WE NEVER DISAPPOINT

A HISTORY OF
7 SQUADRON RAAF
1940-1945

KEVIN GOGLER
The story of the Beaufort and the crews who flew them needed to be told, and Kevin deserves a great thank you for the time and effort he has put into this project. It marks Australia’s growth from dependency on the mother country to self-sufficiency and modern proficiency in aviation and self defence.

Initially, the decisions of the Air Board as to the role of the Beaufort were uncertain and like many others were changed almost daily. However, when ‘A’ flight was sent to Horn Island and 7 Squadron was confirmed in its role of reconnaissance with the ‘N’ and ‘P’ patrols and anti-submarine work, the skill of the crews and reliability of the aircraft soon won recognition so much so that the Department of Aircraft Production (responsible for the manufacture of the Beaufort in Australia) was able to avoid damage from a proposed Royal Commission into the Beaufort itself and the many casualties that were then occurring in training at Bairnsdale and East Sale.

I must say that with a good crew, an enthusiastic group of aircrew, a conscientious and skilled bunch of ground crew, I enjoyed my tour with 7 Squadron. It was indeed a very efficient squadron, well deserving of all the accolades it received including its name as the ‘Happy Squadron’.

K. R. Parsons
Air Commodore, CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC, RAAF (Retd)
Commanding Officer No 7 Squadron, RAAF, December 1942 to February 1944

Adelaide
September 2009

Keith Parsons passed away in June 2011.
His memory lives on as a strong leader, role model and friend.
Preface

I decided to compile this history of No 7 Squadron after writing an account of my father's service in the RAAF. My father, Eric Gogler, completed one tour with 7 Squadron from May 1943 to June 1944 and another in November and December 1945, when he was responsible for its disbandment. The achievements of 7 Squadron during his time with the Squadron, and which subsequently came to my notice in the research I undertook, convinced me that these achievements needed to be recorded. Histories have been written on some of 7 Squadron’s contemporaries but it was obvious that the gap needed to be filled.

By far the majority of this history has been compiled from official records. These records were accessed either through the National Archives of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, the Office of Air Force History–Department of Defence or the RAAF Museum. Unfortunately, not all of the official records were retained following the war. As Peter Howard states, at the end of the war, all unit records were packed without any assessment of what material was worthy of permanent retention.1 The records were culled to about 10 per cent of their original volume with those remaining being classified and then stored. When I reviewed what was left of the 7 Squadron records, it was obvious that some significant material had been destroyed. Many files containing important historical information are referenced in the remaining records but these were not retained.

Records of some RAAF units up until July 1944 were scant. This seemed to be particularly so for those units in northern Australia and areas further north. During that month, a direction was issued requiring Commanding Officers of all units to more closely conform to the relevant Air Force Order and the additional instructions promulgated at that time. This was because it was realised that the history of the RAAF during the war would be significantly based on the quality and quantity of information contained in the unit history sheets and operations record books. These instructions required official records to be completed with the recording of history as the main prerequisite and ‘no document, photograph, map, sketch or relic should be overlooked which may provide some link in the chronicling of the part played by the Service in all theatres’. Attached to these records, additional reports were now required including all Intelligence Officer

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Reports and a Commanding Officer Report. The purpose of the latter report was to provide the official historian with essential background information not included in the day-to-day entries; a general review of the activities of the unit. Information included difficulties and obstacles encountered, the degree of success achieved, discipline, morale, living conditions, general welfare and other domestic matters. An examination of unit history sheets by RAAF Headquarters to this time revealed that units had not appreciated the necessity of correctly completing them and as a consequence the RAAF had already lost a large quantity of significant historical information. From this point forward, records not complying with the new requirements were returned to units for rectification.

Further information was sourced from a number of additional areas, all published, and mainly books and personal records. This history contains a minimum of personal recollections, which is unfortunate. These recollections are what gives a history more relevance but it is now too late to provide a truly balanced account. The official records relate what happened but personal recollections go further, they relate how it happened. I have been privileged to hear the personal recollections of a number of Squadron members and appreciate how these put what happened into context. These few personal recollections demonstrate how brief the official records really are. Sadly, most of these stories are gone forever. Because the official records up until the middle of 1944 were scant, this history therefore predominately covers the air operations up until that time, as the air operations were what was recorded. Even so, much more detail on individual sorties was contained in the operations record book of North Eastern Area than in those of 7 Squadron. Also, the information contained in the Squadron’s operations record book only included the name of the pilot whereas some other squadrons included the name of the whole crew.

The task of writing this history was made difficult when on numerous occasions the official records were found to be wrong or contradictory. What also did not help was that records in the operations record book for February 1944 are missing, and those for January to October 1942, February 1945 and from September to December 1945 are incomplete. If this history therefore appears one sided then I apologise but there was little other information available. I have made a few assumptions in the narration and if this has caused me to err I again apologise, but I have tried to verify the facts where at all possible. I have also decided to use in the narration the place names used at the time and retain the imperial measurements. For example, Squadron personnel use the term ‘Jacky Jacky’ rather than Higgins Field for the airfield at the top of Cape York Peninsula, so I have used Jacky Jacky throughout.
My appreciation for their support and advice is extended to colleagues David Vincent and Nigel Daw. I particularly thank Steve Allen from the Office of Air Force History, Canberra, Tony Clark and Ralph Cusack from the Beaufort Restoration Group based at Caboolture, Bill Edwards from National Archives Australia, Canberra, Barry Follington, Rick Hanning, Sarah Jarvis, John Lever, Greville Montgomery, Gill Peacey, Bob Piper, John Snewin from the Beaufort Squadrons Association, State Library of South Australia, Monica Walsh from RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Alan Wilkie, Roy Wing and Bob Wiseman.

I am particularly indebted to the following members of 7 Squadron who willingly provided information, advice and assistance: Ron Appleton, Tom Kelly, Jack Roberts, Warren (Wal) Hacker, John Lemcke, Hugh Roche, Phil Harrison, Ron McGrath, Jack Russell, Mike Heysen, Dick Ottaway, Alan Storr, Bruce Hinge, Keith Parsons, Max Tomlinson, Tom Holden, Norm Raw, Jack Waite, Alf Humble, Harry Read, Peter Jowett, and Keith Reddie.

The support provided by Hugh Roche in correcting my drafts, making suggestions, identifying faces in photographs and recalling events has been of the greatest value and I sincerely thank him for his assistance. To my wife, Sue, and my children Melissa, Alison and Joseph who put up with my absence, or accepted that another detour was necessary to look at a plane or an airfield, or to collect just one more piece of information, I thank you for your patience and understanding.

I thank the Air Power Development Centre for publishing this work as part of the RAAF Heritage Series. The efforts of Adam Braakman, Graeme Smith, Greg Gilbert and Chris Clark in bringing this book to its current form is also recognised.

To those who served with 7 Squadron, and after having talked and corresponded with some, I can easily recognise their great camaraderie and esprit de corps that still exists among them and their acknowledgement of their achievements. I am privileged to have met them and been accepted by them. Many of them are keen to keep alive the memory of what they achieved and I hope this account assists in that aim.

Kevin Gogler
Adelaide
January 2010
### Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Aircraftman</td>
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<tr>
<td>AC1</td>
<td>Aircraftman 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFC</td>
<td>Air Force Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANGAU</td>
<td>Australian New Guinea Administration Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cpl</td>
<td>Corporal</td>
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<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>Companion of the Order of Bath</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>Commander of the Order of the British Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAP</td>
<td>Department of Aircraft Production</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFC</td>
<td>Distinguished Flying Cross</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSO</td>
<td>Distinguished Service Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/O</td>
<td>Flying Officer</td>
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<td>F/Lt</td>
<td>Flight Lieutenant</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/Sgt</td>
<td>Flight Sergeant</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMAS</td>
<td>His/Her Majesty's Australian Ship</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMS</td>
<td>His/Her Majesty's Ship</td>
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<tr>
<td>HQ</td>
<td>Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFF</td>
<td>Identification Friend or Foe (airborne radar identification device)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KVA</td>
<td>Kilo Volt-Amps</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Leading Aircraftman</td>
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<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>Mentioned In Despatches</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mk</td>
<td>Mark (eg Mk II, Mk IV Aircraft)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MV</td>
<td>Motor Vessel</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>Non-Commissioned Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Officer of the Order of the British Empire</td>
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<tr>
<td>P/O</td>
<td>Pilot Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAAF</td>
<td>Royal Australian Air Force</td>
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<td>RAF</td>
<td>Royal Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAFVR</td>
<td>Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAN</td>
<td>Royal Australian Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>RNZAF</td>
<td>Royal New Zealand Air Force</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sgt  Sergeant
SOS  Save Our Souls
Sqn Ldr  Squadron Leader
SS  Steam Ship
TSS  Turbine Steam Ship
US  United States
USAAF  United States Army Air Forces
USS  United States Ship
WAAAF  Women’s Australian Auxiliary Air Force
WAG  Wireless Air Gunner
W Cdr  Wing Commander

**Units of Measurement**

**Conversions**

1 inch = 25.4 millimetres
1 mile = 1.6 kilometres
1 foot = 30.48 centimetres
1 mile per hour = 1.6 kilometres per hour
1 yard = 0.914 metres
1 knot = 1.85 kilometres per hour
1 pound = 0.45 kilograms
This history is dedicated to the personnel who served with No 7 Squadron RAAF from its formation in June 1940 to its disbandment in December 1945 and, in particular, to those 34 men who lost their lives while serving with the squadron.
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Chapter 1
A Slow Beginning

No 7 Squadron, RAAF had its genesis in No 7 (Training) Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, which was formed at Yatesbury, England on 24 October 1917 to train aircrew for Australian squadrons operating on the Western Front in France. By 1917 the Australian Flying Corps consisted of four operational squadrons that outstripped the ability of the Army’s Central Flying School at Point Cook to supply sufficient numbers of fully trained airmen. It was for this reason that the training squadrons were established in England. No 7 Squadron trained personnel in corps reconnaissance, mainly for No 1 and No 3 Squadrons. It was originally identified as No 32 (Australian Training) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps, but was renamed, along with all of the Australian squadrons, in January of 1918. The squadron moved from Yatesbury to Leighterton, near Bath, on 23 February 1918, where it remained until the squadron was disbanded in March 1919.

