governor-General. But wherever they came from didn't alter the question that they were constitutionally to be directed by Australian Ministers. Interestingly, I raise that point of Section 70. John Anderson of the Colonial Office was most concerned about Section 70 and the powers that a Governor-General might have. Well, Section 70, when you read between the lines, is the section that allows the Governor-General to act without the advice of his executive council or his ministers and that's the famous reserve powers. Indeed, that was one of the amendments that Chamberlain was successful in having George Reid amend in our constitution. Quite interestingly, when you look at the Colonial Office files and what Joseph Chamberlain was writing at the time, he was saying 'look, we can't have a situation in Australia whereby the Australian government is in control all the time. We might want to get rid of them so the Governor-General needs reserve powers, and that's it.' And he managed to get that into the draft constitution and there it stayed. Interesting!

Professor John McCarthy: John thank you for a very interesting paper. The debates on the incorporation of the British Army Act into the Air Force Act revolved considerably about the introduction of capital punishment, did they not? And I just wondered if I could push a little bit - you quote Gillison and quite rightly that the Air Force Bill in 1939 was rushed through. Did this become an insignificant matter, or was it simply amateurishness on the part of the Australian politicians?

Dr Mordike: I've spent a bit of time looking at the parliamentary debates concerning the Air Force Bills in the 1921-23 era, and there's quite a bit of criticism, particularly in 1923, about incorporating British Acts and certainly you're quite right. They'd just come out of World War I and they simply didn't like the harshness of the British Army Act; in particular, it permitted capital punishment in the field and there was an

objection to that. But I believe that's only a part of the story. What is really in those speeches, was the wish to have control - a central control - over our legislation and our own defence forces. That to me predominates and is the major issue. When Gillison writes it up, he only refers to the harshness, as I recall it, of the British Legislation. I think that there's far more to it than that. It's the issue of national control that offended most people and they did not see why we should be having British legislation. In relation to 1939 – yes, you're quite right - there's no fuss about it. I think the reason is that war has broken out and the threat is in Europe. This is December 1939 and I'm sure Menzies had already announced his intention to send an RAAF component overseas. He hadn't made any decision on the Army at that stage, I don't believe. So, this is the 1939 Act where it included the British Air Force Act, in my reading of it, specifically designed to enable that component that became the Empire Air Training Scheme to go to Britain.

Professor John McCarthy: Can I just make just one comments on that? There is in the Public Record Office quite a few files on how, while the British thought that the British legislation was in fact operating, it was constantly being whittled away by RAAF Headquarters. And I wonder if I could just suggest that sometime somebody investigates RAAF Headquarters in London to see exactly what they did about it.

THE RAAF MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

MR DAVID GARDNER

What role does the RAAF Museum have on leadership and, conversely, what role does leadership have on the RAAF Museum? We have heard today a number of different perspectives on this subject from the wars, between the wars and after the wars. There were not only those leaders who were successful at leadership but also those who made a mess of it. We can hopefully learn from their mistakes. In striving to quantify what we have learnt, the RAAF has developed the following set of core values that translates into an effective fighting force and therefore acts as a guide to what makes a good leader:

- Esprit de Corps
- Professionalism
- Flexibility
- Dedication
- Courage
- Excellence
- Ethical conduct

This is where I believe the RAAF Museum features in the leadership question for it is the very embodiment of most of the values. A strong and vibrant Museum is something that can engender these values of the RAAF Vision Statement. The Museum directly fosters esprit de corps, and displays examples of courage, dedication and excellence. The Museum affects the Air Force and leadership because, with a strong and vibrant Museum, we are fostering those values that the RAAF is trying to instil into its personnel.

One value, however, is missing from the Vision Statement. Essential to achieve all of the values in the Vision Statement, that value is commitment. We can talk about and push our values time after time but, without commitment, it is a waste of good oxygen for the following reasons:

- Commitment is what transforms a promise into reality.
- It is the words that speak boldly of your intentions.
- And the actions which speak louder than words.
- It is making time when there is none.
- Coming through time after time after time, year after year after year.
- Commitment is the stuff character is made of.
- The power to change the face of things.
- It is the daily triumph of integrity over scepticism.

Commitment is a two-way street. The Museum has a commitment to the RAAF and the Australian people to preserve the heritage of this proud Service, but the Air Force must have a commitment to the Museum. Without strong leadership, the Museum

suffers more than most units. The Museum has staggered throughout its existence. Prior to becoming a unit in 1988, the command and leadership of the Museum was uncertain as its command moved from Base Squadrons to Headquarters, to becoming an independent unit without any real control. The only real command was 50 years ago in 1949 when Sir George Jones formed the Museum and, even then, it was not a unit or a museum; it was a repository. Apart from the continual changes of command and leadership, the Museum has had to endure numerous relocations throughout its history, including several in recent times on RAAF Williams. It has had to fight for its own survival with its own agencies and the Defence Estate Organisation. Whilst the Museum is neither a fighting unit nor a core unit, it needs strong leadership to allow it to fight for its survival. Unfortunately, the Museum has not always had that luxury. It has floundered through a succession of curators and commanding officers, various administrations, and the odd Command dabbling into its operations. As a result, its development has suffered. The RAAF Museum has been borne on personalities. It has been driven from the 'ground floor'; the 'coalface' has had to drive the Museum's direction. It has never really had the guiding support of the organisation as a whole.

The Museum is about showing and displaying people's courage, and how and why the dedication behind this courage developed over the years; this in turn helps leaders to lead. So indirectly, by devaluing the history of leadership displayed in the Museum or by not putting the right leaders in charge of the Museum, the Air Force is missing out on a vital asset. Look at our development by comparing our Museum with the RAF Museum at Hendon, the USAF Museum at Dayton and the RNZAF Museum at Christchurch. The RAAF Museum was the first air force museum, it belongs to the second oldest air force in the world - a proud Service, and now it is the most impoverished among all the western air forces. It is further under threat - Point Cook itself is under threat - and then directly, from these threats, some of the values stated in the Vision Statement such as courage, dedication, professionalism and esprit de corps are challenged. The Museum is the embodiment of many of the values of the Air Force, and our leaders impress upon the troops that the realisation of these values is necessary for the development of the Air Force team.

It is now up to a private company, albeit with RAAF support, to do all the work. The Company - Point Cook Operations Limited - was formed as a result of recommendations from the Museum Advisory Board. The Board, which was formed by Chief of Air Force and has met regularly over the past 12 months chaired by Commander Training-Air Force, considered the future and indeed the development of the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, and that of the Base itself. Point Cook Operations Limited - a not for profit company and limited by guarantee - is charged with taking responsibility for the future viability of the RAAF Museum. In addition, Point Cook Operations Limited will seek to retain the base and airfield at Point Cook to support the Museum. Its Board of Directors, of which Air Vice-Marshal Peter Scully is chairman, consists of four honorary directors. The company will provide a brighter future for the Museum and Point Cook through its plan to preserve Point Cook for all Australians. Its first objective is to provide that much needed stability in management, followed by a large aircraft storage and display facility. Long term, the company may be responsible for the provision of a large, controlled-environment, storage facility to provide protection of the valuable objects within the RAAF Collection and to replace the myriad of run-down hangars and buildings currently occupied. The present economic climate within Defence precludes any relief to this issue in the near future.

Whilst this exciting stage in the development of the Museum takes shape, however, the Museum continues on with its primary mission to 'collect and preserve'. Major notable acquisitions this year included an Avro 707A research aircraft, a Tiger Moth and a Wirraway, in addition to four groups of medals destined for the overseas market. There can be no doubt about the importance of objects as reflections of our past and present cultures. The objects and depictions of them in the Museum provide a wealth of information about the personnel, technology and social activities, and the relationship of these objects to their ceremonial and everyday use. The study of the contemporary objects in the museum collection offers an insight into the past on a continuum that amazes anyone who explores it. This is indeed more so to our present generation of serving personnel.

Over the past decade, a concerted effort has been directed at conserving the RAAF historical collection. From a conservation perspective, the preservation of the objects within the collection is as important as the information the object can provide to the present and future generations. Such conservation translates into a resource for the conservation of a living tradition; the collection is irreplaceable because traditions and technology change. The most successful feature of the object conservation project at the Museum is the preventative care program. Although it is in its infancy (approximately two years old), the program has suffered two major setbacks in the form of major relocations of valuable historical assets. These setbacks have cost the Museum considerable losses in staff power, resources and storage room. The most disturbing result of these relocations is the damage to the objects from being continually moved. The real damage will only become evident when the objects are due for conservation/restoration.

Despite our raising the awareness about the art of flying through the Museum Interactive program, the Museum heritage collection has not been neglected. On the contrary, a major program of cataloguing has commenced, along with a rationalisation program. This will see the collection placed on an electronic database hopefully within the decade. The storage venue – well, that is another issue. The long-term aim will be for a controlled-environment facility. This, hopefully, will be another project for the company; meanwhile, the Museum is carrying out remedial repairs to the buildings it occupies in an attempt to ensure some protection to the collection.

Along with the conservation plan is a review of the operations. Time and effort devoted to restoring and flying aircraft have been addressed. Two years ago, 80 per cent of the effort was directed to the restoration and operation of aircraft. This level of resource, I might add, dictated that the remainder of the collection would slip back into the days when the Museum was only a repository and the objects were stored inappropriately. A comprehensive review of the human resource and internal functions of the Museum has provided the Museum with an 80 per cent effort being directed towards collection, preservation and promotion, and 20 per cent towards the operation and restoration of aircraft. Apart from the pilots and 'techos' having withdrawal symptoms from the 'flying club', this new public program is working effectively.

Some of you may be thinking that museums have other important roles besides exhibitions and public programs, and I agree. Preservation and collection of objects as a matter of material record and for the purposes of education and research are vital

components of a true museum's charter. But make no mistake, if the RAAF Museum does not make attendance figures and the revenue produced a major priority, it is doomed to loose relevance and financial viability in a rapidly evolving market place. So how does flying historic aircraft fit into this picture? Marketing and education! A look at any modern marketing theory reveals a number of common threads to consider when figuring a successful marketing strategy. Foremost amongst these is to determine what makes your particular facility unique. For any institution, it is the unique nature of its attractions that affects the pulling power or distance-pull - that is, the distance and trouble to which people will go to visit your attraction. For most of us here today, the unique feature of the RAAF Museum is its flying aircraft for they set the Museum apart from all other competitors. We must view the flying of historic aircraft as an extension of our exhibitions or public programs. They must be relevant to our mission statements and readily accessible to the public. Consequently, the interactive flying program is endeavouring to make the flying more accessible to the public and therefore an important adjunct to the Museum's marketing program.

Education! This familiar word finds strong resonances within an institution that has taken on such a role in society today. The RAAF Museum has embarked on a potent means of technical education with its new interactive program through instruction and the systematic presentation of operating aircraft. Over the past 11 months, the aim has been extended in two ways: by an increasing emphasis on a historical approach to technology using airworthy aircraft, and by giving priority to general rather than technical audiences. The development of popular interactive science has accentuated this move towards a more general promotion of a public understanding, not only of the operation of historic aircraft but also of the RAAF itself.

As part of the education and marketing plan, the Museum has redeveloped its three-year-old web site. During the refinement process approximately 12 months ago, the intention was to improve accessibility and opportunity. To achieve this, we related the site to all elements of the Museum such as the exhibition, restorations, special exhibitions and Friends of the Museum. Visitors can now even purchase merchandise online. Like any web site, the Museum's site is in a constant state of development. While it is not as technologically ground-breaking as some, the Museum has strived for accuracy and functionality. It works for us because it whets the appetite for potential future visits, enhances planned visits, and enables the Museum to establish an intimate and unique dialogue with its customers. Most importantly, it starts people thinking positively about the RAAF and the RAAF Museum.

In closing, I emphasise that the achievements of the last year have, to a great extent, been concerned with laying the foundations for the future. At last, the RAAF Museum, through the use of its great collection, is beginning to achieve its ambition of restoring the balance among presenting the past, giving an insight into today and providing a foretaste of tomorrow.

DISCUSSION

Wing Commander Ted Ilton: Mr Chairman, rather than ask a question, I would like to make a comment, which I believe to be of important relevance at this Conference today - a comment about the RAAF Museum. In reading a Ralph MacInerny novel recently, I came across the passage 'History is meant to provide the perspective that corrects for closeness'. Isn't this then the reason we are here at this RAAF History Conference today – as indeed many of us have been for the last eight years? Isn't this the reason for reunions as when some of us attended at RAAF Staff College yesterday? Similarly, isn't this the same reason for Associations such as the RSL, RAAF Association, and countless other associations and bodies throughout the national community? Isn't this too the reason for the National Trust and other heritage bodies? Even more importantly and particularly to us, isn't this the reason for the establishment and the continued existence of the RAAF Museum?

The importance of the RAAF Museum, as part of the RAAF's illustrious history, can be gauged by its Acting Director, Mr David Gardner, being invited for the past three years to address this highly reputed, ever-growing-in-stature RAAF History Conference. I am sure I speak for all in attendance today in saying that this fourth consecutive year of addressing RAAF Museum matters by Mr Gardner has again been delivered in his accustomed, frank, authoritative and informative way. This updating continues to be highly illuminating, particularly with regard to how carefully the RAAF's history and heritage is not only being safeguarded but also being displayed professionally to all who care to visit the Museum. Regrettably though, it also continues to be matter of great sadness, to each of us who either spent a lifetime in the RAAF or is building currently a similar lifetime profession, to note the continuing frustration being experienced by the Museum particularly as their role - a most important national role at that - is one of preserving and promoting RAAF heritage.

No sooner were the high hopes of relevance and permanence engendered by the exciting prospect of a National Air and Space Museum of Australia (NASMA) being collocated with the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, than this same excitement was lost in a sea of pessimism and perhaps cynicism with NASMA now 'barely hanging on the vine'. Almost coincident with the demise of NASMA was the implementation of a RAAF base closure policy that sadly included RAAF Point Cook, a base now in the firing line with its attendant disruptive effects on the RAAF Museum. Not forgetting the latter, this closure policy is accompanied by a seeming, complete disregard by the bureaucracy for the preservation of the many RAAF birthplace icons that abound at Point Cook. Although there are a number of bodies and groups, both formal and informal, working on a 'master plan' for the continuing existence and growth of the RAAF Museum at Point Cook, their agendas pursue in the main survival plans underpinned by commercialism. This is being forced on them by the realities of apportioning the Defence 'cake' with two of the often missing ingredients of the 'cake' being issues associated with tradition and heritage. These issues, upon which a dollar value cannot be placed but nonetheless are of great importance to national roots and identity, cannot be overstated.