At the end of 1921—the year the RAAF was formed—plans were drawn up to initially form six flying squadrons (numbered 1 to 6), but these arrangements were immediately abandoned due to post-war financial restrictions imposed on the Service. When improved conditions allowed the first operational units to be formed in mid-1925, there were just two—1 and 3 Squadrons. From 1934 the RAAF gradually expanded and by 1939 there were 12 squadrons in existence, with numbers allocated between 1 and 25. A 7 Squadron was not included in these pre-World War II expansion plans.

At the start of World War II the then acting Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Goble, proposed a six-squadron RAAF expeditionary force that was to include the as yet unformed 7 Squadron. Later, when the expeditionary force was superseded by the Empire Air Training Scheme, 7 Squadron was scheduled in the Home Defence Plan of 19 squadrons to form on 1 June 1940 at Richmond, New South Wales. This forecast was made when the squadron was designated to be a fighter squadron equipped with Bristol Beaufighters; this being based on the original advice that these aircraft would be available by that time. Beaufighters were considered the most suitable long-range fighter type available, and had been ordered to provide protection to the vulnerable industrial areas around Sydney from possible Japanese carrier aircraft. However, delivery did not eventuate as all United Kingdom Beaufighter production was required to equip RAF squadrons.

Perhaps surprisingly, the RAAF in early 1940 considered the possibility of a Japanese attack on Australia to be diminishing, and were now convinced that its
primary function in home defence was the location and destruction of German raiding vessels. At this time, the seaward reconnaissance and striking force was meagre, with regards to the areas to be covered and the wide dispersion of vulnerable points. The War Cabinet therefore decided that the strengthening of the RAAF’s bomber-reconnaissance force was a higher priority than a single squadron of long range fighters. In April 1940, in accordance with this direction Cabinet altered the role of 7 Squadron to general reconnaissance and, once equipped, to have the squadron patrol along the Queensland coast. To counter the loss of a specialist fighter squadron, the RAAF proposed that any air defence required could, in an emergency, be adequately undertaken by Wirraway general purpose aircraft.

With this change in role, 7 (General Reconnaissance) Squadron was now to be equipped with Lockheed Hudson aircraft; this being the only suitable type available. However, Hudsons were not expected to be available in Australia until October of that year. On 22 April 1940, based on this information, it was recommended that the squadron should not be formed until 1 November. Regardless, by 13 May, Cabinet decided that the squadron would form on 15 June 1940, comprised of a headquarters and one flight, even though it was uncertain whether all the establishment personnel would be available by that date. The squadron’s permanent war station was to be Townsville, even though the Townsville airfield was yet to be completed and would not be ready for several months. Cabinet therefore decided that 7 Squadron and No 24 Squadron would form at Amberley, Queensland on 15 June, and that both would later move to Townsville once the runways and facilities had been completed. Although Amberley was the preferred site for this interim period, No 3 Service Flying Training School was due to be formed there on 21 October and both squadrons would be required to vacate before that date.

By 15 May, following confirmation that a nucleus of personnel, stores and accommodation would be available, it was finally confirmed that 7 Squadron would form on 17 June 1940. Over the next two days, further discussions took place with Air Staff on the formation of the squadron during which it was agreed that it should be formed, at least in nucleus, prior to 30 June, using aircraft from the Hudson reserve. But on 28 May, this decision was placed on hold pending further discussions concerning the squadron forming instead at Laverton, Victoria.

By 3 June 1940, it had been conclusively decided that 1 Squadron was to proceed overseas to Malaya and this influenced where 7 Squadron would finally be formed. Forming at Laverton would obviate the immediate building of additional accommodation at Townsville and it would also be administratively
A Slow Beginning

more convenient for 7 Squadron to take over the organisation developed by 1 Squadron when it left, including its surplus stores, equipment and hangar accommodation. Regardless of this decision, the station at Townsville would continue to be developed to provide for the squadron, which could either go there when the accommodation was complete or when 1 Squadron returned to Australia. This change was confirmed by the Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Burnett, on 7 June and 7 Squadron would form at Laverton on 27 June with Squadron Leader Ernest Dallas Scott commanding. The signal establishing the squadron confirmed that until further notice it would be maintained with a Headquarters Section and one flight of Husdons only, and would be administered by Station Headquarters, Laverton. Although the provisional establishment provided for a full unit, postings would be made on the reduced basis. On 12 June 1940, 2 Aircraft Depot advised that three Husdons would be allotted to 7 Squadron and be available for when it was formed on 27 June, however, their delivery ended up being delayed due to various modifications that were required. Whilst waiting for the aircraft, personnel were kept occupied in organising the squadron by preparing equipment and placing serving personnel where they could obtain practical experience and tuition on Hudson aircraft.

Upon formation, the following personnel were posted to the squadron:

- Squadron Leader E D Scott – Commanding Officer
- Flight Lieutenant P Parker
- Flight Lieutenant S I Winter-Irving – Adjutant
- Pilot Officer W A Hall – Equipment Officer
- Pilot Officer R A Ridgway
- Pilot Officer R Wittwer
- Pilot Officer J H R Marshall
- Pilot Officer M G Cowan
- Pilot Officer O H Diamond
- Air Cadet J Bell
- Air Cadet W J Hoddinott
- Warrant Officer G E Croker – Warrant Officer Engineer
- Flight Sergeant E L Fry – Fitter 11A
- Sergeant R M Wenker – Storekeeper
- Sergeant G A Pearson – Clerk General
- Sergeant C R Taylor – Fitter 11A
- Sergeant S J Prout – Fitter 11E
- Corporal W H Wilcox – Fabric Worker
- Corporal F L Berryman – Clerk Stores
The rapid expansion of the RAAF in mid 1940 meant there were not enough aircraft to equip new squadrons to their established strength. Over one third of the RAAF’s initial Hudson orders had been allotted for service in the Far East and this left 60 aircraft to equip seven operational squadrons, the Armament Training Centre at Cressy, and for an immediate reserve. By 1 July, questions were being asked as to why no allotment of aircraft had been made to 7 Squadron. It had transpired that the original allotment of three Hudsons had been cancelled on instructions that No 8 and No 13 Squadrons were to receive immediate priority, and that the arrival of 7 Squadron at Laverton had been deferred. Because of this misunderstanding, the only aircraft immediately available were; two target-towing aircraft, four aircraft fitted for passenger transport, and four aircraft that were incomplete and under maintenance. Against the requirement from the squadrons for 25 aircraft, there were only 20 available aircraft, including the 10 just mentioned. On 8 July, three Hudsons were ordered to be dispatched to 7 Squadron at the earliest opportunity and shortly thereafter, A16-12, A16-18 and A16-38 were allotted to the squadron.

Soon after the start of the war, single letters of the alphabet were applied to RAAF aircraft to identify the unit to which they belonged, and for 7 Squadron this was the letter G. The code letters were to be applied in grey on top of the camouflaged finish; for 7 Squadron the location of this code letter was on the nose of the aircraft.

By the end of July 1940, the three Hudsons had still not arrived, and seven of the squadron officers and two Air Cadets had been posted away. Twelve airmen were posted to the squadron, making a strength of three officers and 38 airmen. Finally, on 12 August, A16-12 and A16-18 were received and the personnel who had been attached to 1 Aircraft Depot for instruction on Hudsons returned to the squadron for their maintenance. However this was to be short lived, as just 10 days later, these two Hudsons were reallocated to No 2 Squadron to bring it up to strength and the third Hudson that had not yet been received—A16-38 was subsequently issued.
to 24 Squadron. No 7 Squadron would now be without aircraft of its own until 25 January 1942, a total of 16 months. By 19 August, however, Pilot Officers Ron Cornfoot and Ian Gibson were attached to the squadron to undergo a conversion course on Hudsons. Nine fitters were also attached for instruction in Hudson maintenance and servicing. However, since the squadron had no aircraft, arrangements were made for 2 Squadron—that was also based at Laverton—to provide the necessary instruction. A short time later, two Hudsons from 24 Squadron were attached to 7 Squadron for these purposes.

The difficulties arising from conflicting higher priority requirements for Hudson aircraft within the United States inevitably left the RAAF with too few aircraft to meet Australia’s own defence plans. No 7 Squadron suffered the consequences.

By the middle of September 1940, four 24 Squadron Hudsons were attached to 7 Squadron. On 17 September, both Cornfoot and Gibson were sent solo after 21 hours and 40 minutes, and 24 hours and 40 minutes dual instruction respectively. Gibson’s first take off and landing was successful but on his second landing he bounced several times, with the last bounce being so severe that the starboard undercarriage collapsed. The undercarriage, wing and both airscrews of A16-13 were damaged but there were no injuries, and the resulting damage turned out to be minimal and easily repaired. By the end of September, of the eight officers recorded as on strength with the squadron, six were attached from 24 Squadron, together with 10 out of the 77 airmen and all four Hudsons. By 19 October, the conversion course for the 24 Squadron pilots and ground crew had been completed and preparations made for the movement of that detachment to Townsville, which occurred five days later when Hudsons A16-13, A16-16, A16-39 and A16-91 departed Laverton. Towards the end of the month, Flying Officer Bill Baird was posted to the squadron as Adjutant and to command temporarily as he was now the only officer on strength. While attached to 7 Squadron the 24 Squadron Hudsons chalked up 92 flying hours in September and 72 in October.

As 7 Squadron was again without aircraft, all fitters, flight mechanics and riggers were attached to 2 Squadron to retain experience in Hudson maintenance. This situation continued until 14 November 1940 when Southern Area Headquarters sought direction from the Air Board on the future status of the squadron, since it was operating on a nucleus basis only, and again without aircraft. Southern Area also considered it beneficial for the personnel to officially remain attached to 2 Squadron for useful experience; this arrangement continued pending the allotment of aircraft. Furthermore, Southern Area considered Baird too inexperienced to continue to command the squadron.
unaided. From 11 December 1940, 7 Squadron personnel were officially attached to 2 Squadron until the receipt of its own aircraft. At the same time, Wing Commander Fred Thomas, Commanding Officer of 2 Squadron was appointed temporary Commanding Officer of 7 Squadron while attached. Apart from a duty crew, personnel were then sent on Christmas leave, and on return Baird was posted to 2 Squadron as Adjutant leaving 7 Squadron without any officers but with 64 airmen.

So it was that 1941 began with the personnel attached to 2 Squadron while a small nucleus serviced the two Hudsons from the Armament Training School at Cressy, although this requirement lasted only until the beginning of June. By the end of January it was evident that there was little prospect of any aircraft becoming available for the squadron. With about 60 airmen on strength, it was recommended that the squadron either be disbanded or instructions issued to
post the personnel away until such time as aircraft could be provided. This latter course would at least leave the squadron in being on paper, and would avoid having to reform it at a later date. This situation continued through February when the Deputy Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, advised that it seemed unlikely that more general reconnaissance aircraft would be available until Australia’s 90 Beauforts on order from local production commenced delivery. This was expected to be at about four aircraft per week from September or October 1941. In April 1941, Wing Commander Frank Headlam was appointed to command 2 Squadron, replacing Wing Commander Fred Thomas and assuming temporary command of 7 Squadron by default. While personnel remained attached, 2 Squadron continued to provide patrols in the waters off south eastern Australia. Detachments were based at Mallacoota in Victoria and Cambridge in Tasmania through to November 1941.

Hudsons of 2 Squadron at Laverton being serviced with ground personnel including those attached from 7 Squadron.

Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.
On 6 August 1941, the Air Staff issued *Operational Planning Directive No. 1 for Guidance in the Formulation of Detailed Plans*. Appendix C to the directive provided for the intended location and equipment of squadrons. For the Northern Area, it was planned that there would be nine front line squadrons, comprising two of flying boats, three general purpose and four for general reconnaissance. No 7 Squadron was designated to be one of the two general reconnaissance squadrons based at Darwin (the other being 13 Squadron) and it was estimated it would be operationally available from September of that year. As it was, there were no aircraft to equip the squadron and the move never eventuated. From 21 August to 26 August 1941, 11 of the 2 Squadron Hudsons flew from Laverton to Alice Springs on deployment, accompanied by 2 Squadron’s personnel in two Douglas transports. It is not clear whether any 7 Squadron personnel were included. In October and November, flights of 2 Squadron aircraft proceeded to Darwin to conduct aerial reconnaissance over areas of the Netherlands East Indies.

On 3 December, 2 Squadron was ordered to move to Darwin at short notice in view of the possibility of hostilities with Japan. Two DC-2 aircraft transported essential ground personnel from Laverton to Darwin on 8 December with service and civil aircraft transporting further personnel over the next few days. Other personnel moved overland but it is not recorded whether the attached airmen from 7 Squadron also relocated to Darwin. The official historian Douglas Gillison indicates that in early December 1941 7 Squadron was physically located in Darwin.¹ Squadron records, however do not agree. No 7 Squadron remained at Laverton with personnel employed on station duties, and Gillison must have erred on this point. From February 1941 to the end of that year, 7 Squadron personnel did not exceed 30 in number.

Chapter 2
Training Others

The men of No 7 Squadron believed that the commencement of the war in the Pacific on December 1941 would soon see their squadron brought up to full strength and sent to the forefront of the fight against the Japanese. Events did not pan out in the manner that many in the squadron expected.

There were no Hudsons available for second line units prior to 5 December 1941 but on that date the first of the RAAF’s Hudson Mk IVs were received at 2 Aircraft Depot, Richmond. One month later, enough of these Hudsons had been assembled and were ready to be allotted to 7 Squadron. When the delivery of these aircraft was imminent, RAAF Headquarters determined that they would be allocated to both 7 and No 14 Squadrons. This was because the Mk IVs had Pratt and Whitney engines that were common with the Darwin based squadrons, and 7 Squadron was expected to provide reinforcements to Darwin and Western Australia should the need arise. Southern Area Headquarters was therefore requested to arrange for 7 Squadron to become operational as soon as possible and personnel began to be posted in. For the second time in 18 months, 7 Squadron began to receive air and ground crew sufficient for a headquarters and three flights. Southern Area Headquarters took immediate action and the squadron was officially re-formed as an independent unit on 7 January 1942 at Laverton, however, it was still over two weeks before the first aircraft, Hudson A16-150, arrived. On 12 January, Squadron Leader Peter Parker was appointed to temporary command, and Flying Officer Arthur Root was posted in as Adjutant as other personnel began to arrive. Although only posted to 7 Squadron a few days before, Flight Lieutenant David Bradley was assigned to assist in flying A16-144 from Laverton to 14 Squadron at Pearce in Western Australia. Tragically when taking off from Ceduna in South Australia on 17 January, the aircraft crashed shortly after becoming airborne and all on board were killed. Bradley is often recorded as being 7 Squadron’s first fatality, and this is quoted in a number of official documents. However, it took some time for the paperwork to be processed—complicated by his death—and Bradley had officially been posted to 14 Squadron on 17 January.

Two days after the crash, Wing Commander Sam Balmer arrived and took command, having the previous month established No 1 Operational Training Unit at Nhill. The reason for this decision was made plain three days later when the Deputy Chief of Air Staff announced that, as a temporary measure, 7
Squadron would not be formed as an operational squadron but would adopt the role of the ‘Operational Training Flight’ of an operational training unit. As such, orders were issued for the squadron to form Hudson general reconnaissance crews from trainee personnel and make complete, operationally trained crews for posting at the end of each training period. These crews would then be available for replacement of crew wastage in operational squadrons, building existing operational squadrons up to full strength and providing a pool of operationally trained crews for new squadrons yet to be formed. As this was only a temporary measure, an assurance was given that when training facilities available for 1 Operational Training Unit could be sufficiently expanded, 7 Squadron would be relieved of its training role, then brought up to strength and deployed as an operational squadron.

The permanent strength of the flying personnel was established as being the Commanding Officer plus four complete crews. Within the next couple of weeks, 16 pilots from 1 Operational Training Unit and 32 Wireless Air Gunners (WAGs) from 1 Bombing and Gunnery School were posted into the squadron. This was complemented fortnightly by an intake of 16 pilots and 16 WAGs who remained with the squadron under training for four weeks. By the end of January there were 15 officers (including one attached) and 197 airmen on strength, although fledgling aircrew could get little air time on the one aircraft with the other three aircraft on strength having been flown to 2 Aircraft Depot. These were A16-141 (Flight Lieutenant Jack MacAlister), A16-142 (Flying Officer Hughes) and A16-149 (Pilot Officer Ron Cornfoot). The reason for flying these aircraft to Richmond was not recorded but may have been for the fitting of Boulton Paul turrets.