My view is that it is not yet too late to reverse the closure situation at Point Cook by adopting the following plan. The real estate that goes to make up RAAF Point Cook as it is today should remain as Commonwealth property, with the RAAF being the major tenant made up of at least three units: the RAAF Museum, the RAAF College and a new unit - a RAAF Care and Maintenance Unit (that is, a mini Base Squadron). This configuration would also provide flexibility of use and expansion in the case of any future national emergency. Indeed, it would also concurrently leave open opportunities for other defence industry-related companies to become user-tenants and, if I can refer to it as the 'icing on the cake', a renewed option for NASMA to become a major tenant. Funding for such a plan could be provided from a 'Special Projects' allocation from within the overall Defence vote, co-administered through the RAAF and an appropriate national heritage body when necessary, thus allowing the Museum continuing growth without interruption. More importantly, the many RAAF birthplace heritage icons – rather than the few now being contemplated – would be better preserved by a continuing daily usage.

In closing, might I invite the attention of delegates at today's Conference to my letter as published in the recent August issue of Air Force News. This letter outlines my attempts to retain Point Cook as a permanent RAAF entity, thus honouring, for all times, not only its place in Australian history as the birthplace of the RAAF but also the many thousands of RAAF personnel (and their families) who have contributed to the Point Cook heritage over the past 78 years. I would appreciate delegates advising me, as soon as possible, on any thoughts or opinions they may have on this important matter so that I can incorporate these into a paper I am currently preparing on the subject.

Group Captain David Glenn: At Point Cook in the Officers' Mess, there are a remarkable series of portraits of CASs [Chiefs of the Air Staff]. Is this going to become part of the Museum or part of the national portrait gallery, or what is to happen to them - do you know?

Mr Gardner: The CAS portraits are presently not in the Mess. They are being conserved because they've been standing in there for quite some time and taking a fair 'caning' in wear and tear, so we're cleaning them. As matter of fact, Commander Training and I had a meeting last Monday morning about this and there are a couple of points of view: whether they'll go to the Officers' Mess at Laverton or to the new RAAF College, when and wherever it is established. Perhaps it's better if they went to the College because those are the people you want to see them. That's their status at the moment - they're not going to get lost - we've got them in care and some of them are being conserved by the Museum at this moment.

Group Captain David Glenn: Could those [paintings] conserved hang in the national portrait gallery?

Mr Gardner: I don't think they're a great drawcard to anybody outside the air force.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION 1921-1939

GROUP CAPTAIN D.J. LANCASTER

I would like to begin by recording my debt to the work of Chris Coulthard-Clark whose prolific output on the social aspects of Australian military history work has been of enormous help to me, quite apart from his encouragement. I should also acknowledge the financial assistance of the Australian War Memorial towards the task of basic research.

This presentation follows two threads. The first tells the story of three generations of RAAF officers: the veterans who comprised the founding officer corps of 1921, the Royal Military College (RMC) and Naval College graduates who comprised the only additions to the corps of permanent officers between 1921 and 1934, and the 'pre-war cadets' who comprised the staff needed to establish the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS). These latter staff also were so important to the command of the flights, squadrons and wings that met the Japanese attack on Malaya and Northern Australia, and then went on to fight the Pacific campaign. The second thread follows the developing relationship between the RAAF and society at large, seeking to demonstrate how external forces had a decisive impact on RAAF development between 1921 and the outbreak of the World War II.

In 1919, Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Williams, a regular officer of the pre-war Australian Army and just 29 years old, was in London. As the senior Australian Flying Corps (AFC) officer in the Australian Army, he advised Prime Minister Hughes, who was attending an Imperial Conference before attending the Versailles Peace Conference. Gillison assures us that Hughes was well aware that the Australian Army planned a post-war aviation corps of some 300 aircraft and 8,000 personnel, to be paid for from the war loans. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN), farseeing in terms of Japanese naval construction and thinking in terms of substituting aircraft for ships, was equally ambitious in terms of squadrons but needed only 2,000 personnel. Between them they required a capital outlay of some six million pounds.

Budget was never a problem for the Navy because they were perennially gifted with 80 per cent of the national peacetime defence vote. To understand the Army's problem, however, you need to know that their regular budget covered only a minuscule regular establishment plus the costs of training the militia. Once the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) left Australian shores with personal equipment and horses, but otherwise poorly equipped for general warfare, their supply needs were met by drawing on British stocks that were charged and paid for from London borrowings known as 'War Loans'. From this source, the Army hoped to receive the aviation equipment which was already in use with their squadrons in Palestine, the Western Front and AFC training squadrons in Gloucestershire. The proposed air force

could be maintained on an annual budget of 500,000 pounds. The Navy could meet capital costs from their ongoing budget but they too needed an annual vote of 500,000 pounds to maintain an aviation force.

According to Williams - in his autobiography published when he was more than 80 years old and with the worrying title *These Are Facts* - Hughes sought his advice about whether 500,000 pounds would be a sufficient budget for a post-war 'Air Force'. The principle of charity requires us to assume that Williams was unaware of the planning by his Chief of Staff General Legge, both he and Hughes were in agreement with British Air Ministry proposals for a post-war Imperial Air Force, and the Australian Defence Minister and his Chiefs were not aware of this concept. Williams, in fact, was impressed by the generosity of the Air Ministry. Not only had the British Government foregone the capital cost of aircraft operated by four operational squadrons and four training squadrons but (there's more) they would offer more than 100 'gift aircraft' with spare parts and motor vehicles to any Commonwealth country wishing to establish an Air Force. Williams nodded, Hughes winked and the Royal Australian Air Force had a 'father'. You might fairly question the ambiguity of the last sentence - which Welshman was 'father'? I have no difficulty with Williams' recognition as 'father' but I wanted to make some reference to Hughes' significance as a political founding figure. It was his government that had insisted on forming new AFC squadrons to fight on the Western Front in 1917, rather than contribute volunteers to the Royal Flying Corps. He was also prepared to risk his political career during the 1930s to insist on developing the air force to defend Australia. Neither man, it seems, had anticipated the post-war mood. The conservatives, though happy to ride to power with Hughes on the issue of conscription, were worried about the war debt and mistrustful of Hughes' grandiose plans. Hughes, it should be remembered, was born an Englishman, was a former Secretary of the Waterside Workers Union and had been Prime Minister of a Labor Government, which he abandoned on the issue of conscription. Above all, he was an acculturated city man with little understanding of rural Australia. In December 1922, the newly formed Country Party brought him down, to be replaced by S.M. Bruce.

Williams, for his part, had no cause to lose his faith in the intense bond of mutual loyalty that characterised the old culture of the Flying Corps. His RAAF Command and his force were the gift of British Air Ministry patronage. On his return to Melbourne, however, he found himself in an invidious position. Hughes' support, along with the continuing loyalty of the Defence Minister, Senator Pearce, would ensure that the Air Force came into being by administrative decree on 31 March 1921. On the other hand, the manner of their coming into existence was resented by the military community while also offending the Labor Opposition, who saw in the Air Force a power capable of defending Australia **independently** of British control. Both of these factions saw, in the proposed RAAF legislation, the creation of a creature of British policy. The 1921 Bill was passed by the Senate, though vigorously opposed by Labor on nationalistic grounds but was never brought forward in the House of Representatives. When it was introduced again in 1923, a large number of veterans by now were present. Though Conservative (that is, 'Nationals'), they refused to accept the adoption of British legislation and when the press joined their cause, the Bill was again dropped. A weak temporary Bill was passed, permitting the formal existence of the RAAF, but **no legislative power henceforth existed** to enable the RAAF to be employed in war until the Air Force Act of November 1939 was passed.

The situation occupied at the time by Williams deserves our sympathy and leads me to think that he earned the accolade of 'fatherhood'. Despite the clear political intention of subordinating the RAAF tactically to the Army and Navy, Williams boldly asserted independence. He insisted on maintaining the style and dignity of 'Chief' although the political and social environment, in the most obvious manner, rejected his claim. He had neither the salary nor the social infrastructure of great houses, messes, staff and vehicles that allowed his Army and Navy counterparts to display themselves broadly and in suitable style. To add to Williams' difficulties, the scale of operations that the new RAAF could undertake was so restricted that initial establishment was limited to 47 officers. Even though an immediate commitment was made to purchase land and begin construction at Laverton and Richmond, the RAAF could spend barely a half of its 'half-million' pounds' in 1921-1922. According to Treasury practice at the time, this reduced amount became their financial 'ration' for the years that followed.

We need to understand also the tiny scale of the force he commanded. It consisted of one Station - Point Cook - that we could describe as a cluster of temporary buildings situated far off on the treeless, lonely, windswept Werribee Plains, some 20 kilometres from the Guiding Star Hotel which was the last or first outpost of Melbourne, depending on which way one travelled. For the next five years, Point Cook was home to some 300 officers and men. It could operate about 30 aircraft: Avro 504 trainers in the main, a few DH9 variants - which actually flew beyond Victoria from time to time - some seaplanes which varied in numbers between none and three, and some S.E.5as that served as a finishing school for graduate pilots. The S.E.5a was also the aircraft of the 'Fighter Flight', which comprised the RAAF's only organisational concession to the air-fighting role for almost 20 years, and was almost entirely occupied in display flying. The CO of the School, Squadron Leader Anderson, a classics scholar, produced routine orders in quite beautiful longhand.

Before considering the men of Point Cook, there is a need to look at what today would be called the logistics system. The RAAF followed the wartime practice with which they were familiar. At squadron level aircraft were allocated to a crew consisting of a pilot, a rigger, an engine mechanic and perhaps a junior NCO who could call on specialists, such as blacksmiths and electricians, as they were required. There were no engineers at squadron level and there was no formal technical training after recruitment. Rather, as new tradesmen were recruited from civil life they were placed under the hands of master tradesmen. These tradesmen were Senior NCOs who managed the various workshops that supported the station. Such NCOs, therefore, were exceptionally important men and it is not surprising that they found in the RAAF an attractive, long-term career.

During World War I, lost or irreparable aircraft were replaced from an aircraft park, which was the domain of the Quartermasters Branch. The supply of new aircraft to the parks was a matter well beyond the squadron's purview. In fact, resolving the problems of supply had been an initial cause for Lloyd-George's bloody-minded determination to bypass the War Office and create the RAF. For the RAAF in 1921, these depot functions were met from boxes that contained the 'gift' aircraft. Despite a wide recognition of the need to develop a civil industry in conjunction with creating the RAAF, and political statements which gave voice to the necessity, nothing had been done. The Air Board was very conscious of the need and, with human dynamos

like L.J. Wackett among the officer Corps, something was always bound to happen. However, the functional division between technicians and officers led to professional engineering functions being confined to RAAF Headquarters staff. As a consequence of this failure to develop a logistics infrastructure, the opening of Richmond and Laverton in 1925 and 1926 - events which should have released them from the operational limitations of a single base - led the RAAF to open more boxes, only to find that the contents were largely useless. This was the logistics crisis which led to Air Chief Marshal Salmond's visit in 1928.

When the air force came into being on 31 March 1921, it had 21 officers: 16 'G' Branch, four Quartermasters and a Doctor. All of them had some claim to be 'regular' officers either as pre-war Army officers or through being included in the 1918 mass gazettal of RAF officers (five officers). In September 1921, another 27 officers who were selected by the first establishment joined them. They included eight Quartermasters, among them the legendary Mackinoly, another Doctor and 18 'G' Branch officers. Those of the 'G' Branch were an 'all round' group, although it did include two fighter 'aces' (Pentland and Hepburn - both RAF men inducted as Flight Lieutenants). It contained a proportion that had some technical experience, some of whom went on to become the backbone of the staff of RAAF Headquarters during the 1930s. Among these, Jones and Bostock (both men with technical beginnings) catch the eye because of their part in the 'command disaster' of 1942-1945, but Hepburn, Brownell, Bell, Murphy and the Harrisons (E.C. and H.C.) all occupied important technical staff positions during that period and during the Second World War.

The structure of the Royal Australian Air Force as it was envisaged by Williams in 1921 was to be a cadre of 'regular' officers (the first 21) who would be the commanding flyers for many years to come, and a substructure of more junior officers (the second 27) which included some necessary transfers from the RAF at the too senior rank of flight lieutenant (and in Pentland's case a beguiling troublemaker). The remainder of the substructure possessed between them a variety of the kind of civil skills that would lead the RAAF to exist independently in an Australian society that was technologically unprepared to support them. That the RAAF had this 'variety' of officers to call upon was serendipitous. The creation of the AFC was the result of a national decision to form a flying school at Point Cook so that when they were deployed, first to Mesopotamia and then to Egypt, they arrived with an Australian regimental title and could expand by recruiting 'likely lads' from other Australian units. The only requirement of these 'likely lads', apart from demonstrating the necessary spirit, was either to hold an Australian Commission or be eligible to do so, circumstances that did not rely in the Australian context on considerations of family, wealth or previous occupation. The Royal Flying Corps, on the other hand, was founded on an elite class of aristocratic career officers, the product and the object of the age of imperialism.

For reasons covered in greater detail in my yet unpublished book, *Bricks Without Straw*, the Royal Flying Corps officers of 1914 survived the war pretty much intact and comprised the high command of the RAF for the next 30 years. In 1916, however, the depredations of superior German aircraft plus ambitious expansion plans required far greater numbers of new pilots than traditional sources could provide. Trenchard refused to admit lower class boys to the RFC or to train NCO pilots. As a consequence, several thousand colonial soldiers, most of them Canadians, became

officers and pilots in the RFC, their only qualification being that they were suitable for commissioning in their own service. Trenchard was appeased by assurances that colonials, by virtue of their life on the prairies, naturally 'rode well and shot well'.

Though many Australians transferred to the RFC, the Australian Army insisted on forming its own squadrons in Europe, leading to Nos 2, 3, and 4 Squadrons entering the fray in late 1917 and Nos 5, 6, 7, and 8 training squadrons forming in March 1918. This was the Corps from which Williams could choose such a varied array of talents when he selected the officers of 1921. Sixty per cent of the first 48 officers were Victorians, most of them Victorian-born or immigrant Tasmanians. This number reflects a predominance of No 1 Squadron men, who were almost entirely Victorian in 1916, and the fact that Victorians and Tasmanians made up more than 50 per cent of the AFC. If they were not Victorians in 1921, they became Victorians with almost all of the officers marrying and buying houses in East Melbourne. Some of them never had cause to vary their residential address through long and illustrious careers, except for a training excursion to Britain perhaps, or to command a unit at Richmond if one was unlucky, or for war service between 1941 and 1945. Under the strict protocols that regulated Melbourne's social hierarchy, a regular officer could expect to marry well. His salary allowed him to employ household help and he was expected to take up membership in two or three good clubs. During the week most officers, of necessity, lived in the mess at Point Cook where the veterans maintained the 'horsey', hard-drinking roughness they had learned from their British betters and which was still in some evidence 50 years later.

The second generation of officers immediately followed the first. They were regular Army and Navy officers who had been transferred or seconded to Point Cook to learn to fly and who were expected, in theory at least, to return to their parent service. In fact, until the truncated Air Force Act 1923 was passed, only regular officers and designated civil aviation pilots could be trained. Some of these officers returned to their own service as planned but many stayed, and this group of officers formed the senior command and staff that enabled the RAAF to grow prior to World War II. For a number of reasons, very few new 'cadets' entered the ranks of the regular officers before the 1930s so that the Royal Military College, with a few Jervis Bay officers, provided the great bulk of new officers between 1921 and 1934.

Returning to the main plot, when Richmond opened in late 1925 and Laverton in 1926, the RAAF could at last break its geographic shackles. Williams had returned from his RAF staff course in 1925 full of ideas and submitted a comprehensive plan for Australia's air defence. His obvious priority, however, was to hasten arrangements for occupying the new stations. In England he had come under the spell of Trenchard - an unusual man who could neither read nor write - but who could ring anyone's bell by engendering and dispensing overwhelming loyalty. When the sad state of the RAAF's aircraft in boxes became known, it was clear that, apart from a nominal occupation of the new stations, new aircraft would be needed for the four new squadrons intended to occupy them. Given his minor station in the Defence hierarchy, it was natural for Williams to turn to the RAF for support.

The wheel had turned yet again. Breaking out of Point Cook was easier than breaking out of the Treasury straightjacket. To get the money, and one suspects that a half-million pounds would still bring joy to Williams' heart, would require a firm

statement of Government policy to that effect. But 1925-1926 coincided with rescheduling the war debt and the Treasurer at precisely that time was also convincing the Premiers that they should discipline their individual State borrowings to the mechanism of a 'Loans Council'. Evidence of Commonwealth profligacy was to be avoided. Let us be clear - in 1925-1926, aviation was no more than a public curiosity for a number of reasons:

- Smithy and Ulm had not flown the oceans.
- Hinkler had not taxied his Avian up to his mum's front door in Bundaberg.
- The RAAF had done very little to recommend itself to the Australia which existed outside Victoria.
- Why should anyone care about the RAAF?

Trenchard was delighted to take up the cause. Here we must take another detour while we examine how the network operated in 1926. From his position in Melbourne, Williams' scope was limited. By writing to Trenchard, he would have the great man intervene at an appropriate level in Australian government. On the Australian side, the Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce, was impeccably credentialed in imperial terms - rich legal family, a 'blue' in golf and Captain of Boats at Cambridge, wounded at Gallipoli as a rather mature officer of a good British Regiment, and now Prime Minister. On becoming Prime Minister, Bruce had sent a younger man, R.G. Casey - a good chap of some standing and class - to be his personal man in London. The Air Ministry let Casey know that it was time to invite a senior Air Force man to Australia. Casey let S.M. Bruce know and within two years, gallant Sir John Salmond, soon to be Marshal of the Royal Air Force, came riding. Sir John arrived in June 1928, already aware that he was anointed to succeed Trenchard - his presence was something of a coup for a colonial Prime Minister.

From the RAF's point of view, Salmond's inspection was a triumph, announcing that the 'Imperial Air Force' still lived. From Williams' point of view, it turned out to be a personal disaster. Salmond could speak comfortably with Bruce on the basis of social parity. It was in this 'old boy' context that Bruce became aware that Williams was not up to his job. Bruce was of the opinion that exchanging Williams with an RAF officer would solve the problem - a fairly standard response to a colonial problem prior to the World War II. Sir John wisely held his council on the matter and failed to respond to Bruce's idea. His reasoning, Coulthard-Clark tells us, was that Williams was yet too inexperienced to undertake the necessary training in England. I suspect also that he was also unwilling to sacrifice a good RAF officer to such a thankless task. His report makes the reasons for his disquiet clear and would be agreed by most modern professionals who read it.

Without putting too fine a point on it, the RAAF was a shambles. However, it would have been equally clear to Salmond that Government ignorance and neglect were central to the problem. How could Salmond send an officer with sufficient political weight to command something like a dispersed Wing, badly trained, badly administered, inadequately equipped and largely wasting its time? Salmond's report is an artefact of immense value to RAAF history for the detailed information it contains about Air Force life, and in particular about RAAF life in the 1920s. Paying no regard to its strategic recommendations, here are some of the headlines:

A lack of married quarters.
Poor living-in accommodation.
Personnel lost their allowances while they necessarily lived in (ie. all distant rural locations).
Commonwealth conditions of service unavailable to RAAF personnel.
Only the sick or the dead got superannuation benefits.
There was no formal recruit training.
There was no formal technical training.
There was no formal training in bombing, gunnery, navigation, radio, air-fighting and 'pilotage'.
By relying on RMC and Naval College transferees to build its regular officer corps the value of inter-Service exchange was lost.
Relying on the Citizens Air Force (CAF) to provide the bulk of operational squadron personnel meant they would never be properly trained.
Technicians were wasting their time trying to make outdated equipment serviceable.
The quartermasters had wasted years trying to account for equipment that was no longer in use.

To be fair, the aircraft re-equipment problem had already been addressed to some extent. Eight Bulldogs were being purchased for the obligatory 'Fighter Flight' and the replacement of the DH9s was in train, although Salmond's strong commentary no doubt helped speed the latter before the Depression made new orders impossible. His criticism of Williams, on this interpretation, almost certainly related to problems of organisation and administration that were, at least in his opinion, within the scope of a competent command and administration to remedy.

The depression, which commenced with the stock market crash in October 1929, turned out to be rather a blessing for the RAAF. This argument follows three stages. In the first instance, the RAAF existed in such a parlous state that any substantial cut in budget was impossible without eliminating the Service, a result that was contrary to the new Labor Government's policy on national defence. When the total defence budget was halved during 1930-1931, the Navy and Army bore the cost. In the Navy's case this included decommissioning the seaplane-carrier, HMAS *Albatross*, while the Army suffered cancellation of compulsory military training. Secondly, in 1934, by which time a conservative coalition had been re-elected under J.A. Lyons, the depression was beginning to lift and international rearmament was again becoming an issue. The Government appointed an exceptional Defence Minister in Archdale Parkhill who announced that defence spending would rise again to pre-depression levels. This allowed the RAAF to compete for new funds with a Treasury 'slate' clear of the pre-depression levels of funding enjoyed by the Army and the Navy. By 1938, the Air Force had achieved broad parity with naval and military spending plans.

The third level of explanation describes no less than a 'sea-change' in the nature of RAAF development and in the way that Government and aviation generally combined to make a social leap of immense significance. The RAAF now benefited hugely from the blueprint laid down by Salmond and embarked immediately on the acquisition of a new generation of aircraft equal in technological development to aircraft in service with the RAF. In addition, the 1920s graduates of the Army and Navy colleges became the new experts (being trained in Britain) in skills such as navigation,

bombing, gunnery, introducing a new standard of operational expertise to RAAF training and operations. These officers, both the RMC men and the cadets they trained, eventually provided the backbone of the Air Force that was left behind in Australia after the Empire Air Training Scheme became the main plank of Australian air strategy.

During the period 1927-1933, the regular officer strength of 'G' Branch increased from 58 (which included 15 seconded or transferred Army and Navy officers) to 78 (which included four seconded Navy officers). The CAF 'G' Branch reduced from 50 to 30 over the same period. During that time, something like 150 pilots had been trained which included about 60 CAF cadets, about 20 RMC and Naval College transferees, about 50 direct entry cadets, and some 20 RAF cadets. These figures are rough estimates derived from RAAF Lists. Most of the CAF and direct entry RAAF cadets transferred to the Reserve after their period of obligatory service was completed, so that the increase of just 20 regular officers was made up entirely of transferred Army and Navy officers and 13 RAAF cadets who trained at RMC between 1929 and 1931.

After 1933, RAAF training policy changed, with expansion of the officer corps henceforth relying on direct-entry cadets (a class of people referred to generally as the 'pre-war cadets') - 23 in 1934, 38 in 1935, 62 in 1936 and 73 in 1937. This exponential progress was maintained as war approached. In the aftermath of the depression, the RAAF could afford to be very selective in the type of young men they selected for training. Theirs was a severe indoctrination because the generation of the 'twenties' played the major part in training, and their disciplinary and social standards, learned at the military colleges, was demanded of the cadets. An increasingly dominant RMC regular core and large numbers of direct-entry cadets dramatically changed the professional and social ethos of the RAAF at the level of the units and schools.

The change in character of the Government after 1934 was no less dramatic. The conservative coalition now contained a very influential group of younger members, including names like Menzies, Parkhill, Casey and Fairbairn. Their political sentiments were Liberal in the modernising tradition of David Lloyd-George - seeking to provide for Australians the social benefits of living in a modern industrial society. In the climate of the times, this represented a reaction to the Imperial trade system which gave Australian primary product preference in Britain and British industrial product preferential tariffs in Australia. These agreements, having the power of law, had the effect of inhibiting Australian industrial development.

Dramatically in October 1935, Britain made it known that a number of civil aircraft on order for Australian airlines could not be supplied. What we are seeing was the first effects of expanding RAF aircraft production in reaction to expanded German aircraft production. Seizing the moment, the Australian Government authorised the importation of modern American aircraft including the DC-2, Lockheed twins and Stinsons. At the same time, Parkhill encouraged an Australian group of industrialists to form a company to manufacture aircraft - which materialised as the Commonwealth Aircraft Factory - and authorised an overseas visit by L.A. Wackett with two technically-qualified RAAF officers (Murphy and H.C. Harrison) to select a type for production for the RAAF. This was an astounding decision because the main basis for

selection of the type to be manufactured was its technical feasibility as a basis for establishing a modern factory in Australia. Williams entirely supported the plan, just as he had demonstrated his support and unwavering faith in Wackett's various schemes over many years. Though there is evidence to suggest the Air Force bought the Wirraway as a fighter, there can be no doubt that Williams was as aware as Wackett of both its limitations and its technological purpose.

Much has been made of British resistance to Australian aircraft manufacturing but there is need for some discrimination. There is no doubt that the old 'Empire Men', in both Australia and Britain, regarded any scheme to develop Australian manufacturing as tantamount to treachery. These would include the Country Party, and British pastoral and commercial interests in Australia, and the Board of Trade and the Colonial Office in London. Wackett himself tells a great story about S.M. Bruce, High Commissioner in London, throwing Wackett's accreditation documents across the desk, leaving Wackett to pick them up from the floor. But by Wackett's own account, he was generally well received by industry people during his 1936 visit. By 1937, when the American type had been decided and he was buying machines and tools, his reception was excellent. By early 1939, the Air Ministry was encouraging even greater aircraft production in Australia with a view to maximising imperial war production.

I would now like to give some consideration to the destruction of the RAAF's high command over the period 1938-1939. In my view, too much weight is given to the view that Williams' fate was the outcome of a report by Marshal of the RAF, Sir Edward Ellington, who examined the RAAF's poor safety record in 1938. That is only a partial explanation and our understanding of his sacking and the debacle that followed is deepened by an account of a political crisis that surrounded it. By way of initial background, Archdale Parkhill was defeated in the elections of 1937, a tragedy in Wackett's view, and his place taken by H.V. Thorby, a Country Party Minister without a military or aviation interest. Nonetheless the pace of air force development did not slacken under his ministry. Ellington, at Thorby's invitation, arrived in late May and his report became available to the Government late in August 1938 while Parliament was in recess. It was released immediately to the public by the Defence Minister, prior to it being available to the Air Board but without any expression of dissatisfaction in the leadership. Unknown to either the press or the Air Board, a secret annex was withheld. The press everywhere attacked the Government for the report's implication of bad leadership. This was reflective, in contrast to 1928, of booming public expectations about the power of an air force defence. The files indicate that, from that point, the Minister's handling of the issue was largely driven by the demands of the press. The Department expected that by formulating a point-by-point response to Ellington by the Air Board and the Civil Aviation Controller, the press would be satisfied. This process was due to be finalised in December but, by that time, a full-blown Government crisis was at hand in which the coalition split over the issue of preparedness for war.

For its part, the Government became immediately preoccupied by the Munich crisis. The crisis was resolved late in September, to the great satisfaction of the Australian press, by the 'appeasement' of Hitler but the issue brought to the fore an intense public debate on the issue of compulsory or voluntary military training. On this issue, the cabinet lit with Joe Lyons insisting on voluntarism, to which a loyalist faction

agreed whatever their private thoughts. Against this, Menzies took up an active opposition, with most of his overt support coming from outside the Cabinet. Within three weeks, Hitler threatened Czechoslovakia - another crisis - but one in which Lyons adopted an active role in consultation with an embattled Neville Chamberlain. Again, war was avoided and Lyons was acclaimed in the Australian press as a world saviour. The strain told on Lyons and he was forced to convalesce in Tasmania for a month. The disclosure of Lyons' poor health led to an intense struggle for leadership conducted under a facade of unquestioned loyalty to Lyons, one of Australia's most popular Prime Ministers. Sensing the mood, Menzies advanced his public image by mounting a spirited defence of the National Insurance Act, the great domestic issue of the day, rather than challenging Lyons directly on the Compulsory Training issue. You will sense that the Williams issue was not high on the agenda.

On 25 October the DC-2 Airliner *Kyeema* crashed in the Dandenongs, killing among others most of the legal staff of a Royal Commission which was finalising an inquiry relating to National Insurance, together with Charles Hawker, a much respected Minister and candidate for leadership. Lyons, still unwell, returned within a week and made three announcements:

- There would be no compulsory military training.
- Brigadier Street would be Minister for Defence with the task of achieving the necessary training targets voluntarily. (This, incidentally, brought about Blamey's return to grace.)
- Cabinet was reduced to six Ministers, to include Thorby with responsibility for Civil Aviation but to exclude the Minister for Defence. By way of another footnote, this was a deliberate denial of the Menzies faction. It had the contingent effect of bringing about the resignation of Sir Thomas White, a graduate of No 1 Flying Course, who saw himself as a rival to Menzies and who bitterly resented Casey's inclusion. Upon White's resignation, Lyons included Street in his inner Cabinet.