Due to the great need for air cover over vessels off the Victorian coast, 7 Squadron was required to carry out seaward searches and patrols as well as performing its operational training duties. Coastal patrols in Australian waters had now taken on a greater significance with the entry of Japan into the war. On 2 February 1942 the first course, consisting of six complete crews and 10 extra WAGs arrived. These courses would continue until June and seem to have been aimed at providing crews with only the basic training necessary for operational postings. The allotment of aircraft for the permanent crews of the squadron and for those on No 1 Hudson Operational Training Course at this date was as follows:
## Training Others

### A' Flight

**Aircraft A16-168**
- Captain: Wing Commander Balmer
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Palmer
- WAG 1: Sergeant Smeed
- WAG 2: Sergeant Hobden
  - Sergeant Brekenridge

**Aircraft A16-114**
- Captain: Flying Officer Blanchard
- 2nd Pilot: Flying Officer Bell
- WAG 1: Sergeant Gitsham
- WAG 2: Sergeant Woods
  - Sergeant Thomson

**Aircraft A16-166**
- Captain: Squadron Leader Parker
- 2nd Pilot: Pilot Officer Walsh
- WAG 1: Pilot Officer Higgins
- WAG 2: Sergeant Horne
  - Sergeant Hurthouse

**Aircraft A16-150**
- Captain: Flight Lieutenant Pannell
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Craddock
- WAG 1: Sergeant Gray
- WAG 2: Sergeant Williams
  - Sergeant Menzies

**Aircraft A16-138**
- Captain: Flight Lieutenant Graham
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Martin
- WAG 1: Sergeant McKenzie
- WAG 2: Sergeant Buzzard
  - Sergeant Harvey

### B' Flight

**Aircraft A16-171**
- Captain: Flight Lieutenant Bernard
- 2nd Pilot: Pilot Officer Michael
- WAG 1: Pilot Officer McKenzie
- WAG 2: Sergeant Williams
  - Sergeant Roll

**Aircraft A16-120**
- Captain: Flight Lieutenant Dalkin
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant James
- WAG 1: Sergeant Fisher
- WAG 2: Sergeant Sutherland
  - Sergeant Godfrey

**Aircraft A16-137**
- Captain: Pilot Officer Alcock
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Craze
- WAG 1: Sergeant Powell
- WAG 2: Sergeant Kemp

### C' Flight

**Aircraft A16-164**
- Captain: Flight Lieutenant Morgan
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Jacobs
- WAG 1: Pilot Officer Hepworth
- WAG 2: Sergeant Farmer
  - Sergeant Lugg

**Aircraft A16-152**
- Captain: Pilot Officer Sharpe
- 2nd Pilot: Sergeant Cameron
- WAG 1: Sergeant Stevenson
- WAG 2: Sergeant Keith
We Never Disappoint

‘C’ Flight (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft A16-109</th>
<th>Aircraft A16-139</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captain  Pilot Officer Venn</td>
<td>Captain  Sergeant Pittman</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Pilot Pilot Officer McKeand</td>
<td>2nd Pilot -</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAG 1    Sergeant Kilpatrick</td>
<td>WAG 1    Sergeant Young</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAG 2    Sergeant Cloonan</td>
<td>WAG 2    Sergeant Dingwall</td>
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As the need arose, Hudsons were removed from the squadron to meet urgent operational demands elsewhere, or for other squadrons to be brought up to a higher operational standard. This was typified by the need, over the next week, for A16-166 (Flight Lieutenant Vern Morgan) to be flown to 2 Aircraft Depot followed by Hudsons A16-137 (Squadron Leader Peter Parker), 138 (Flight Lieutenant Bob Dalkin), 109 (Wing Commander Sam Balmer) and 118 (Flight Lieutenant Vern Morgan again) for the fitting of Boulton Paul turrets; one aircraft flying up each morning with the turret being fitted overnight and tested next day before the aircraft returned to Laverton. These aircraft movements severely restricted both the squadron’s operational commitments and its training program. Before long, Mk III Hudsons A16-164, 166, 168 and 171 with Wright Cyclone engines were received as a temporary measure. Few details of early flights by the squadron are available but operational or training flights were undertaken in the first two weeks of the month. Following one of these flights on 11 February, A16-150 was damaged at dispersal when the ventral turret gun was being unloaded and a round still in the breach was accidentally fired and holed the fuselage. To assist with the gunnery training for the squadron, Wirraway A20-183, which was equipped for drogue towing, proceeded from 1 Armament Training Station, Cressy, to Laverton under temporary assignment to the squadron with A20-283 to follow when serviceable.

On 12 February 1942, 7 Squadron was deployed on its first operational sortie when four Hudsons carried out a diverging search south and west from Cape Otway for a distance of 220 miles, and sighted and identified six merchant vessels. At the beginning of its operational commitment, 7 Squadron advised the Air Board that it now comprised the following permanent crews:

| Captain Wing Commander Balmer     | Captain Flight Lieutenant Cuming  |
| 2nd Pilot Sergeant Palmer         | 2nd Pilot Sergeant Cowan          |
| WAG 1    Sergeant Smeed           | WAG 1    Sergeant McKenzie        |
| WAG 2    Sergeant Hobden          | WAG 2    Sergeant Buzzard         |
| Captain Squad Leader Parker        | Captain Flight Lieutenant Bernard  |
| 2nd Pilot Pilot Officer Walsh      | 2nd Pilot Pilot Officer Michael   |
| WAG 1    Pilot Officer Higgins     | WAG 1    Pilot Officer McKenzie   |
| WAG 2    Sergeant Horne            | WAG 2    Sergeant Williams        |
Training Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Captain</th>
<th>Flight Lieutenant Dalkin</th>
<th>Captain</th>
<th>Flight Lieutenant Morgan</th>
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<tr>
<td>2nd Pilot</td>
<td>Pilot Officer McKeand</td>
<td>2nd Pilot</td>
<td>Sergeant Jacobs</td>
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<td>WAG 1</td>
<td>Sergeant Fisher</td>
<td>WAG 1</td>
<td>Pilot Officer Hepworth</td>
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<td>WAG 2</td>
<td>Sergeant Sutherland</td>
<td>WAG 2</td>
<td>Sergeant Farmer</td>
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Seaward patrols continued the following day with four Hudsons carrying out a diverging search west from Cape Northumberland for a distance of 300 miles, with four merchant vessels sighted and identified. Meanwhile, a further two Hudsons were allotted from the squadron when A16-88 (Pilot Officer John Alcock) and A16-3 (Pilot Officer John Venn) were ferried from Laverton to West Sale for use by 1 Operational Training Unit. On 18 February, Sam Balmer received specific instructions from Southern Area to report on the flying abilities of pilots from No 100 Squadron. This was still an RAF squadron but attached to the RAAF and was reforming at Richmond following its evacuation from Singapore. Before the end of the month it had evolved into No 100 Squadron RAAF. Royal Air Force officers Wing Commander AW Miller, Squadron Leader JG Kirby and Flight Lieutenant FD Mitchell were attached to 100 Squadron RAAF for this purpose as was RNZAF Pilot Officer F.A. Hendry with Beaufort T9551 (later renumbered A9-12) and RAAF Sergeant Bill Wendon with Beaufort T9545 (later renumbered A9-6).

For the remainder of February, Hudsons in flights of three or four carried out diverging searches and anti-submarine patrols throughout Bass Strait and its eastern and western approaches. These flights ranged out to a distance of up to 300 miles from base and were used for both training and operational purposes. At the end of the month, 7 Squadron established an outer anti-submarine patrol for HMS *Warpite*, which was operating from Cambridge in Tasmania, and then continued to provide cover as it headed west towards South Australia. HMS *Warpite* was sailing to join the Eastern Fleet to counter the Japanese threat following the sinking of several capital ships, however, a submarine scare and adverse weather conditions necessitated the battleship seeking safety in St Vincent's Gulf in early March. It dropped anchor in Aldinga Bay south of Adelaide on 7 March 1942 to take on fuel and a British Admiral.

In regards to the training program, No 1 Course completed on 2 March with crews captained by Wing Commander Lyle Holswich, Flight Lieutenant Bronte Pannell, Flying Officer Roger Blanchard, and Pilot Officers Jack Sharp, John Alcock and John Venn being available for posting. Of these six crews, three were posted to No 13 Squadron, two to No 2 Squadron and one to No 6 Squadron. This course was certainly limited in comparison with the following courses in the number of hours that could be flown due to aircraft availability. Nevertheless,
We Never Disappoint

the standard of these crews was considered satisfactory for squadron service. By the time the first course was completed, the second course had commenced. It comprised crews captained by Flight Lieutenant Simon Fraser, Flying Officers Philip Brooks, Nathaniel Straus, Gordon Jaques, Pilot Officers Pat Taylor, Wilfred Rehfisch, Stan Morrison, Jim Lang and Sergeants Alan Hawkesford and Malcolm Smith. By the end of February 1942 the squadron strength had risen, for the first time to resemble a strength near establishment, with 41 officers and 255 airmen.

Flights of up to six Hudsons continued to carry out patrols over waters off the Victorian and Tasmanian coasts and these were interspersed with specific operations. On 6 March one Hudson was ordered to locate and identify a suspect vessel sighted off the coast that was identified as the Iron Knight, however, that same day five aircraft were required to patrol the east and west coasts of Tasmania. In the end none were available so this patrol was carried out by two B-17 Flying Fortresses of the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF). As in the previous month, A16-120 (Peter Parker), 114 (Flight Lieutenant Derek ‘Jell’ Cuming) and 152 (Bob Dalkin) were flown to 2 Aircraft Depot for fitting Boulton Paul turrets; one aircraft flying up each morning and returning to Laverton the next day after an airborne turret test. Being located close to Melbourne probably resulted in Sam Balmer being ordered to fly the Chief of Air Staff and four staff officers from Melbourne to Canberra in A16-171 on 11 March. Together these flights were restricting the training activities of the squadron. On 18 March, Balmer relinquished command of the squadron and ferried Beaufort T9564 (A9-25) from 1 Aircraft Depot to Richmond to take command of 100 Squadron RAAF. Peter Parker again temporarily commanded the squadron until the appointment of a new permanent Commanding Officer. At the beginning of March, No 3 Course commenced consisting of nine complete crews and six surplus WAGs; the crews being captained by Flying Officers Arthur Adams and Peter Pennycuick, Pilot Officers Lex Halliday and Harold Teede and Sergeants Maurie Cooper, Alwyn Samuel, Doug Lovejoy, Bob Airey and Norm Clark.

By the middle of the month, No 2 Course consisting of eight crews passed out with one captain failing the course; he reverted to a 2nd pilot and the crew were absorbed in No 5 Course intake. With the passing out of this course, No 4 Operational Training Course commenced, comprising nine complete crews captained by Wing Commander John Graham, Flying Officer Ian Hay, and Pilot Officers Warren Cowan, Bob Gill, Keith Smith (held over from No 2 Course due to illness), George Oldham, Richard Banks, Graham Allchin and Charles Winnall. At the end of the month, No 5 Course commenced with
10 complete crews but an additional eight surplus WAGs. These crews were captained by Flight Lieutenants Lucius Manning, Bob Trigg and Noel Quinn, Pilot Officers Ron Shore, Ron Dixon, George Charlesworth, Brian Long and John Napier and Flight Sergeants Harold Hursthouse and Malcolm Smith.

Reports on the standard of flying ability for two courses were submitted during March and indicated that each pilot flew between 20 and 30 hours, of which no more than two hours were night flying. On one course the standard of instrument flying was rated as poor and yet for the following course no instrument flying was undertaken at all. Pilot Officer Jack Russell—the 2nd Pilot/Navigator in the crew captained by Keith Smith—states that on the No 4 Course they undertook 7 hours instrument flying, 5½ hours of night circuits and one 3½ hour cross country flight. It would therefore appear that syllabus training varied widely between courses but in general it consisted of day and night flying, navigation, bombing and gunnery and ZZ approaches to landing. WAGs in many cases were stationed for a short time at the Laverton Wireless Station where they were instructed and trained in handling traffic by the WAAAF.

In training crews and making recommendations for future postings, several second pilots were found to be more suited to single-engined aircraft and recommendations were forwarded accordingly. On 26 March aircraft availability was again affected when A16-139 was seriously damaged in a forced landing in conditions of heavy rain and low visibility near Croydon while returning from a training flight to seaward with a No 3 Course crew captained by Arthur Adams. Most of Victoria was covered in low cloud and heavy rain when the four aircraft returned. Pilot Officer Brian ‘Barney’ Hancock, who was second pilot/observer in A16-139, states that Adams was flying around looking for landmarks and waiting to land at Laverton. With fuel almost exhausted, Hancock was told to put his head out of the window to see if he could see anything. He soon saw the tops of gum trees and Adams pulled up under full power but not before the Hudson went through the top of one tree. They observed a hole in the clouds and Adams decided to land in a small paddock. The Hudson skidded through two pine trees and along on its fuselage though thick mud into a fowl yard scattering hundreds of chickens, before stopping just short of the back veranda of the farmhouse.

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1 The ZZ approach was a landing method employed in situations of low visibility. The morse code of ‘ZZ’ would be relayed to the pilot if it was ok to land, or ‘JJ’ if an abort was necessary.

A16-168 was also seriously damaged on landing from this flight. Aircraftman Jack Roberts, a flight rigger, witnessed this accident and described how the Hudson skidded uncontrollably on its belly on landing on the wet grass and collided with two Wirraways. Damage to the Hudson included the starboard engine and mainplane, undercarriage and fuselage, with the starboard airscrew and elevator written off. Fortunately there were no serious injuries in either crash. By this time the strength of the squadron had risen to 55 officers and 311 airmen.

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3 The photo includes instructors and trainees for the operational courses being run at that time. These courses usually comprised about 40 personnel and why there are only 22 personnel in this photo is not known. Some of the trainees are from No 3 Course and some from No 4 Course. Identified in the photo to date are:

**Rear:** Ron Castles (third from left), P Higgins (fifth), Norm Lennon (sixth), Adams (?) (seventh), John Russell (eighth), Keith Smith (second from right) and L McKenzie (far right).

**Front:** W Root [Adjutant] (far left), Jell Cuming (second), Vern Morgan (third), Peter Parker (fourth), Sam Balmer (fifth), Cliff Barnard (sixth) and John Graham (far right).
On 1 April 1942 the squadron suffered another potentially serious aircraft accident when A16-164 crashed on take off from Laverton during night circuits for a dual check of a trainee crew. The official investigation states that the aircraft was airborne at about 1930 hours when a double engine failure caused the instructing pilot, Vern Morgan, to immediately attempt a landing. The undercarriage was raised resulting in damage to the engines, undercarriage and lower fuselage. Jack Russell and Keith Smith were the flare path controllers that night. Russell witnessed this accident, which occurred on the up-wind end and right hand side of the runway, and states that the starboard wing of the aircraft hit the ground resulting in the crash. The starboard engine broke away and a small fire started but was quickly extinguished by the fire crew who were promptly on the scene. Russell recalls that the reason for the accident was circulated to personnel at the time, and it would seem that this was no doubt to impress on them the need to pay careful attention to maintenance and pre-flight checks. This aircraft had some minor servicing on it that day and Russell’s recollection is that it was also converted from single to dual controls. During this the ailerons were inadvertently reversed so when Morgan tried to correct a dropped wing this action only worsened the situation, resulting in the wing hitting the ground. With the instructor was a crew of four and one ground crew passenger but none were injured. On the following day the first squadron
fatality occurred when Leading Aircraftman William Dyer was killed in a vehicle accident on the Princes Highway at Werribee.

In the period of March and April 1942 there was some trouble at Laverton when USAAF personnel arrived, mainly those who had escaped from the Philippines. Ken Brown, who was a WAG under training with 7 Squadron at the time, recalled that the Americans had little regard for rank and the relevant Mess and would enter any Mess where there was food, and particularly alcohol, available. On one occasion after some Americans had too much to drink they broke into the WAAAF’s quarters and it took quite a while for the Military Police to remove them. The incident was further compounded when those same Military Police then had, themselves, to be forcibly removed.

During the first week of April, one Hudson was ordered to South Australia to locate HMAS *Vendetta* and the merchant vessel *Islander* to ascertain if they required assistance. Both vessels had signalled that they were battling heavy seas. If the searching aircraft had sufficient fuel, HMAS *St Giles*, a tug of 380 tons serving as an anti-submarine vessel, was to be located and directed to the distressed vessels. As it was, there was not sufficient fuel and then the aircraft went unserviceable at end of the search. Two days later, a second Hudson proceeded to Ceduna and from there again located both vessels still in distress due west of Port Lincoln, where they were found drifting shoreward. Hudson A16-45, now on standby at Port Lincoln, successfully guided HMAS *Moresby* to *Vendetta* and was then in a position to return to Parafield. From Parafield, A16-45 returned to Port Lincoln on 5 April to search for the vessel *Ping Wo* but no contact was made and the Hudson returned to Laverton. For the remainder of April there was limited coastal surveillance with one outer anti-submarine patrol carried out for a convoy and at the end of the month three Hudsons carried out a parallel track search in Bass Strait for a suspected enemy submarine but without result.

Then on 16 April came the first air tragedy involving the squadron when A16-151 crashed at Christmas Hills near Yarra Glen during a night training cross-country exercise and all on board were killed. The cause of the crash, which occurred at 2300 hours, was not ascertained. The pilot was Richard Banks with the members of the crew being Pilot Officer Ron Nall, Sergeant Norm Thomas, Sergeant Alan Amey and a passenger, Leading Aircraftman Keith Higgie. Jack Roberts described how he was originally designated to fly as a passenger on this flight. As the aircraft was waiting at the end of the runway at Laverton, Higgie knocked on the door and asked Roberts if he would swap with him as he (Higgie) had never been on a night flight before and wanted to experience what it was like.
Training Others

Roberts agreed to let the youngster swap with him only to find out later that the aircraft had crashed.