The Menzies faction, principally through J.V. Fairbairn, a RFC veteran, and Sir Henry Gullet, attacked the Government by attacking Thorby from the backbench. Williams had enlisted the support of the AFC Association in challenging the Ellington conclusions on accident rates and Fairbairn represented these views to Parliament. White, the old AFC hero, also joined the defence of Williams but attacked the new Minister for Defence, Street, who by now had joined the inner Cabinet. It was patently clear that Williams had provided the detail for parliamentary critics but it was White's vicious turn on Street which brought Williams undone. Lyons, having completed his Cabinet reorganisation, announced Williams' replacement during the January slumber of Parliament, balanced by an earlier announcement by Street of a further increase in the RAAF's frontline strength. Sadly, though Williams had finally seen the RAAF approach the lofty goals he had set for it. In 1921, he was unable to share the fruit. His complicity in the Fairbairn attacks could not be ignored. Ironically, if Menzies had succeeded at that point so would Fairbairn have been rewarded (as he was a year later) and Williams would have been saved. In the event, worse was to follow.

The Air Board's response to Ellington revealed firstly, that Ellington's statistics on safety were 'rubbery'. Secondly, the RAAF's slowness in building new training establishments was precisely in accord with Government policy. Thirdly, the blame for poor conditions of service lay with the Department of Defence. Unfortunately, upon Street's appointment, Goble had written to the new Minister stating the view that Williams was solely responsible for operations and his preoccupation with public displays had contributed to the accident rate. A 'most confidential' minute from Street to Lyons followed, recommending Williams' replacement on the basis of shadowy insinuations on the safety issue. In parallel, the Air Board's response to Ellington was sanitised on the basis of the 'secret annex', causing the Government's failings to disappear as if a fog had descended.

Goble had made a grievous political misjudgement because Street ceased to be his responsible Minister when war broke out and Fairbairn eventually became Minister for Air. We should acknowledge, however, that Goble was a very effective Chief in 1939, setting in place most of the infrastructure of plans that would sustain the RAAF through the enormous expansion that followed the adoption of the Empire Air Training System. When Lyons died in April 1939, Menzies became Prime Minister and when war was declared in September, he became Minister for Defence as well. He very quickly began a search in England for a suitable RAF officer to be Chief of the Air Staff. We cannot know on what basis he abandoned faith in both Williams and Goble but we do know this:

- He did not discuss the matter with Fairbairn, who was his designated Air Minister when legislation was passed.
- He was unaware that Fairbairn wished to reappoint Williams.
- It seems that he had not discussed the matter with Street.
- He had no discussion with the Air Board on any matter
- He had, however, discussed the matter with Casey, who was in Britain coincidentally on Defence Production issues, and with S.M. Bruce, the High Commissioner.
- With regard to the overwhelmingly important decision of commitment to the Empire Air Training Scheme, neither Williams nor the Air Board were consulted. We do know, however, that Fairbairn was with Menzies when war was declared, and that the EATS was not at that moment planned.

In conclusion, those among you who have read McCarthy and Horner will realise that I have failed to address the questions surrounding the remarkable and unexpected decision to participate in the Empire Air Training Scheme. I will leave you with a postscript. Williams, at Fairbairn's insistence, returned as the second member of the Air Board to Burnett, to enjoy by his own account a broadly satisfying partnership. He was delighted to be made an Acting Air Marshal, making him equal to the most senior Army appointment, just as one suspects Burnett would have been pleased to be promoted Air Chief Marshal, making him the most senior military officer in Australia. How do you account for this amazing metamorphosis with the RAAF becoming, on

the face of it, the most significant instrument of Australia's strategy for defending the Empire? Is it the case, do you think, that Australia's political leadership had divined strategic paths that the RAAF's leaders had been unable to envisage for themselves?

HEROES AS LEADERS: RAAF PERSONALITIES IN WORLD WAR II

DR ALAN STEPHENS

When we examine the lives of significant military personalities, we frequently do so under the banner of ‘command and leadership’, for the very good reason that the majority of people who make their mark do so within that framework. Thus, the theme for today’s conference seems entirely reasonable to me. Nevertheless, we should approach our theme carefully for at least two reasons. First, at the risk of stating the obvious, a commander need not also be a leader. Command is the lawful authority granted to an individual by virtue of rank and/or appointment. By definition, therefore, in a strict legal sense, anyone can be a commander. Leadership, however, is a more elusive business. An individual’s ability to make other individuals *want* to do something – that is, to inspire them - cannot rely on legislation. Leadership is an art, and is not inherent in rank, seniority or appointment. Formal status might help establish leadership, but it is unlikely to be sufficient in itself.

‘Command’ and ‘leadership’ at the highest levels of the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II were not always as coincident as one might have liked. That is an issue which has been given considerable exposure in previous RAAF history conferences, to the extent that I imagine many here today, including me, do not want to hear any more for the time being about that most wretched business, the Jones/Bostock rivalry.¹ I shall confine myself to two short observations on the subject. First, on the basis of performance between 1939 and 1945, Air Vice-Marshal Jones might be categorised as a commander but not a leader, and Air Vice-Marshal Bostock as a commander and a leader. And second, regardless of those or any other assessments, both failed in their responsibilities to their Service.

Previous conferences have also examined the performance of senior World War II officers who served the RAAF admirably in all respects, notably Air Commodores Scherger, McCauley and Bladin, and Group Captain Garing; and others who disappointed, such as Air Commodore Cobby.² For the purposes of today’s presentation, Cobby’s case is the most informative. The archetypal fighter pilot, Harry Cobby is a genuinely great figure in RAAF history. He was the Australian Flying Corps’ leading ace in the World War I, accounting for 29 aircraft and 13 balloons, an achievement which made him a household name. His remarkable air combat skills were complemented by good humour and a classic dare-devil manner. According to George Jones, who flew Camels over the Western Front with the same squadron,

¹ For comment on that rivalry, see ‘The RAAF Command Scandal’, in Alan Stephens, *Power Plus Attitude*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, pp. 62-68.

² See Alan Stephens, ‘RAAF Operational Commanders’, in *The RAAF in the Southwest Pacific Area, 1942-1945*, the Proceedings of the 1993 RAAF History Conference, Air Power Studies Centre, Fairbairn, 1993, pp. 21-51.

Cobby was a ‘natural leader in the air and in all off-duty activities’.³ Which brings me to my second reason for arguing that today’s theme should be approached with care. Let me suggest that Cobby’s career exemplifies a third category we should consider in this discussion of individual authority within an institution, namely, that of the ‘hero’.

No Australian airman’s experience better illustrates the tensions between ‘command’, ‘leadership’ and ‘heroism’. In World War I Cobby unquestionably was all three: a hero, a leader, and a commander, as a consequence of which he exercised both formal and informal authority. But in World War II his seniority (and perhaps age) precluded him from doing what he did best, namely, flying aeroplanes in combat with inspirational skill; eventually, his thoroughly justified reputation as a hero and a leader was no longer enough to sustain him as a commander. In May 1945, following several unhappy events, Cobby was sacked as commander of the 1st Tactical Air Force. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that his performance was seriously deficient in a number of respects.⁴

The sequence of Cobby’s rise and fall is instructive. In the first instance he rose to prominence because he was a hero, and he became a hero because he was an exceptional combat pilot. Because of that achievement, he then became a leader, a role he also filled with distinction, on occasions leading formations of 80 aircraft on raids against the Germans, and attracting the admiration evident in George Jones’s praise. Finally, to complete the sequence, during the inter-war years, the RAAF made Cobby a commander. It is noteworthy that Cobby found the peacetime Air Force tedious and resigned his commission. He re-enlisted in 1939 and was appointed director of recruiting, a position which utilised his high public profile. But it is questionable whether he was ever entirely comfortable in subsequent senior operational commands before his ultimate demise with the 1st Tactical Air Force. It is tempting to speculate that the qualities that make a hero do not easily translate into those needed by a commander, although they are likely to engender leadership.

For the reasons I have already stated, I do not want to revisit the subject of RAAF command in the World War II. Rather, I want to try to add more substance to the notion of heroes as leaders, and look for the tensions, which might exist between the roles of hero and commander, by reviewing the careers of four Air Force heroes. I accept that the sample is small, but from my reading of RAAF history I believe that the generalisations which emerge are fair. The men I have chosen are Group Captain Clive Caldwell, Squadron Leader John Jackson, Squadron Leader Keith Truscott, and Squadron Leader Charles Crombie.

GROUP CAPTAIN C.R. CALDWELL

Clive Robertson Caldwell was the RAAF’s leading air ace in World War II. Born in Sydney on 28 July 1911, Caldwell was educated to Leaving standard at Sydney Grammar School. Before joining the RAAF as a trainee pilot in 1940, he had worked as a garage proprietor, jackeroo, salesman, bank officer and life assurance representative. A large man at 1.89 metres and 87 kilograms, with a dark complexion

³ Air Marshal Sir George Jones, Foreword, in A.H. Cobby, *High Adventure*, Kookaburra Technical Publications, Dandenong, 1981, p. 5.

⁴ See George Odgers, *Air War Against Japan 1943-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1968, pp. 443-450.

and brown hair and eyes, Caldwell was an outstanding athlete who represented New South Wales in javelin throwing, and the 120 yards and 440 yards hurdles. He was selected in the Australian track and field team in 1932. Whereas many eager young men overstated their age to serve in the war, Caldwell reversed the process, understating his by three years. He was almost 29 years when he joined the RAAF, unusually old to start military flying. His relatively late start was perhaps offset to some extent by his previous flying experience, albeit brief on Tiger Moths, while he seems to have been temperamentally well-suited to the individual air combat of the fighter pilot, being described by one historian as 'shrewdly daring, fit, alert, fast-talking and cynical'.

Commissioned immediately, he gained his wings in January 1941. Pilot Officer Caldwell was on his way to the Middle East only a fortnight later, where he flew Tomahawks with the RAF's No 250 Squadron in the Syrian campaign and Cyprus. It was when No 250 Squadron moved to the Western Desert that Caldwell's special talents as a fighter pilot emerged. By mid-1941, Caldwell had flown about 40 operational sorties but had only one confirmed kill. Sweeping back low over the desert after a mission one day, pondering why he generally seemed unable to score hits on enemy aircraft, Caldwell found himself watching his formation's shadows racing over the sand. On the spur of the moment he fired a short burst from his guns, observing the fall of shot relative to his shadow. He immediately realised that, intuitively, he had identified an extraordinarily simple but deadly accurate way of assessing deflection (the amount of 'lead' a pilot must allow when firing at a moving target). Within minutes, following further trials, he had fixed in his mind's eye precisely the amount of deflection needed for a variety of speeds, an image far more potent than scores of classroom demonstrations.

Within two weeks, Caldwell had shot down four more enemy aircraft and had a half-share in another. An instruction was issued to all fighter squadrons in the Middle East directing them to adopt Caldwell's 'shadow shooting' method of gunnery practice. Caldwell himself applied the technique with a vengeance. On 5 December, in what has been described as the 'most brilliant air success of the Western Desert campaign', Caldwell shot down five Ju-87 Stukas in the space of eighteen seconds. The combat report recorded the astonishing victory:

At 300 yards I opened fire with all my guns at the leader of one of the rear sections of three, allowing too little deflection, and hit No. 2 and No. 3, one of which burst into flames immediately, the other going down smoking and went into flames after losing about 1000 feet. I then attacked the leader of the rear section ... from below and behind, opening fire with all guns at very close range. The enemy aircraft turned over and dived steeply ... [I] opened fire [at another Ju-87] again at close range, the enemy caught fire ... and crashed in flames ... I was able to pull up under the belly of one of the rear, holding the burst until very close range. The enemy ... caught fire and dived into the ground'.

Three weeks later, Caldwell was simultaneously awarded the DFC and Bar, an achievement unique in RAAF history. Early in 1942, now an acting squadron leader (less than a year after being commissioned), Caldwell was appointed commanding

officer of No 112 Squadron (RAF) operating Kittyhawks. Although something of a lone wolf in the air, his strong personality, confidence and outstanding tactical skills made him a natural leader. Known by the nickname 'Killer' because of his exceptional combat skills and ruthless determination to strafe ground forces - one estimate suggested he may have killed as many as 600 enemy soldiers - Caldwell continually urged his pilots to be aggressive, decisive and quick, and to learn to use not only their guns but also their heads. It was advice he always followed himself, continually practising his shooting. Before Caldwell returned home at the request of the Australian Government to help in the fight against Japan, his log book had been inscribed by the brilliant British air commander, Air Marshal Arthur Tedder, with the endorsement: 'An excellent leader and a first class shot'. Caldwell left the Middle East with 19 individual and three shared confirmed enemy kills, six probables and 15 damaged; and a Polish Cross of Valour (No 112 Squadron included a number of Polish pilots) in addition to his DFC and Bar.

After a break from operations during which he test-flew the Australian designed and built Boomerang fighter, in January 1943 Wing Commander Caldwell was appointed wing leader of No 1 Fighter Wing's three squadrons of Spitfires in Darwin. He again immediately distinguished himself with his rare air fighting skills, becoming one of the most successful Commonwealth pilots in the South-West Pacific theatre. By the time Caldwell left the wing in August, his tally of confirmed kills had risen to 28.5, and the DSO had been added to his bravery and leadership awards. Caldwell returned to operations for the last time in April 1944 as commander of No 80 Fighter Wing and, in August, was given the acting rank of group captain. Operating from Darwin and Morotai, Caldwell found that the war had largely passed the fighter squadrons by. There was little enemy air opposition (although ground fire was still often intense) and many operations seemed futile. Disillusioned and frustrated, Caldwell became a key figure in the so-called 'Morotai mutiny' in April 1945 when eight RAAF officers simultaneously submitted identical resignations. In the subsequent inquiry, Chief of the Air Staff Air Vice-Marshal George Jones chose to focus much of his attention on allegations of liquor smuggling and alleged profiteering instead of the real issue of the RAAF's role in the air war. Caldwell was implicated in the liquor trading and was reduced from his substantive rank of squadron leader to flight lieutenant, an action which many considered shameful treatment of the RAAF's greatest fighter pilot since Harry Cobby.

SQUADRON LEADER J.F. JACKSON

John Francis Jackson was born in Brisbane on 23 February 1908. He was educated to Senior level at Scots College, Warwick, before becoming a grazier, and stock and station agent. Jackson learnt to fly before the war, piloting his own aircraft on business trips. He was a tall man at 1.85 metres, of medium build, and with blue eyes, a fair complexion and thinning light brown hair. A pre-war member of the Citizen Air Force, Jackson was quickly into action in World War II. By November 1940 he was fighting in North Africa with the RAAF's No 3 Squadron. Initially equipped with biplane Gloster Gladiators, the squadron converted to Hurricanes early in 1941 and then Tomahawks in May. The Hurricane brought Jackson his first success on 28 February when he shot down three Ju-87s. With another confirmed victory and a probable on Hurricanes followed by 2.5 confirmed on Tomahawks, Jackson left No 3 Squadron in November 1941 as an ace and with a recommendation for a DFC, which

was eventually gazetted in April 1942. Notwithstanding his success in North Africa, it was to be as an inspirational leader during the worst months of the war in the Pacific that Jackson made his great contribution to the RAAF.

Less than a month after Jackson returned to Australia, Japanese forces launched their coordinated attacks on Pearl Harbor, the Philippines and Malaya. In South-East Asia, allied resistance collapsed and, within weeks, Japanese forces had swept down the Malay Peninsula through the Netherlands East Indies. By mid-February 1942, Darwin was being bombed and an invasion of Australia, with all its horrific possibilities, seemed probable. The need to hold New Guinea, and in particular Port Moresby, assumed critical proportions. Pilots with Jackson's experience were desperately needed as air and surface defensive barriers were thrown into place. One of those barriers was a new RAAF fighter unit - No 75 Squadron - formed at Townsville on 4 March 1942. So urgently were the unit's Kittyhawk fighters needed in New Guinea that only nine days could be spared for the pilots to train on their new aircraft. Now a squadron leader, Jackson assumed command on 19 March and the same day led his unit north. Arriving at Moresby's 'Seven Mile Strip' on 21 March, the pilots of the first four Kittyhawks were fortunate to escape with their lives when shell-shocked army gunners, mistaking the Kittyhawks for Zeros, opened fire.

Known affectionately as 'Old John' because his thirty-four years made him elderly for a fighter pilot, Jackson provided his untried unit with a calm head, a wealth of combat knowledge and skill, and inspirational leadership. When two of his pilots shot down an enemy reconnaissance bomber within an hour of the squadron's arrival at Port Moresby and within full view of the garrison, spirits were immediately and dramatically raised. The day after arriving, Jackson led nine Kittyhawks - including one flown by his younger brother Les - on a strafing attack against parked aircraft at Lae. Taking off at first light and catching the enemy by surprise, No 75 Squadron swept in from the sea so low that the wing of one Kittyhawk struck a parked Japanese aircraft. Twelve enemy machines were left in flames and another five damaged. That set the scene for the coming weeks as the squadron flew a punishing schedule, alternating between daring strikes against Japanese strongholds and sudden scrambles to defend Port Moresby.

When Jackson did not return from a reconnaissance mission on 10 April, his squadron sank into a depression, a mood that was lifted eight days later when it was learnt the CO was safe. Having been bounced by three Zeros and shot down near Lae, Jackson had made a remarkable escape, firstly feigning death alongside his crashed aircraft to dissuade the circling Zeros from finishing him off and, then helped by two natives, trekking bare-foot through the jungle for eight days occasionally within earshot of Japanese patrols to reach friendly soldiers. But the drama was not over then. As the American Dauntless aircraft, which brought Jackson back to Port Moresby, was about to land at the Seven Mile strip it was attacked by a Zero, one of the bullets shooting off the tip of Jackson's right index finger. The Dauntless nevertheless landed safely and within days Jackson was back on operations. Fate, however, is an ephemeral power. By this time, the intensity of sustained combat had reduced No 75 Squadron to a bare minimum. On 28 April, Jackson led the squadron's five remaining serviceable Kittyhawks against an enemy force of eight bombers and their fighter escorts. In the ensuing battle, Jackson destroyed a Zero but was then shot down and killed.

In five short weeks Jackson had become an RAAF legend. Always leading from the front, 'Old John' had epitomised the Australians' courageous defence of their vital New Guinea bastion, the security of which at times had hung by a thread. After his death, the Seven Mile airstrip was renamed 'Jackson's' in his honour. It is a matter of record that the defence of Port Moresby, in combination with the historic victory at Milne Bay in August-September 1942 and the triumph along the Kokoda Trail, marked the turning of the tide for Australian forces in the Pacific.

SQUADRON LEADER K.W. TRUSCOTT

A star player for the Melbourne Australian Rules Football team, Keith William 'Bluey' Truscott was a household name in Victoria before he joined the RAAF. Truscott was born in Prahran on 17 May 1916 and had matriculated from Melbourne High School, where he was an outstanding student leader and sportsman, and an excellent scholar. He was a powerful, stocky man, 1.72 metres tall and weighing 82 kilograms, with auburn hair and dark grey eyes. Because of his fame, Truscott's decision to leave his job as a clerk and join the RAAF in July 1940 attracted great publicity. Curiously, for someone of his intellectual and physical ability, he struggled with his flying lessons. He showed little natural aptitude and took an inordinately long time to go solo. Had it not been for his high public profile, he undoubtedly would have been suspended from pilot training. But given the extra time denied to others, Truscott began to demonstrate the qualities of coordination, anticipation, judgment and an absolute determination to win which had made him a champion footballer.

Those latent talents became even more obvious when, following further training in Canada, Truscott was posted to fly Spitfires with No 452 Squadron in England. (Somewhat amusingly, however, Truscott never quite came to terms with landing, persistently levelling out about seven metres too high. When chided by one of his closest friends over his habit of 'landing' at altitude instead of at ground level, Truscott, by then a squadron leader with a DFC and Bar, wryly replied, 'Son, I'm not changing my habits at my time of life'.). Truscott joined No 452 Squadron in May 1941 and, by the time he returned to Australia a year later, had destroyed 11 enemy aircraft, and been credited with three probables and two damaged. As one of his bravery citations recorded, Truscott was 'of a courage and devotion to duty beyond question'. He had also become the squadron's commanding officer and the best-known RAAF pilot in the war, a reputation which rested just as much on his appealing personality - a combination of intelligence, good humour, openness, and indomitable spirit - as it did on his considerable achievements. Such was his popularity in England that the Marquess of Donegall organised a public fund into which red-headed Britons paid £5000 to 'buy' Bluey his own Spitfire.

Posted back to Australia to fight against Japan, Truscott's talent for being at the centre of the action saw him posted to No 76 Squadron in New Guinea only weeks before a major Japanese force attempted to invade Milne Bay. The Kittyhawks of Nos 75 and 76 Squadrons played a decisive role in repelling the enemy as, for the first time, Japanese land forces were defeated. When No 75 Squadron's commanding officer was killed at a critical stage of the battle, Truscott assumed command. For several days while the outcome hung in the balance, he led from the front as the Kittyhawks relentlessly strafed and bombed enemy land and sea forces, and repelled the

occasional air attack. Conditions were appalling, with the dangers of near-constant rain, mist and low cloud and a perilously slippery airstrip added to those of often intense anti-aircraft fire.

After Milne Bay No 76 Squadron assumed a relatively routine, sometimes tedious, garrison role in north-west Australia, although Truscott did manage to increase his tally of enemy aircraft to 14 destroyed, three probables and three damaged. On 28 March 1943, he was killed in a flying accident in Exmouth Gulf.

SQUADRON LEADER C.A. CROMBIE

Charles Arbuthnot Crombie was born in Brisbane on 16 March 1914. After finishing his education as a boarder at Sydney Church of England Grammar School, Crombie worked as a jackeroo, becoming an expert horseman and rifle shot. His physique was ideal for riding and, as it happened, flying in the cramped cockpits of fighter aircraft; he was 1.7 metres tall and weighed 59 kilograms. He had a dark complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. When war came Crombie decided to join the RAAF, having heard that young men 'who have done a bit of machine gun work and can ride a horse' were considered good pilot material. Displaying his characteristic quiet determination, he quickly raised his educational qualifications to the required standard, and completed civil flying training at Archerfield to enhance his prospects. Because he was slightly above the age limit for flying training, he further enhanced his prospects by understating his age on his enlistment form by a year. In October 1940 he left Australia for Canada as a member of the second contingent of trainees in the Empire Air Training Scheme. After graduation, Crombie flew Beaufighters with RAF units in the United Kingdom, the Middle East, Malta and India, ending the war with 12 confirmed 'kills' and four probables.

On 19 January 1943, he fought a magnificent lone-handed action against four Japanese bombers over Calcutta. Although his own aircraft was on fire and had one engine out of action, Crombie shot down two of the enemy, and probably destroyed a third, before his petrol tank exploded and he was forced to bail out. Crombie's typically modest, laconic account of his bravery in a letter to his wife gave a clue to his tremendous popularity with his colleagues. He made no mention of his success in the combat, instead writing that the 'b... Japs have shot me down', and that the 'parachute trip [his first] was very nice, quiet and cool ... [but] I landed in the most God awful swamp'. His courage was recognised by the immediate award of the DSO (he had already been recommended for the DFC).

By the end of the war Crombie was a squadron leader and the chief flying instructor at No 5 Operational Training Unit, Williamstown. He was killed in an aircraft accident on 26 August 1945. His popularity was such that, at the unanimous request of all ranks, the entire unit was stood down to attend the funeral.

CONCLUSION

It is arguable that in the singular conditions of war, the formal authority of command is almost unnecessary for people like Caldwell, Jackson, Truscott and Crombie, as their status as heroes, which in turn seems naturally to confer the authority of leadership, means that men and women follow them because they want to, not

because they necessarily have to. That is not said to suggest commanders are not needed – of course they are – but simply to make a point which I think is intrinsically interesting.

I also think it is interesting to note the official response to the Morotai mutiny, an event which assumed such notoriety that it became the subject of a government inquiry conducted by Commissioner J.V. Barry.⁵ My point here is that the eight so-called ‘mutineers’ included a number of notable fighter pilots, three of whom were RAAF heroes: Group Captains Caldwell and W.S. Arthur, and Wing Commander R.H.M. Gibbes. The question arises – would the same action by a group of unknowns have attracted the same response?

Because it is difficult to become a hero in peacetime, our experience of the phenomenon of the hero as leader is almost exclusively confined to wartime. It is now 25 years since the RAAF was substantially involved in a war. We need to remember that every conflict produces its heroes, and we can be certain that when the RAAF next goes to war, a new batch will emerge. As a consequence of becoming heroes, those people will also acquire institutional authority; that is, they will become leaders, regardless of their rank or position. It is less certain that they will become commanders.

DISCUSSION

Wing Commander Jerry O’Callaghan: I was very pleased to hear that you selected Charles Crombie as your number four there, Dr Stephens. I had the great privilege of knowing him. In August of 1944, I was posted to 5 (Beaufighter) OTU [Operational Training Unit] and we met - rather interestingly – when I was a wireless navigator and we had to go into the Officers Mess and team up with our pilots. It was all done by people just wandering around and pairing up – it was rather interesting. But watching it all was Squadron Leader Crombie and the interesting thing about him was that everyone seemed to like him. It was quite interesting because squadron leaders were way up there as far as we were concerned, and that he was so humble - the most humble fellow you’d ever meet - and had a great sense of humour. Hearing what you had to say about him emphasises to me that leadership doesn’t come from someone who is forceful and so on, but can come from someone who is humble.

Flight Lieutenant Tim Anderson: Sir, this year, as in last year, the focus of the Conference has been almost exclusively on officers. Is it fair that we place such an emphasis like this? Is it not very unfair, not only to the airmen and airwomen of the RAAF right through its history, as well as unfair to history, that their story is not told. Obviously we give great credit to the four heroes that you mentioned there but we don’t hear about the Flight Sergeant Middletons, the Warrant Officer Coughlans, and their ilk. There is a well-worn phrase that history is written by the victors, and I’d ask what sort of message are we sending to our airmen and airwomen when, at the RAAF’s primary forum for history, there is no mention of them. I think that we risk succumbing to a sort of historical arrogance – noble, well intentioned even – but

⁵ See Odgers, *Air War Against Japan 1943-1945*, pp 443-450.

arrogance nonetheless if we're not prepared to put some sort of spotlight on their achievements. I ask, sir, whether or not you'd be prepared to advocate for next year's conference, to have a presenter from the non-commissioned ranks, or at least a specific topic or area devoted primarily to their cause?

Dr Stephens: Warrant Officer Coughlan, of course, got his CGM [Conspicuous Gallantry Medal] in Vietnam – I was talking about World War II so that would exclude him. The question of whether it's fair or not: it's a distinctive characteristic of air forces that the warrior caste is very small – it's confined to aircrew – and by and large those air crew have been commissioned. Is that fair? Perhaps, perhaps not. But it's a fact. Other than that, I'd endorse your view about the Air Force needing to pay more attention to the history of enlisted ranks. On that, I could point out that in the last two years, the Air Force has published books on the airfield construction squadrons, which almost exclusively were enlisted ranks, and on the Apprentice Training Scheme. So there has been, in fact, a conscious attempt in the last couple of years to redress what's been a deficiency in the recording of our history. However, like it or not, if you're going to talk about heroes - which I was this afternoon - you're going to be hard pushed to go past the aircrew.

Air Vice Marshal Bob Richardson: I'm almost certainly not the best person in this audience to address a follow-up to that topic but I would like to just mention my own father's recollections. He was trained at Essendon just after the hero that you mentioned that had difficulty in landing, and he told some interesting stories about those landings, so it's certainly very true. But my father became a sergeant pilot and was in a torpedo Beaufighter squadron for two tours in UK. He won a DFM and then was commissioned later on and won a DFC. But he often spoke about having had the perspective of being an NCO pilot for an operational tour, and especially in the UK, and I think it's significant, that it was probably different in other theatres. But he often spoke about the ration of awards that was made under the British system for NCO aircrew versus officer aircrew. So I think, if I may, that you probably glossed over the issue that was raised just a little too quickly because there were an enormous number of NCO aircrew during World War II. Many of them were later commissioned in the field as my father was, but I do think that there's still a message there that perhaps you didn't address.

Dr Stephens: I'd only partly agree. I'm going to go back one step. I think it's almost inevitable that, when we're talking about air force heroes, we'll focus on pilots. While I think that has created problems at times for the Air Force as an institution, I'm not sure it's necessarily the wrong thing in the study and recording of history. It's also the case that, during World War II, there were large numbers of NCO aircrew. Many, however, were commissioned, particularly if they were pilots – particularly if they'd earned a decoration for valour. The obvious example is Rawdon Middleton, the RAAF's only VC winner in Europe during World War II, who was a flight sergeant when he won his VC and was killed, and was posthumously promoted to pilot officer. I think the paperwork was in the system. So, I'm not going to necessarily agree that I've been unfair in my survey.