Beginning on 20 April, the move of the squadron from Laverton to its new base at Bairnsdale in eastern Victoria commenced with the advance party setting off by road. This was followed by the main ground party on 29 April and then by an air party of six Hudsons on 1 May with the rear party arriving four days later. Mid-way during the move on 22 April, Wing Commander Sturt Griffith arrived to take up his appointment as the new Commanding Officer. For much of May, squadron personnel were mainly occupied in establishing the necessary facilities to continue with both seaward patrols and training flights. As described by Jim Prendergast in his book *RAAF Bairnsdale – The Story of a Wartime Airfield*, accommodation on the airfield was still a long way from being completed. This included the administration areas, hangars and living quarters. Consequently, most of the available accommodation in Bairnsdale was taken over by the RAAF.

The Victoria Hotel was allocated for officers and the Main and Terminus Hotels provided billets for sergeants and warrant officers. The Transport Section was based at the Club Hotel with the transport drivers billeted in the lounge and their vehicles parked in the street outside the hotel. Other hotels also had their complement of personnel. One or two of the hotels provided cooking facilities but most of the men had their meals at the aerodrome and came back to their hotel accommodation after the evening meal. There was little time to get accustomed to the new arrangements as the schedule of operational training courses still had to be met.

On 4 May, No 7 Course commenced with 10 complete crews. Originally 18 crews were posted to this course but eight were sent elsewhere on request of the squadron, presumably due to constraints of available instructional staff, aircraft and disruption caused by the move. Even with the move, No 6 Course, which had started at the beginning of April, completed with 10 crews passing out. Crews captained by Lucius Manning, Bob Trigg and John Napier were destined to be posted to No 32 Squadron, one crew captained by Ron Shore to 14 Squadron, crews captained by Harry Hursthouse, Brian Long and Noel Quinn to 1 Aircraft Depot with crews captained by Keith Smith, Les Hill and Ron Dixon posted to 13 Squadron. The Air Board was advised that No 7 Course comprised the nine crews captained by Flying Officer Gilbert Roxburgh, Pilot Officers Keith Daniel, Torlief (Erik) Erikson, Bill de Salis, Colin Portway, Eldin Moore, Ralph James and Arthur Cambridge and Sergeant Sid McDonald, although it appears that at a latter date a 10th crew was added.

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At this stage the following flying personnel were recorded on permanent strength with the squadron:

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It was received by the squadron on 9 February 1942 and on 10 June struck a flock of birds in flight that resulted in a hole in the leading edge of the starboard mainplane and damage to the turret. Once repaired the aircraft was allotted to 1 Operational Training Unit on 27 June 1942. Here it remained until August 1944 when it was assigned to 1 Communications Unit for use by Air Board members, but crashed on the taxiway at Coomalie Creek on 26 August. It was repaired and sold in April 1947 to John Fairfax and Sons Pty Ltd and became VH-SMK.
Training Others

The agreed establishment of the squadron was 56 officers and 368 airmen with 18 Hudsons, comprised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilots</th>
<th>Air Observers</th>
<th>WAG</th>
<th>WAG (cont.)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W Cdr SdeB Griffith</td>
<td>P/O RJ O’Donnell</td>
<td>F/O FH Hailstone</td>
<td>Sgt S Manners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sqn Ldr JA Hepburn</td>
<td>P/O NE Jones</td>
<td>P/O LL McKenzie</td>
<td>Sgt CP Mills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/Lt DR Cuming</td>
<td>P/O WG Gardiner</td>
<td>P/O AJ Higgins</td>
<td>Sgt KA Yuille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>P/O A Anderson</td>
<td>P/O WA Hepworth</td>
<td>Sgt G Bond</td>
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<td>P/O AG Stewart</td>
<td>Sgt T Bonnice</td>
<td>Sgt RR Brevin</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/Lt RA Fletcher</td>
<td>P/O NP Mortimer</td>
<td>Sgt F Moriarty</td>
<td>Sgt RL Horne</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/O PJ Gibbes</td>
<td>P/O JH Davies</td>
<td>Sgt FR Morphett</td>
<td>Sgt DC Farmer</td>
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<td>P/O EV Hickery</td>
<td>Sgt OC Robinson</td>
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<td>Sgt G Whyte</td>
<td>P/O HS Cameron</td>
<td>Sgt RL Black</td>
<td>Sgt RJ Williams</td>
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<td>Sgt G Baird</td>
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The demands on the squadron were mounting and the resources available were diminishing. There were not enough aircraft to enable the squadron to meet all that was required of it and no operational flights were carried out during May. The situation was exacerbated when on 10 May a 250 pound general
purpose bomb was accidentally dropped on A16-150 that holed the mainplane in two places and punctured the port front fuel tank. To rectify the situation, the squadron argued that not enough consideration had been given to personnel requirements and equipment when the operational training role was assigned to it. Requests were made for additional airmen and equipment and for additional experienced instructors. This was further compounded when the squadron was required to maintain a detachment at Mallacoota, about 100 miles east of Bairnsdale. The situation had become so desperate that by the beginning of June the squadron sought urgent assistance from Southern Area to rectify deficiencies in ground personnel, for which there was an establishment of 7 officers and 265 airmen but the then available strength was only one officer and 174 airmen. At the end of May, No 7 Course completed with nine crews posted for ferry duties; one captain failed and this crew was carried over to the next course.

By June 1942, the squadron was once again fully engaged in operational flights off the coast, escorting convoys and mounting anti-submarine patrols. Crews were well aware of the presence of Japanese submarines off the coast as Sydney Harbour had been attacked only five nights before, and reports of several ships being torpedoed south of Sydney had been received. On 4 June the merchant vessel Barwon was attacked by an enemy submarine and one 7 Squadron Hudson carried out a search of the area but failed to locate it. Later that day, Flight Lieutenant Cyril Williams was flying a creeping line-ahead patrol south-west of Gabo Island with the objective of locating surface vessels and submarines and was approaching a vessel to identify it when it blew up before the crew’s eyes, having been struck on the port side over the stokehold by a torpedo. The vessel was the freighter SS Iron Crown, which had stopped, broke in two and disappeared beneath the surface in less than a minute. The Japanese submarine surfaced a short distance away. Williams immediately dived to attack and dropped two 250 pound anti-submarine bombs that were seen to straddle the submarine’s conning tower. The other two bombs carried were only general purpose bombs and to release them at less than 500 feet would risk the aircraft being caught in their blast, so Williams decided to make a second run at a higher altitude. The Japanese submarine dived before the Hudson returned to attack and could not be found. Williams then flew off and located the SS Mulberra and directed that vessel to the Iron Crown’s survivors, who were rescued two and a half hours later. Williams reported possible damage to the submarine.

No 7 Squadron was the first RAAF unit to sight and attack a Japanese submarine off the east coast of Australia and it was also the squadron’s first offensive action in the almost two years since it had been formed.
With such evidence now very real that enemy submarines were operating off the east coast of Australia, 7 Squadron stepped up its anti-submarine patrols with crews ever vigilant. Flight Lieutenant Frank Tampion was conducting a search for enemy surface vessels and submarines out to 100 miles east of Cape Howe on 10 June when his navigator pointed to a patch of foam and spray between a destroyer and the convoy it was escorting. This was considered to be the wake of a periscope and he dived to attack, releasing a bomb that resulted in a dark patch that looked like oil. By this time the destroyer was racing for the area and was soon dropping depth charges on and about the dark patch made by the explosion. The convoy was by this time in disarray when Tampion’s rear gunner spotted another submerged object and he again dived to bomb. This time he waited until he could see the bulk of the object under the water and released two bombs at almost 500 feet; these were seen to be a direct hit, blowing it to the surface. He was about to drop one more bomb when the destroyer started shooting at it with its forward guns so he didn’t take the risk and remained circling the area. The destroyer by this time had pulled alongside when an Aldis lamp signal advised that they had well and truly finished off a whale.
The squadron continued to undertake anti-submarine and convoy protection sorties up until 15 June, usually during the dawn and evening. When the aircraft returned in the evening, they had to be refuelled from 44 gallon drums by hand pumps. On one of these nights Aircraftman Ern Lee, a flight mechanic, was up on the wing of a Hudson, with a torch in his mouth, when he couldn’t smell the petrol being pumped in to the tanks and yelled for the corporal to stop pumping. It was soon discovered that water was being pumped into the tanks. They drained all the tanks completely but an investigation never discovered where the water came from or how the mix-up occurred.