Mr Ken Llewelyn: Alan, as you probably remember, I interviewed Clive Caldwell not long before he died. One of the couple of interesting stories about Caldwell – he mentioned in a letter he received from a nephew of a [Messerschmidt] 109 pilot who smashed his spine on landing and lived for 12 days - and during that interview he actually broke down in tears, so it showed how Caldwell had considerably mellowed in later years. He said to me quite openly that he wouldn't walk on an ant and kill it, how he'd really changed so much. I think what is interesting during that interview he was still very bitter about the fact that he was still regarded by the Air Force as a flight lieutenant, although I know, when he died, Air Marshal Gration, if I remember correctly, wrote to Caldwell's widow and regarded him as being a group captain. But I wondered whether we really had been treating our heroes properly, that he never got reinstated back as a group captain after the war.

Dr Stephens: Well, he was an acting group captain. He was a substantive squadron leader. He was reduced to flight lieutenant as a result of the Morotai mutiny inquiry. If I could just divert around that a bit, Ken, the issue that I think is really interesting about the heroes/leaders/commanders relationship is one that Group Captain Rusling, the Royal Air Force Attache, touched on earlier today. And that is, these heroes emerge in wartime, like the group I mentioned, regardless of their rank or position. As I've argued, they acquire institutional authority because they're heroes, they become leaders, but do they become commanders? Probably not, I think is a fair generalisation. I think the point Nick Rusling was suggesting was - has there been any kind of institutional effort to recognise this phenomenon and factor it into personnel management? I'd suggest for example that there was a similar kind of phenomenon post-Vietnam – not large the way it was after World War II when people like Caldwell and others were genuine Australian heroes. But certainly after Vietnam, there was a period of restlessness, you might call it, in the RAAF as young men (there were no women in aircrew) came home having won the war (in their opinion) and had to settle back into peacetime. I'm not sure if the organisation found it that easy to deal with and I think that's one of the interesting aspects of this whole hero/leader/commander tension.

Dr Chris Coulthard-Clark: Al, I was very interested in you linking the status of hero with questions of command and leadership. I notice that you missed Air Vice-Marshal Frank McNamara VC out of your discussion. Having heard your paper, I guess perhaps why you did, but would you like to state your reasons?

Dr Stephens: I was talking about World War II, Chris. He wasn't a hero in World War II but I will pick up on what I think is your general point. By all means, as McNamara's biographer, correct me, but I would see him as someone who had 30 minutes of inspired greatness, perhaps it was an hour, where - and this is not meant to be dismissive of McNamara - he was the right man in the right place at the right time. He performed a magnificently heroic feat, as a result of which he won a Victoria Cross, which gave him enormous institutional authority for the rest of his life, which he probably, in those terms, neither deserved nor wanted - a perfect example of the hero/leader/commander tension.

Squadron Leader Ian McKenzie: Dr Stephens I acknowledge that your topic was 'Leader and Heroes' but the topic of the Conference is 'Command and Leadership'. In your examples, you spoke of the attrition levels of aircraft and the rate of flying that

was achieved and in fact the command and leadership linking probably is more closely aligned to those people whose responsibility was ensuring that those aircraft were keeping on line for the heroes to emerge. In support of the Flight Lieutenant's [Anderson] comments, we in the Air Force do not as a rule generally place the accolades on the ground crew, but perhaps that is something that we need to change in all future reporting of our activities in war.

Air Commodore Doug Chipman: If I could just add to that as Commander of Training. At 1RTU [Recruit Training Unit], there has been a considerable amount of effort to identify our non-commissioned heroes and leaders, and there are a number of displays and photographs over there at 1RTU at the moment. If anyone is ever at Edinburgh and interested in the topic, I would encourage you to pay a visit to 1RTU and have a look at that. It's quite inspirational.

LEADERSHIP IN THE RAAF 1946-1975

[HEROICS PLUS HISTRIONICS EQUALS HYSTERESIS?]

AIR VICE-MARSHAL BRENDAN O'LOGHLIN

INTRODUCTION

The post-World War II decades were remarkably fluid in terms of restructuring and overseas deployments. In the 1940s, there was naturally a shakeout but, initially, guidance was uncertain. Highly successful operational deployments in many parts of the Asia-Pacific region and beyond demonstrated that the Royal Australian Air Force of the 1950s could still 'cut it'. Commanders and leaders at all levels, but especially in the field, rose to many successive challenges in Japan, Korea, Malaya, Thailand and of course Vietnam. Heroic deeds were not always matched with strong, concerted action by the whole organisation. Rising to these challenges and recovering from them demonstrated failings in leadership at the organisational and strategic levels in a type of hysteresis curve of lagging response. Nevertheless, some great stories have been written of individual and strategic leadership in an Air Force evolving into the modern era. The great exploits of the World War II were over but the roller coaster period of ups and downs, and Asian wars and threats, make an interesting period. In this last session of the day, we have still much to consider.

The period covered in this session encompasses several air forces. It is a fascinating, complex and demanding time. First, the post-war period up to about 1950 was, predictably, one of demobilisation, restructuring and uncertainty as to what should replace the grand wartime structure. The object of Australia's security partnership had switched from the UK to the US. By the time the ANZUS agreement was signed, all eyes were on Asia although the signatories perceived quite different primary sources of threat. Australia was still 'jumpy' from its scare in 1942 at the hands of a regional power while the US's attention was firmly captured by communism. New Zealand, disposed to follow British concerns about the Far East and Europe, could see both viewpoints but from a less vulnerable vantage point. Either way, the US was now dominant in the Pacific and Australia had to prepare for a greater role in Asia, even if still as an adjunct to the forces of this particular traditional ally.

The Korean, Malayan and Vietnam conflicts probably define the second part of the period. The third and final period – the years of the 1970s following Nixon's so-called Guam doctrine – saw the need for a more home-based force, still stretching its strategic reach into the region but starting to recognise the need for a more independent or local posture. Amongst this, there was a phase when the long arm of NATO's strategic setting inspired a move to establish a force along the lines of the RAF's V-bomber force. These were substantial commitments where the RAAF squadrons and individuals undoubtedly performed fine service. But it is also an era of substantial ups and downs, wherein consistent themes and threads are hard to find. There is no doubt we did well overall, with some notable periods of uncertainty. But

how do we perceive the whole tapestry? One unifying feature is that we were often to be found either preparing for a new type of conflict or getting over one. This is not a trivial point; such times put the leadership of the day through their paces in no uncertain terms, and their felicity in negotiating these transitional phases might be seen as a good performance indicator. So, we should notice these transitional phases with some interest today.

To capture this turbulent period, I intend to take some samples from three areas: individual performance, what I shall call organisational leadership – a synchronised concert of initiative and action from the strategic level to the front line, and strategic leadership. These samples will be a snapshot rather than a detailed analysis, with all the caveats implicit in that approach. I will then cover a number of areas - a motley admixture of periods, theatres and categorisations – that must be pressed into our service for the purpose and time available. These areas are the early years (including the Interim Air Force), Korea, Malta, Malaya, Confrontation and Vietnam, plus organisation, doctrine, later years, and strategic leadership.

THE EARLY YEARS

The first few years after World War II must have been almost as chaotic and stressful as the war itself. Hopeful commanders were told to shelve their plans and dismantle not only the wartime force but also the peacetime force, planned initially at 34 squadrons. This was a difficult era, when few correctly divined the path of an air force plunging from 170,000 towards 7,000. Political guidance was scarce or exploratory, and strategic development could be characterised as a sort of multiple-choice examination for the Minister to see which way Cabinet was leaning. But the circumstances depicted here probably exclude too harsh a judgement.

After the initial changes came the reinvention. Numbers, aircraft, technologies and roles all changed markedly. Organisationally, it seems we were feeling our way a bit by trial and error according to the ‘itches’ of the politicians and Air Members of the day. Strategic planning, and intellectual or doctrinal documents are regrettably conspicuous in the archives by their absence. One who displayed his initiative and strength by taking on the problems of severe reductions and demobilisation was Air Vice-Marshal Joe Hewitt who, not without controversy, had been a successful commander of No 9 Operational Group in the Pacific. He recommended an ‘Interim Air Force’ of about 20,000 until the way ahead became clear.

By 1947, all of the prominent and experienced figures before and after the war – Goble, Bostock, Wrigley and Williams himself – were gone. Air Vice-Marshal Jones was Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) from 1942 through the rapid expansion of the War years and the subsequent ‘fire-sale’. He had performed as a sound administrator but his ascendancy was in unusual circumstances and, while these were challenging times, there were also lost opportunities. The leadership needed for the 1950s was not his. Conversely, there were plenty of successful, decorated and strongly motivated war veterans: aircrew, engineers and suppliers. Many were summarily discharged in 1946 but others like Bladin, Scherger, Wackett and Hancock represented a strong core of experience for the future.

Some of you will recall the absolute delight of ‘Bull’ Garing’s enthusiastic personal interventions and entertaining anecdotes at the 1993 RAAF History Conference. Recorded as having made a significant contribution to victory in the Pacific theatre, particularly at Milne Bay, Air Commodore W.H. Garing’s flair and style are legendary.¹ During my first months at the RAAF Academy in 1962, my course-mates and I visited Laverton from Point Cook. My memories from this temporal distance provide no hint as to why we went there but they do retain a strongly etched image of a seemingly huge Meteor in the hangar sporting a black bull logo on the nose. He was, as I recall, commanding another base and used the Meteor as a personal transport. I remember thinking this was a fine idea, one that I put into practice with a Sabre on occasions during the 1960s (these days, of course, the fringe benefits tax alone would amount to a week’s pay, to say nothing of ethical and political sensitivities). From our first days at Point Cook, we revered the former warrior and Commandant of the RAAF College, as my *alma mater* was known up until a few years earlier. As an early figure in the era under analysis in this paper, his contribution was to transfer his experience, leadership style, and vision of what air forces were all about.

These characters therefore represent the great men of the World War II era who kept the vision alive. But the prospect had changed dramatically even in those short years after the War. The heroic and personable style was less comfortable in the interim and evolving force of the 1950s. Not only were there personal mismatches but also the organisation as a whole had difficulty translating the inherited vision into a peacetime strategy. Various optimistic plans were launched against the pragmatic, political bastions in Canberra, only to be rebuffed, broken or dismantled.

KOREA

We now move on through these uncertain years, past 1948 and the Berlin Airlift (heroic and exciting story though it was for the air and ground crews involved – Air Marshal David Evans, for example). Let us merely recognise that there was, at this stage, a major Australian commitment to the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan. In June 1950, North Korea attacked the South, leading to the never-to-be-repeated Soviet walkout at the Security Council and thus a United Nations operational force. For an Air Force person, the next thoughts after saying ‘Korea’ are often Mustangs, MiGs and Meteors ... and No 77 Squadron. Remember, of course, there are other highly valued elements, including transport and airfield construction units, but let us stay with No 77 Squadron. The US commander regarded this fighter squadron as one of the best. It is a great story but let us just note that people like Wing Commanders Lou Spence, Dick Cresswell and Ron Susans all garnered high praise for their active, positive and successful leadership, adapting to new demands with new schedules, tactics and approaches. In the air, the lead was often given not to the most senior but to those most able – a sergeant or junior officer - rather than always the executives.

Failings in administrative and logistic support, however, suggest that the front line was adapting faster than the ‘head shed’. At one point, airmen were living in tents, using American flying suits and still suffering from the extreme winter conditions

¹ Alan Stephens, *High Fliers: Leaders of the Royal Australian Air Force*, AGPS, Canberra, 1996, p. 60.

(two men, for example, died in a tent fire). Later, during the phase of re-equipment with the Meteor, the home organisation was not ahead of the game in some respects. Crews were not trained in basics such as instrument flying, let alone air-to-air tactics against the new Chinese threat posed by the increasingly aggressive and able MiG-15 pilots. Changes in the basic role between air-to-air and air-to-ground (not just tactics, which you might expect to come from the front line) were driven by the squadron commanding officers rather than higher command.

Back in Australia, however, Sir Donald Hardman as the first CAS of the 1950s after Jones was developing thoughtful plans for a localised self-defence posture and local aircraft production. These ideas were not taken up by his successor in 1954, John 'Black Jack' McCauley, as they seemed to be curiously out of tune with the clear trends in Korea. The first major trend was a swing from the Meteor (which had been in RAAF operational service for a year or so by then) towards the American F-86; the second trend was a move from a British security orientation towards an American alliance. McCauley, by the way, had been waiting in the wings for some time with his credentials being built on an excellent intellectual base, together with a successful operational career. He must be listed on the balance sheet as one of the better leaders of the era.

MALTA, MALAYA AND CONFRONTATION

Our lens now pans all too quickly past the operations in Malta, the Malayan 'Emergency', and the Indonesian *Konfrontasi*. These were interesting challenges and the responses praiseworthy. Success must be taken to imply strong leadership, although the demands and complexity of the deployments were relatively minor. Scherger and others played a strong part not only in the operations but also in significant command positions such as in No 224 Group in Singapore. Sir Valston Hancock impressed his coalition and host nation colleagues with his dedication, professionalism and wisdom.

Worthy of mention, highly laudable leadership was displayed by Wing Officer Doris Carter as Director of the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) through the 1950s, many of her WRAAF colleagues such as Lois Pitman, and members of the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service such as Betty Docker. If nothing else, their performances point to the great pool of talent that was being overlooked as a result of the discriminatory attitudes extant in the community at the time.

VIETNAM

Hancock was CAS when a much larger commitment, politically and operationally, was mooted - that in Vietnam from 1964 to 1972. Squadron Leader Chris Sugden led the way with a flight of newly-delivered Caribous, eventually to become No 35 Squadron in mid-1966 and the last RAAF squadron to leave the theatre. After some regrettable argument and delay, No 9 Squadron with Iroquois and later No 2 Squadron with Canberras followed to perform exemplary service. The Vietnam experience perhaps provides a good case study of this category that I have called 'organisational leadership'. At the operational level, the level of results would appear to suggest that the leadership and teamwork as a whole, regardless of analysis of or judgement on individuals, must have been effective. I was struck by (ex-No 35 Squadron member)

Group Captain 'Chuck' Connor's remark at last year's history conference devoted to the Vietnam period:

It was a fantastic effort from the CO down. It's amazing how necessity can focus one on the job ... The heroes of Vietnam were the blokes that provided those aeroplanes ... working all damn night, trying to sleep all day under noisy and abysmal conditions and getting the job done... They are the role models that are applicable.²

Even a brief scan of discussion at the RAAF History Conference on Vietnam reveals innovation, determination and dedication at all levels. Dirou, Downing, Hodge, Lane, Paule, Weller, Scott, and many other air and ground crew officers and NCOs provide evidence that people not only performed admirably but also exercised the requisite leadership to achieve results. Major General Hartley's view from the ground was of a 'green' organisation quickly adapting to the operational milieu. Certainly, arrival in Vietnam marked some rapid self-help programs by people from our squadrons and headquarters, with less than adequate assistance from Australia.³ Detailed records of leadership per se at NCO and airmen levels are scant. We all remember our WOD or sergeant during our training; whether we liked them or not, we learned much from them. I refer not to the collective art of keeping the long barrels of the .303 rifle roughly parallel at the slope, but to the odd word at the side of the parade ground during a break and the yarn over an evening brew on exercise. During the operations in Vietnam, the need for personal leadership and role modelling amongst the airmen was, of course, even more important.