Crews were now advised of a change in orders issued to the Navy whereby naval ships would open fire upon any unidentified aircraft flying directly towards the ship at a range of less than 1500 yards. All squadrons were therefore required to ensure that aircrews were given adequate instruction in the identification of allied and enemy vessels, not to approach head on but to allow the aircraft to be identified side on first and that during briefing aircrew were to be fully informed of vessel movements and locations.
On 9 June three Hudsons, A16-39, A16-98 and A16-222 conducted a search for submarines south-east of Bairnsdale without result. At 1615 hours all three aircraft were recalled to base due to an impending deterioration of weather conditions at Bairnsdale. This was not acknowledged by A16-39 but was by the other two although the former was sighted returning. As it was, the weather conditions had improved to such an extent that only fine rain was falling by the time A16-98 and A16-222 landed. This too eventually cleared. By 1930 hours, A16-39, piloted by Squadron Leader Jim McGilvray had still not landed despite a number of bearings being broadcast. Just after 2000 hours the aircraft crashed at Long Point near Sale and south of Bairnsdale. Visibility at the time of the crash was excellent and why McGilvray, who was a navigation specialist, had not been able to land after overflying the airfield 20 minutes before the crash could not be explained. The subsequent investigation concluded that at some point the starboard engine had failed and later the aircraft had stalled and spun into the ground. This was the first fatal crash from Bairnsdale, destroying the aircraft and killing the entire crew. The other crew members were Sergeants Murdoch Gawith, Frank Walton and Ern Bayley.
By 10 June the squadron was advised that 1 Operational Training Unit would immediately commence moving from West Sale to Bairnsdale, and to complete the move by 17 June. Upon completion personnel and equipment from 7 Squadron, with the exception of a nucleus party, would be absorbed into 1 Operational Training Unit but the squadron was not to be disbanded. The nucleus party would be retained at Bairnsdale and the squadron rearmed when aircraft became available. At that stage, it had also been decided that 7 Squadron would remain based at Bairnsdale after 1 Operational Training Unit had moved to its final base at East Sale. Again during an upheaval directly affecting the squadron, the Commanding Officer was posted away. On 12 June Sturt Griffith departed and Squadron Leader Jim Hepburn assumed temporary command. By 17 June, the personnel, aircraft and equipment had been absorbed and now formed the Hudson Squadron of 1 Operational Training Unit. The ground staff absorbed from the squadron wore a green triangle with a silver ‘7’ on their shoulders to signify their previous unit. By 22 June only a few members of the squadron remained within the nucleus when Squadron Leader Andrew ‘Pete’ Henderson took over command. Although the squadron had been reduced to nucleus status, the last of the 7 Squadron training courses, which had commenced on 1 June, was completed by the end of the first week in July. Of the 22 officers and 26 sergeants on No 8 Course, 32 were posted to the Reserve Pool at Birdum in the Northern Territory and 16 to the Reserve Pool at Charters Towers. Those crews posted to Birdum were captained by Squadron Leader Ralph Moran, Flight Lieutenant Sid Austin, Pilot Officers Ken McDonnell, Keith Mills, Hector McDonald and Bob Muecke, Flight Sergeant Lloyd Evans and Sergeant Doug Campbell. Crews posted to Charters Towers were captained by Squadron Leader Bill Leer, Flying Officer Merv Willman, Pilot Officer Martin Law and Sergeant Bill Stutt. One crew did not complete the course and there was no further operational flying during July and August. At this time, RAAF Headquarters adopted a policy that an operational squadron would not be formed unless it could be fully equipped with aircraft and trained personnel. There was further debate on the priority with forming squadrons and where the trained crews would go. No 7 Squadron, now to be equipped with Beauforts, and No 31 Squadron on Beaufighters were competing for the 20 trained crews then finalising their training at 1 Operational Training Unit. The priority in forming new squadrons was general reconnaissance and therefore these crews were posted to 7 Squadron.
CHAPTER 3
PREPARING FOR OPERATIONS

By the beginning of August 1942 RAAF Headquarters advised Southern Area Command that aircrew currently under training at 1 Operational Training Unit would be posted to No 7 Squadron and the nucleus would be expanded as soon as possible. The intention was to move the squadron to Nowra on 15 August, by which date the squadron would be re-issued with Australian built twin-engined Beauforts in lieu of Hudsons. The role of the squadron was now to be general reconnaissance/torpedo. Postings of ground crew to Nowra were to commence with the move of the nucleus. The squadron was to be brought to a state of operational efficiency at the earliest possible date. It was not until 4 August that the 7 Squadron nucleus received official notification to re-form at Nowra and come under the command of Eastern Area. There was even less time for preparations at Nowra. Eastern Area only provided RAAF Station Nowra with three days notice that 7 Squadron would be arriving. However, on 16 August the nucleus party consisting of the Commanding Officer Pete Henderson, the Adjutant George Piper and 13 airmen departed by road for Nowra arriving there on the following day. However, there was another change in command with Wing Commander John Lerew being appointed effective from 17 August arriving with Flying Officer Graham Erwin, Defence Officer and Pilot Officer Cec Sawyer, Intelligence Officer. During the remainder of the month a further 38 airmen arrived on posting.

For strategic reasons the Chief of Air Staff had directed the Director of Personnel and the Director of Training to ensure that, while Australia sent crews to the United Kingdom and Canada as far as possible in accordance with commitments, it was essential to ensure that Australia’s local requirements were fully provided for. To this end it was agreed that 12 Beaufort aircraft be immediately allotted to the squadron, even if torpedo gear was not ready. When the squadron had its full complement of crews then it could, if necessary, leave Nowra as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron. In fact, this was seen as a possible eventuality to make room for No 14 Squadron, which was planned to rearm as a general reconnaissance/torpedo squadron the following month. To provide training, the Base Torpedo Unit at Nowra was established under the command of Eastern Area to: pass out 18 complete torpedo-trained air crews per month; train 20 Fitters 11E (Torpedo) each six weeks, with an intake every three weeks; and conduct a course for 10 Aircraft-hands General (Torpedo) each
three weeks. Torpedo courses were commenced even though it was realised that training would be incomplete due to lack of torpedo sights, a lack of suitable target ships and insufficient aircraft to maintain the desired serviceability.

The torpedo course commenced under the direction of instructors from the RAF who had been flown out from England. Sergeant Bob Wake found that the idea after take off was to fly in formation as low as possible, preferably in the trough of the waves, with the instructors preferring to see a wake left behind or they were flying too high. To attack, the flight formed line astern spaced out at some 400 yards and then all turned towards the target at the one time so that whatever evasive manoeuvre the ship might make, one of the three aircraft should have a decent target. It required considerable training to close enough to ensure a hit and at the same time far enough for the torpedo to run the several

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1 Left to right: Flying Officer George Piper (Adjutant), Sergeant Eddie Creelman, Squadron Leader Andrew Henderson (Commanding Officer), Ted Leslie, unknown, Jack Lee, Ray Huggins, unknown, George Hunter, Corporal Reg Caskey, George Bright.
Preparing for Operations

hundred yards necessary to arm the weapon. During this time, the aircraft
needed to fly perfectly straight and level at the height of 150 feet so that the
torpedo would enter the water cleanly and run straight. After the torpedo was
released there was no point in turning away from the vessel as this presented an
opportune target so the idea was to get down as low as possible weaving about
and skirt around the bow or the stern of the target if not straight over the top.

On 16 September, crews from No 1 Beaufort Course, consisting of 25 officers
and 40 sergeants, arrived on posting from Bairnsdale for the Base Torpedo
Course. Now assembled at Nowra were 18 crews with eight aircraft and this
formed the air echelon of the squadron. A further 170 airmen were also posted
to the squadron in September. On 18 September the course commenced with
John Lerew and the following 17 complete crews:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot</th>
<th>Observer</th>
<th>WAG</th>
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<tr>
<td>F/Lt L Parsons</td>
<td>P/O Burnett</td>
<td>P/O Grady</td>
<td>Sgt Garbutt</td>
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<td>Sqn Ldr Wiley</td>
<td>P/O McGee</td>
<td>Sgt Robertson</td>
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<td>Sgt Collins</td>
<td>Sgt Forrest</td>
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<td>P/O Couper</td>
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<td>F/Lt Ridgway</td>
<td>Sgt Callender</td>
<td>Sgt Pope</td>
<td>Sgt Wilson</td>
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<td>F/O Jay</td>
<td>P/O Muller</td>
<td>Sgt Wilson-Roberts</td>
<td>P/O Tilden</td>
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<td>Sqn Ldr Smibert</td>
<td>P/O Layton</td>
<td>P/O Leiper</td>
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<td>Sgt Stannett</td>
<td>P/O Broadfoot</td>
<td>Sgt Stokes</td>
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<td>Sgt Megan</td>
<td>Sgt Young</td>
<td>Sgt Lay</td>
<td>Sgt Howlett</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/Lt Hamblin</td>
<td>P/O Morris</td>
<td>P/O Webb</td>
<td>Sgt Lauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sgt P Harrison</td>
<td>Sgt Condey</td>
<td>Sgt Barr</td>
<td>Sgt Newsome</td>
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<td>Sgt A Harrison</td>
<td>Sgt Chapman</td>
<td>Sgt Sheriden</td>
<td>Sgt Cornnall</td>
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<td>Sgt Stewart</td>
<td>Sgt Snook</td>
<td>Sgt Wheeler</td>
<td>Sgt Martin</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/O Paull</td>
<td>P/O Murray</td>
<td>Sgt Dawson</td>
<td>Sgt Morrison</td>
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<td>Sgt Green</td>
<td>P/O May</td>
<td>Sgt Mann</td>
<td>Sgt Nolan</td>
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<td>Sqn Ldr Barton</td>
<td>F/O Coblely</td>
<td>Sgt Kearney</td>
<td>Sgt Harrington</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/Lt J Furze</td>
<td>P/O Kennedy</td>
<td>Sgt Corbett</td>
<td>Sgt Crisp</td>
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We Never Disappoint

With only the eight aircraft available at the commencement of the course, flying was limited but a further eight were received at the end of the month. With a lack of aircraft and several days of gale force winds and heavy rain, training was severely delayed. Some days after the course commenced instructions were issued for 7 Squadron to have completed its training and be operational as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron by 14 October, and then torpedo trained by 11 November. The torpedo course at Nowra demanded low level flying over water where a mistake was often fatal. Sergeant Phil Harrison noted that the Chief Flying Instructor used to follow the trainees in another aircraft and tell them to get down lower—the theory being that you flew as low as possible to avoid detection until preparing to drop the torpedo when height was increased to 150 feet at 150 knots and 1200 yards from the target.