The picture at home was not so rosy. The Air Board was firstly reluctant to send any rotary wing support to the Army in Vietnam, despite the strong case for such a decision. When the Board was forced to accede, the squadron was neither very well prepared nor supported for deployment overseas. The top level missed the call, a failure that ultimately led to bitterness and rivalry that not only impeded good order and management within No 1 Australian Task Force, but also led eventually to the transfer of all helicopters out of the Air Force. This sorry tale may have been a failure of judgement - a mistake, rather than poor overall leadership. But it was not good enough and again demonstrates how differently parts of the organisation responded to new challenges at different levels.

What about the withdrawal? Not unlike the experience in 1945-50, this return to peacetime operations 20 years later was often difficult due not only to personal stresses, sometimes exacerbated by regrettable public hostility, but also to the apparently endless constraints of rules and regulations in Australia. When No 9 Squadron returned to Amberley in 1971, for example, there was a need to completely restructure procedures and attitudes. Even the balance of seniority and experience for peacetime operation was wrong – there were too many quite junior but highly capable

² John Mordike (ed), *The RAAF in the War in Vietnam*, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1999, p. 77.

³ See Air Vice-Marshal Billie Collings remarks about poor preparation of the Canberra for No 2 Squadron's deployment to operational service, and Air Vice-Marshal John Paule's reports about lack of support for modifications and development of the Iroquois gunship cited in Mordike, *The RAAF in the War in Vietnam*, pp. 46-47.

and experienced pilots and crewmen. This was also quite reminiscent of the situation in Japan in 1946, where many of the pilots, as Dr Stephens observes in *Going Solo*:

... had 'done it all' during the war. They had met and overcome the most severe challenges ... and earned high status and respect. At the same time, it does seem there was a tendency for some of that generation to coast on their achievements. Too few were prepared to provide the necessary level of supervision.⁴

Despite the lead-time and difficulties in reshaping manning profiles, supervision within No 9 Squadron was addressed quite effectively by gradually cross-posting crews in and out of the helicopter role to the degree that the system could accommodate. My own observation, (and I did not serve in Vietnam myself, despite completing an early Forward Air Controller course in 1967) left me with the impression that the ability of our leaders during the 1970s – such as senior flight lieutenant through to group captain - was on the whole slow to adjust. Without going into individual personalities, many of the internal dynamics and pressure points were not properly addressed in terms of human behaviour or group dynamics. Some preferred to savour the past rather than seeking new modes, while flight commanders competed among and even within squadrons in ways that sometimes focused on self, rather than group, outcome. A commander who does not take a firm hand against such corrosion – and fortunately some did – is not leading well. The faults were systemic rather than local. Dr Coulthard-Clark has critically remarked upon:

... the inadequate briefing [commanders] were given before taking up command, and the lack of debriefing on their return home. We seem singularly determined neither to provide guidance nor to learn from the experience of Vietnam.⁵

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE TO STRESS

The situation in peacetime before and after conflict called for different approaches. Beforehand, for example, we seem not to excel at 'preparing for war and adapting for peace'. Afterwards, readjustment was uneven and slow, causing internal stresses. A case can be made that there was a sort of collective *hysteresis* cycle operating throughout this period. As the engineers here can explain, hysteresis is the behaviour of materials placed under stress; internal strains remain in the fabric, causing later fractures or distortion in the structure. As external demands on the Air Force alternated, the organisation had trouble keeping up. There was a lag between the application of stress - the new demand - and the response as illustrated in the following summary:

- After World War II, the leadership was slow to establish a new political and financial support base, or it was slow to recognise the new realities of a much smaller force. People voted with their feet, left or did not join.

⁴ Alan Stephens, *Going Solo*, AGPS, Canberra, 1995, p. 218.

⁵ Chris Coulthard-Clark 'The Air War in Vietnam' in Alan Stephens *The War in the Air 1914-1994*, Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1994, p. 177.

- Deployments to Korea saw the front line squadrons - air and ground - rise to take on unusual conditions and roles, but making the best of some inadequate equipment and support.
- After Korea, Malta and Malaya in the mid-1950s, there was a rush to re-organise and redeploy back into the strategic reserve. The successful fighter and construction squadrons had to face ebbing support and changing Citizens' Air Force organisational approaches.
- Individual aircrew and squadrons performed well in Malaya and Thailand. The strategic basis, however, was to provide forces for the RAF/US rather than campaign planning.
- Having returned the fighter and bomber squadrons to normal operations, the Government now called for quite different contributions to Vietnam. Again, the squadrons rose to the challenge and performed incredibly well, while the level of support was patchy.
- People then had trouble readjusting to the peacetime force structure and ethos, while at the strategic level, the onset of post-Guam self-reliance still had to be thought through.

Let us not make too much of this. Whether in peace or wartime, armed forces always savour stories of the front line and action in the face of danger, looking askance at the perceived stultified, bureaucratic higher headquarters wherein exists no virtue. The workers at the 'coal-face' are prone to cynical comment on either a complete lack of response, or random edicts from on high. But the old naval desire for 'all parts in the rigging to bear equal strain' is a nice thought. It seems that from top to bottom, strategic to tactical, inner ring to periphery, the whole organisation has succumbed to the natural tendency to increasing entropy and chaos. Leaders are there to stave this off, to pull things together. This is just as hard today as it was then, and we should recognise the challenge as a persistent one. If they get it wrong under extreme external stress, internal strains win.

DOCTRINE

We should not overlook the fact that command and leadership have remained a basic tenet of air force culture and belief throughout this period. It may not make any real difference to our judgements, but it is at least interesting to turn first to the doctrine of the day describing what made a good leader and commander. The mention of doctrine, of course, reminds us that there was no Australian air power doctrine until this very decade when Air Marshal Ray Funnell made one of his many great contributions to the air and defence forces in the shape of his first RAAF *Air Power Manual*.⁶ Previously, the doctrine of the day for the RAAF junior officer's education was to be found in the AP 1300, a 1957 Royal Air Force manual, simply entitled *Operations*, in which the final chapter is dedicated to command and leadership. The good commander was expected to excel in:

⁶ While there was some useful discussion in the first *Air Power Manual* about the nature of an airman, the subject of leadership is not one which should cause us to 'split hairs' about its application in the air, or on land or sea.

... professional knowledge, the ability to see essential clearly, courage and mental strength, sound judgement, good management of subordinate commanders, and setting an example in the air.

The AP 1300 was staple diet for young officers whose otherwise wandering, youthful attention was focused no end by the likelihood that someone could set a question on this final chapter in their next promotion examination. Also included in the AP 1300 was a good reminder that leadership is not just the preserve of the senior officer:

There are few activities of the Air Force, either in the air or on the ground, that do not call for some display of leadership. Whether a squadron is flying ... under its commanding officer, or a small body of airmen ... [working] under a junior NCO, ... the effort will depend on the ... leader.⁷

So the fundamental elements of our doctrine were almost right, except for inadequate development on two particular issues: first, they were not adapted to local conditions by being ‘Australianised’ and second, a doctrine for air power (rather than just leadership) was pretty well ignored outside – and indeed within – the Air Force. One could conclude that the leaders had failed to win the public relations battle. I am not so exercised or downcast by these failures as some for the reasons that, on the first issue, Australians generally have displayed a degree of identity and applied inherited doctrine pretty well, even if they did not quite get round to recording the new and authorised Australian version. On the issue of the lack of an air power doctrine, this is a more serious charge, since it signals a failure either to come to grips with core business or to sell it effectively. Given the cultural orientations of the period, I am not inclined to award low leadership marks for poor salesmanship alone. Admiration is seldom based on self-advocacy.

LATER YEARS – A FEW SELECTED CHARACTERS

We now move to the final period and revert to a sampling of some individuals of four-star and lower rank. For the former, one cannot proceed too far without our famous Air Chief Marshal of this period coming to mind. Most of you probably will not have thought of Sir Wallace Kyle although his story of rising through the ranks of the Royal Air Force to return finally to govern his native Western Australia is illustrious enough. Sir Neville MacNamara, while active in World War II and, in this period, in Korea and Vietnam, properly comes into his own later as Air Force and then Defence Force chief in the 1980s.⁸ Parenthetically, however, I cannot resist a couple of lessons that I drew from my own contact, albeit brief, with Kyle and MacNamara.

⁷ AP 1300, *Operations*, Air Ministry, 1957, p. 112 para 13.

⁸ Charles Burnett does not rate a mention here on a number of counts, of which the most obvious is that he died in 1945.

I met Sir Wallace, a highly decorated and successful commander, in the late 1970s while on the Queen's Silver Jubilee tour of Australia by His Royal Highness, Prince Charles. We had been on the road for several, very busy weeks prior to a final stay at Government House in Perth, with Sir Wallace then in residence as the Governor, before the Prince of Wales headed home. When finally the time of departure came near with official occasions completed, we perceived that His Excellency had, purely coincidentally, assembled his whole extended family in the front room. HRH, already a seasoned royal who could smell a setup from a U-2's wingspan away, let me know with a poker face that his private duties would keep him upstairs until quite late ... how long would it really take to get to the airport? Certainly there would be little time for pleasantries downstairs on the way out!

By contrast, on posting to the joint staff in 1984, I found MacNamara to have all of the approachable, humble and yet authoritative ways that historians generally accord to this great person, if not personality. He typified the Tacitus model defined as:

Ratione et consilio propriis ducis artibus or Reason and calm judgment, the qualities specially belonging to a leader.⁹

Adding evidence from observing a hundred other commanders or senior officers, I have over the years concluded that the presence of a strong ego is often an important ingredient in achieving prominence. But it does not always play well once there. Conversely, those without a strong vision of their own place in the world and a measure of self-confidence to match surely face an uphill struggle. Some of them emerge by virtue of circumstance and event to display effective leadership and to inspire affection and loyalty displaying, like Sir Neville, a humility and humanity which is both marvellous and heart-warming to encounter. The natural extrovert, like the famous four-star to whom we must soon address ourselves, is an easy popular choice. Each has his time and place, and who can predict who will be the right person for any moment? But spare a thought for the meek who do not always inherit on this earth.

Sir Frederick Scherger is more likely to be the name your personal, relational database recovered when recalling our famous Air Chief Marshals. A successful combat veteran, self-motivated, cheerful, tough and even a bit rough on occasions, he was marked early as an officer with the potential to reach the top. When he officiated at the graduation of my Academy course at Point Cook in 1965, I found him impressive, of course, but also immediately appealing. As CAS and then Chief of the Defence Force Staff, his leadership and success are not in doubt.

The last few years of the period are quite within memory of many here, so caution is the keyword. But experience must be our guide in life and why not savour it a little? Some of my favourites have already been mentioned; others are legion. Each of us in thinking back is likely to fix upon a few characters that have been significant in our own experience. You might share some of those names with us in the discussion but, since I have the floor, how many here know 'Jimmy the Tread'? As my flight commander at No 77 Squadron in 1971, Squadron Leader James Allen Treadwell taught me the value of industry, decisiveness and lunacy. He was universally admired

⁹ Tacitus, *History*, Book iii, Sect. 2.

for his energy and unflagging cheerful enthusiasm, but probably best remembered for some uniquely personal and highly colourful phraseology. You will show your age if you can tell me what, in this lost lexicon of forceful interjections and exhortations, has two ends?

On deployment to Darwin on 11 October 1971 for Exercise *Tin Kettle* in a flight of four Mirages, we passed some way north of Mount Isa where an air traffic controller had recently received a shiny new UHF set with which to communicate with these otherwise lawless barbarians interrupting the serenity of his atmospheric suzerainty. Flying Officer Brian ‘Bomber’ Brown, recently arrived at No 77 Squadron, was flying number four to my three. By some combination of technology, statistics and ‘Murphy’, Brown’s radio was the only one to receive a scratchy but enthusiastic controller. Bomber broke the silence:

‘Green 1 from Green 4. Mount Isa’s calling and wants our positioning report’.

‘Roger, Green 4. Break break, Mount Isa, Despot Green section was abeam Georgetown at 32, Flight level 350, estimate zone boundary at 03’, or similar.

Silence. After one or two repeated calls, Treadwell gave up:

‘Green 4 from 1, see if you can get him for me.’

‘Bomber’ duly passed the information, and then relayed several questions and answers concerning our whereabouts, endurance, the weather and so on. Jim’s responses gradually became shorter and more frustrated. Eventually, the conscientious controller asked Despot Green section for an estimate of our arrival over some town which did not even feature on our minuscule 1 in 3 million *WAC Chart*. The prominent occurrence halfway up this particular leg (apart from the muddy waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria) was where the assembled route maps on our kneepads changed abruptly from the green of one sheet to the yellow of the adjoining chart – for no apparent reason and accompanied by no geographical discontinuity whatever. Squadron Leader Treadwell recognised enough was enough when he reached it, and said in a cheerfully exasperated voice, ‘Two ends of a turd! Bomber, tell Mount Isa ...,’ and here he instructed the hapless official to carry out some unprintable action involving his hat, ‘We’re way past Mount Isa, we’ll be in Darwin when the bar opens! See you there.’

One of Jim’s first acts on deployments to Darwin or Tindal in the late 1960s and 1970s was to organise a couple of RAAF trucks, gear and supplies for a squadron weekend camp of survival, shooting and fishing at the Mary or East Alligator River. It could not be done these days but was an inspired act of leadership by providing an enjoyable alternative to Darwin before Cyclone Tracy. There was abundant practical learning, but there was also profit in morale, and an infusion of purpose and moral strength in each person. Jim learned this approach through the tough conditions, first as a trainee Signaller in the airmen’s mess, then later as a Signaller in the Sergeants Mess. He experienced the war-hardened warrant officers, and learned to respect their fierce sense of duty, values, conduct and professionalism. Treadwell still today

strongly extols the virtue of moral strength and trust not only in the air in a crew or formation where lives depend on each other's skill and reliability, but also on the ground between air and ground crews. He laments the loss of this ethos in commercialisation, peacekeeping and outsourcing. Conversely, others to whom I have spoken, particularly the 'groundies', look back on the post-war years as inhibited in some respects by these 'old stagers', until the new Air Force of the 1960s and 1970s began to show the benefits of younger, more flexible and modern people of their times.

What can one conclude, as to the quality of Air Force leadership over this period? Probably not much from this scattered sampling of anecdotal and selective observation. I have talked about the organisational picture enough; individually, it is a mixed bag. As to the Chiefs - it is easy to pick Scherger with his successful war career and Aussie energy as a winner. One commentator opined that the Chiefs around that period were on the whole a lacklustre group. But such judgements, unaccompanied by an understanding of the detail and surroundings, are at best only indicative. The characters are the ones we tend to quote. I can think of many corporals and sergeants in the 1960s who, though they are now nameless, left lasting and admiring impressions on the capability, dedication and innovative approach of the average NCO. We have noted some lapses of judgement and some weak advocacy. Many senior officers were admirable while some might have been categorised by Alastair Mant as having the three essentials of leaders - knowledge, skill and motivation - but perhaps failing his test of an 'undamaged' personality.¹⁰

One prominent lesson suggests itself to us. Many aircrew had little real practical leadership experience, except in the air, in some cases until they reached the rank of squadron leader or even wing commander. The pool from which the top leadership was to be drawn (it was written on a tablet of stone somewhere back when Pontius was a Pilate) had little exposure to leading a team of men and women on the job. Other branches, notably in engineer, supply (equipment as it then was) or administration gained an early bleeding, usually under the guidance of a tough but benevolent warrant officer. To this day, the operations and culture of the Australian Army lead naturally to a much stronger focus on personal leadership and awareness of the needs of the followers. Navy has the division system. I place no particular positive or negative value on these differences but simply note that young emerging leaders should beware and adapt techniques and styles accordingly. Treadwell feared but valued the responsibility, as a young officer, of being in the hot seat for random inspections of his airmen's hut after OC's parade on Tuesdays. We need to put people in front of a team with a real job to do.

A posting from fighters to No 9 Squadron did it for me. Within a couple of years after learning (painfully) to hover the Iroquois inside the boundary fences of the Wagga airfield, I was a detachment commander of two UH-1H and a dozen men in the mountainous jungles of PNG for three months at a time. Largely cut off from the support and life at home base, that is where responsibility – and some good NCOs – had a chance to teach you a thing or two. By contrast, a senior officer once came to visit my contingent in Rabaul, arriving by airline at the very airfield where we were camped together with No 8 Field Survey Squadron under Major Alex Laing (now

¹⁰ Alastair Mant, *Intelligent Leadership*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1997.

there was a man who knew how to run a good operation). My senior visitor tracked within metres of our camp direct to his hotel room in Rabaul to which he then summoned me for an audience.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

What type of leadership is strategic leadership? If you scan the literature, you are likely to come up with a list of theories about leadership that looks like this:

- Trait approach
- Power and coercion
- Transactional
- Situational
- Transformational
- Style approach
- Contingency theory
- Path-goal theory
- Values-based
- Leader-Member-Exchange theory
- Team management
- Psychodynamic

This is fine for individuals and leading a unit or group. A common complaint, and I hear it just as loudly today, is that our senior officers are not well versed in providing strong strategic leadership. Service officers are not called upon to make political decisions, of course, but they need to think through and advise upon strategic options. Here I imply no esoteric definition for 'strategic' - I simply mean making hard choices and linking ends to means at the national level. Strategic leadership might involve some subjects such as:

- analysis of chaos,
- across organisations,
- the 'vision thing',
- thinking nationally,
- short and long-term,
- bargains/compromise,
- link ends and means, and
- discontinuities/secondaries

Much of the concern about our involvement in Vietnam, however, was at the strategic level. In the case of whether and how to become involved, for example, Peter Edwards has pointed out that Air Force leaders were divided on the relative merits of choosing to gain operational experience or concentrating on force development in a period of expansion after demobilisation. Another dilemma was whether involvement was actually needed to provide a pause or halt in the fall of the dominoes, or whether in fact the dominoes would never reach far anyway. Sometimes, it appears, RAAF leaders were not consulted in government decisions, save in the broadest sense. The first and recently retired Commander Australian Theatre often pointed out that while we have been good at tactical level contributions, we have never had to manage the strategic process, including independent campaign planning and support.

Collectively, however, there is no doubt that the RAAF made a significant contribution to Australia's strategic role in the Asia-Pacific region. Projecting a professional and capable presence into various theatres, the RAAF maintained an impressive array of operational activities. It contributed to our image as a reliable and cooperative partner, if sometimes a little unpolished. Also, its individual and unit efforts took a strong leadership role in the establishment and growth of mature air forces in the newly independent nations of the post-colonial era. The RAAF provided instructors, technicians and advisers, in some cases, loaning people to be embedded in the higher command structures of regional partners, sometime at deputy chief level.

There is even a sense in which No 77 Squadron, though they probably would not approve of the metaphor, is like the fabled butterfly of chaos theory. The idea is that the flap of a small wing in one part of the world (in this case powered by a Merlin engine) can influence air turbulence locally, tip an unstable system there and generate a series of events that lead to a typhoon somewhere else around the globe. The squadron's strong performance in defence of US troops on the ground is said to have influenced political machinations in Washington and other capitals that led eventually to the signing of the ANZUS pact, still a dominant element of Australia's security policy. A new phase of RAAF support for regional security began in 1971 with the formation of the Integrated Air Defence System. This initiative saw Australian officers taking a strong lead in building bridges among the partner nations, developing collaborative activities – and habits, and establishing stronger personal and international communications. In summary, the RAAF since the war has been a strong and positive player in building a secure region. This speaks well of the strategic vision and level of participation in the difficult game of national leadership as a whole.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, are the words of the old song *It's still the same old story* true? Do we still believe, as every airman learns, that *Power + Attitude = Performance*? Or has this period demonstrated a new law of air power - *Heroics + Histrionics = Hysteresis*? On the whole, this particular judge's decision is as follows:

- Individual and operational leadership has on the whole been exemplary.
- Organisational leadership has failed to move the whole show ahead in concert.
- Strategic leadership has been pretty patchy, making a significant regional contribution but lacking in depth of vision.

Lest we fall into the same traps today, a simple enough lesson for us to take away is that alignment does not just happen. Alignment of individual energy and creativity with the paths imagined and convincingly described by a leader - not just once but regularly - leads to success. That leader's vision of the goal will be constant and strong but, paradoxically, the colours and edges will always be moving as he or she perceives and incorporates individuals' perceptions of the best way to reach the best future. Organisationally, groups take the place of individuals, the work space expands but coordination is essential. Anticipation and foresight enable harmonic action. At the highest level, the strategic leader works in circumstances of increasing uncertainty, listening to and convincing diverse organisational and other national leaders, from a wide constituency, to pursue the national interest.

DISCUSSION

Air Vice-Marshal Dave Rogers: I enjoyed that. I think it's very easy for us to look back to the period involving Vietnam, from probably the period say 1965 through to 1973, and perhaps be a little critical. But I think we've got to remember that our leadership at that stage - and I just don't say the top leadership but right throughout the Air Force down to the LAC and LACW - are putting a hell of a lot of work in because not only were we involved in Vietnam in a heavy way with the three squadrons, plus the effect of having to train and graduate 120 pilots a year and all of the logistics support that went to there but, for us perhaps, Vietnam was not the main game in town. I suggest it was for the Army, as it rightly would be. The Navy had one project - a major one in the DDGs - but have a look at what the Air Force went through at that particular time. At that stage, we were introducing the helicopter and, as a young junior officer, I don't think we appreciated this sort of thing from the leadership. We had the helicopters coming in, the F-111 project, the P-3 project and the Macchi project and, had not the vision of our leaders at that stage been to press on and look for that major re-equipment program at the same time as maintaining Butterworth and our efforts in Vietnam, I don't think the Air Force would be in the position that it is in today. So I think we owe a debt to our leadership during Vietnam and, as I said, at all levels right to throughout the SNCOs. And that involved the transport people, the aero medivac, the ACS people - everybody - because I think that was a very strong and building part of our history in that particular period you were talking about. It really took a lot of strong leadership and that was in your comments.

Air Vice-Marshal O'Loghlin: I won't comment other than to say that indeed I mentioned the stress between those that wanted to get on with the restructuring and those who wanted to get out into the game of the day. This is always the tension between what we now call tomorrow's force and today's force and now, of course, the force after next. And you're seeing it happen right now - a sudden rush to get organised for Timor - but we've still got to think about the future. So, you're absolutely right.

Group Captain Mike Lancaster: Just to lighten your burden, I noticed you used Tacitus and, being a classic scholar, I have to say something about this. Tacitus was a Senator who got himself into a lot of trouble and decided to retire from public life about 30 years after the Imperium began, which meant in retiring from public life that he also retired from the military career that went with it. He retired and wrote history, and the histories that he wrote were always about the good old days before the Empire - in the days of the Republic incidentally - and of course the quotation you used there was about the good old days when all the leaders were like that. Whereas, he would tell you, the present day leaders are not like that at all - they've gone to the dogs - I just thought I'd pass that on.

Air Commodore Norm Ashworth: Just to give a slightly different perspective on what you're saying there about looking at the period overall, I think one aspect from my own experience in the Air Force in this time, which was over most of the period, was the rather long transition from the Second World War into what the Air Force is today. When I first joined the Air Force, the senior leadership of the Air Force was still the pre-war people, still with their ideas of that time where the cadets had to be

ruggedly handsome and carelessly well-dressed, and calling cards - all that sort of thing - were still very much in evidence. At the other levels, down at the flying instructors and things, it was very much a case of their gung-ho attitudes from the World War. Life was pretty rough then - you might die tomorrow - let's live up now and have a great time. Cowboys were certainly still around. I think the Air Force though, over this period transitioned to today's professional force. I think that also may well affect some of the views of leadership over the time but it certainly wasn't two or three years; it was probably 20 years and, I think, probably the first people going to Vietnam. Some of them were in fact people who had served during the Second World War, and still carried on some of those attitudes. I think that perhaps the style of leadership has also changed the Air Force over this time.

Air Vice-Marshal Bob Richardson. I was struck by the reference - I think you made in relation to Vietnam where you spoke about the people in the field not feeling as though they were backed up well enough back home - and I think there's a real chord that struck throughout this era, especially the early parts of the era that you were covering, where we were of course relying almost totally on logistics support from others. I found, in the Malaysia confrontation and Ubon, the issue of going around and having to scrounge flying gear from the Americans. One that affected me quite deeply at ARDU [Aircraft Research and Development Unit] years later was the realisation of the helicopter force having to do its own major modifications in terms of weaponry and gunship modifications. I wonder in fact if that was ever documented in accordance with Air Force procedures. I suspect it never was. It's actually not funny when you think about it. It seems to me that the command and leadership at the logistic level in the broad sense of the world completely failed, through a lot of those things, in terms of supplying people in the field, who needed the gear, with what they really needed. It really isn't good enough to have to go around and scrounge for it - in one case we got flying boots made down in the town and things like that - that isn't the right way to operate a professional fighting force.

Air Vice-Marshal O'Loughlin: There's quite a lot of discussion - as I've said - in last year's conference about how that was done, and whether it was good or bad, and there are some areas of debate in there but, generally speaking, it's always pretty tough. I think it's going to be an exceptional operation where you've got it all on the shelf because A) you can't afford to do it that way, and therefore B) you're always going to be, to some extent, innovative. I think the question I'm raising is that that's when the leadership has to be particularly active in recognising the hysteresis lag in getting any organisation shifted around to a new direction - it's just very hard work.

CLOSING ADDRESS

AIR MARSHAL E.J. MCCORMACK

Well, ladies and gentlemen, I must apologise that I was not able to be here for the whole day. I was away discussing readiness, preparedness and sustainability, all of which are taking our attention at the moment. I have been told that the presentations I missed were excellent; in fact Mike Lancaster's was particularly mentioned. The theme throughout the whole day went much on the political dimension of leadership and that's something that we need to be very much aware of. If you'll indulge me for a moment, I'll just put a couple of spins on it myself.

I don't know if you've read the Army publication *Opera* but it's a study into the development of Army leadership. In that document, it says that the Navy and Air Force don't make leaders; it also says that we don't worry much about doctrine. Now, whether you believe that or not, it is a perception. Is that perception Army's problem or is it ours? Perceptions in this town often are real or they become real. So that is why we must be aware of these aspects. I put to you that the changeover of the last Chief of Navy, the firing of the Secretary and the firing of the Deputy Secretary Acquisition were all about those sorts of perceptions. It is something we must be aware of in this city; that the biggest contribution we can have to supporting the Air Force is, in fact, credibility. It takes you years to build credibility and you can lose it very quickly, so that is something we must remain aware of throughout our leadership - that the perception becomes real and your greatest asset is your credibility.

Another thing I'd like to discuss is what Air Commodore Ashworth was talking about - the difference between the junior and the more senior leadership. I put it to you that leadership skills are necessary all the way up the chain if you're going anywhere. At the higher level, you have to maintain your leadership skills but learn other skills and here, I believe, it's the bureaucratic skills. It's much more multi-dimensional; it's the ability to deal with many and varied perspectives. I can assure you that Foreign Affairs has a different perspective on things than we do. It's an area where military judgement is just not enough - not good enough - to carry the day. So the higher commander not only must still have leadership skills - in other words, if you're not out there talking to the troops, you're not a leader - but also must have the extra skills to deal with the bureaucracy. On Air Vice-Marshal O'Loughlin's point about the transition to war, I'd just like to emphasise my concern that it is something we haven't done very well over the years: the transition to war and the mindset required for the transition from peacetime to war is a difficult transition.

Finally, to do a history conference like this takes a lot of work, especially for the speakers. I'd like to give a special thanks to the speakers. It takes a long time to get a presentation together, especially when you have to research all your work and write the papers. I congratulate you all on work well done. Special thanks go to Air Power Studies Centre and they'll be publishing and distributing the proceedings of the conference to all participants. I'd also like to thank Air Commodore Doug Chipman

for hosting the conference and, of course, it's no conference at all unless we have the audience; I thank you very much for coming. There has been some consideration about when, where and what we'll do next year. At this time, what I might do is actually leave the History Conference out next year. We will be having an Air Power Conference next year and, with the Olympics and all the work going on, we will be quite busy - but that's not final yet. We'll let you know how we go on that. Ladies and Gentlemen, it's been a great conference. Thank you very much for coming.