On 25 September Flying Officer Peter Paull and crew of Pilot Officer Alex Murray (Navigator) and Sergeant Harold Morrison (Sergeant Jack Dawson was grounded as he could not shake off troubles with air sickness) were on a training flight in A9-109 undertaking camera torpedo attacks on the leading ship in the port line of a convoy heading north up the New South Wales coast somewhere about Eden. Alex Murray stated that after completing the exercise they practised low flying over the water on the return to Nowra. When about 15 miles south of Jervis Bay Heads, Paull, probably deceived by the swell on the water, flew too low dipping the propellers into one swell and crashing into the next one. Morrison managed to get a message out ‘I for Ink—in the sea’, which was picked up at base. It was reported that the lighthouse keeper at Point Perpendicular witnessed the accident, which was about four miles south of Bowen Island. They scrambled out of the wreck, activated the dinghy, and just managed to get in before A9-109 went down. The official record states that the accident was due to an error in judgement when Paull underestimated the height and the propeller blades touched the water. The blades broke from the hub and Paull was unable to recover with the aircraft breaking up on alighting. Fortunately, they were rescued by the air/sea rescue launch and only minor injuries were sustained. There is reputed to have been a competition amongst crews under training to see who could just ‘kiss’ the sea with the tips of the propeller blades. On this occasion Paull and his crew were lucky. Whether he was attempting this is not known but on later courses aircraft did touch the water and crash with a number of fatalities. Now with only seven aircraft before the arrival of the additional eight, flying was cancelled altogether when there were only two aircraft serviceable, which was again the situation on 28 September. Practice against merchant ships in convoy passing up and down the New South Wales coast was the only
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practice that courses were obtaining and this was limited to two days a week on very slow vessels.

Just when the squadron was for the first time starting to develop full operational efficiency, the aircrews were again posted away to other units. The Director of Personnel advised on 29 September that crews presently with the squadron were required for posting to No 100 Squadron RAAF to complete establishment of that squadron and also for instructors at 1 Operational Training Unit and the Base Torpedo Unit. This followed a request from the Director of Training that it was necessary to build up a small reserve of general reconnaissance/torpedo crews in addition to supplying the shortage existing in instructional staff. So for the third time in two years the squadron lost its aircrew to other units, although some did end up remaining, but would now have to commence again with crews from the next operational training course. Meanwhile, the demands placed on the RAAF were increasing and would seem to justify the above decision. On 1 October General Headquarters, South West Pacific Area issued Operations Instruction No 12, assigning to the RAAF general reconnaissance, bomber and torpedo squadrons, the responsibility for keeping open the sea lanes to New Guinea; for ‘effecting the maximum possible dislocation’ of Japanese shipping, supply lines and sea communications; and for maintaining constant reconnaissance of ‘all hostile sea approaches to New Guinea within range’.

Training continued, and on 3 October a very successful torpedo program was carried out and low formation flying practised, however A9-106 overshot the runway on landing downwind with the aircraft being seriously damaged. Fortunately, the pilot Phil Harrison and crew were uninjured. Harrison was number three in formation and on returning from the exercise the leader ordered Harrison to land first, followed by number two and then the leader. As he came in, Harrison covered the first quarter of the strip with the aircraft floating before he could touch down. This did not disturb him overly as there was still room to brake, however, the brakes failed altogether and at this point he realised that the leader had sent him in downwind. It was impractical to take off again—downwind and half way down the runway with a deep gully at the end—so Harrison followed the only course available; he ground looped with the loss of the undercarriage and propellers and slid tail first through the boundary fence.
A9-106 on 3 October 1942. The aircraft was returning from torpedo training and low formation flying when it overshot the runway on landing downwind. The aircraft was seriously damaged but the crew were uninjured.

Source: 7 Squadron Association.

More involved training was undertaken with flight camera torpedo attacks being programmed against mine sweepers off Sydney Heads, but when the aircraft arrived the minesweepers were not at sea due to adverse weather and further disruptions occurred on 8 October when the dummy torpedo dropping program had to again be cancelled due to sea conditions. Two days later training attacks against HMAS Broome were carried out in conjunction with four B-25 Mitchells from No 18 (Netherlands East Indies) Squadron. Results of the day’s attacks were generally considered unsatisfactory as the pilots did not seem to be able to appreciate all the factors involved in attacks on a moving target. This was quite understandable in view of their lack of practice, and in consequence the program for the following day was changed to allow crews to observe torpedo attacks from the target, half on board the vessel in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. The practice attacks by half the course crews were augmented by one flight of instructors, giving nine aircraft in each attack. Six Wirraways and four B-25 Mitchells cooperated in the afternoon attacks that were particularly successful with a high degree of synchronicity being achieved. A further conclusion from these days of training was that the standard would
improve if full facilities including adequate aircraft numbers and a permanent target ship were available.

Phil Harrison was involved in another incident a week later on 9 October, this time in A9-112, again when returning from an exercise. He was at sea level in a three aircraft formation flying in number three position when the leader ordered Harrison to take the lead. Ahead of the formation was a fishing trawler so Harrison decided to practice turning in formation and ordered echelon left, and then, with his aircraft in the lowest position, flew a right hand turn around the trawler. During this manoeuvre, the starboard propeller blades hit an unusually large wave stopping that engine and greatly reducing airspeed. The aircraft then bounced off the following wave, leaving bomb doors and other parts of the plane behind. Amazingly he remained airborne with the port engine now at full power and returned to Nowra, even though the starboard propeller was non-feathering. After landing safely a dead albatross was removed from the starboard engine nacelle.

The first of the crew movements began almost immediately. On 8 October Flying Officer Tony Jay together with his crew of Pilot Officer John Muller, Sergeant Haldane Wilson-Roberts and Pilot Officer Adna Tilden were posted from 7 Squadron to the Base Torpedo Unit to join the instructional staff. By 13 October another crew were posted to the Base Torpedo Unit and a further nine crews to Townsville. By this time 7 Squadron had 12 Beauforts on strength and the decision was made to transfer these aircraft to the Base Torpedo Unit. Beauforts A9-91, 93, 95, 99, 101, 103, 105, 107, 110, 111, 115 and 117 were officially allotted on 11 October and it was estimated that it would not be until 9 November before the squadron would be at full aircraft strength. Weather continued to interfere and severely disrupt the training program. During the middle of October there was continuous rain and when the rain ceased the airfield was unserviceable for heavy aircraft. All crews spent the morning digging out bogged aircraft, which then had to be air tested so the flying program could recommence. Almost a week was lost and then further days in the following week, again due to heavy rain. As the original aircrews were posted away to other units, preparations were made for the arrival of new crews. The squadron was assured that the next output of crews from 1 Operational Training Unit would be fully trained to the general reconnaissance/bomber standard and, providing the full number of aircraft had been received, RAAF Command expected that the squadron should be able to be operational in this role two weeks after the crews arrived. It was also expected that torpedo equipment would be available for the squadron aircraft to enable the crews to immediately commence torpedo training. In addition, providing that aircraft serviceability
Aircrew of No 2 Beaufort Course, 1 Operational Training Unit at Bairnsdale. These crews were posted as aircrew to 7 Squadron.


Source: 7 Squadron Association.
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and a reserve was maintained, there was no reason why the squadron could not be fully operational by 11 November. These expectations from RAAF Headquarters and RAAF Command were overly optimistic. The new aircrews did not arrive until 14 October and the full complement of new aircraft was not available. Accordingly, new target dates were set that allowed for the slow delivery of aircraft. One flight could be general reconnaissance/bomber ready by 28 October and a suggestion that the squadron training be split between the two roles was dismissed as too difficult in the circumstances. To fit in with the training schedule of the Base Torpedo Unit, the target date for completion of torpedo training remained at 11 November but it must have become obvious that this was increasingly unlikely.

The story of how 7 Squadron came to move north for operations shows how desperate the need for squadrons had become and of the difficulties being experienced between RAAF Command as the operational arm and RAAF Headquarters as the support arm. On 8 October RAAF Command requested that since 7 Squadron would be operational but not torpedo trained by 14 October, it be moved as early as possible to the North Eastern Area by having one flight undertaking operations and the other flight detached to Nowra for torpedo training. It also requested that this proposal be implemented by 30 October. To reinforce the urgency, North Eastern Area advised that 7 Squadron would be located at Ross River with a detached flight at Horn Island. These signals were based on RAAF Command’s miscalculation that 7 Squadron would be available from 14 October. RAAF Command had already arranged with the United States 5th Air Force for the squadron to take over the important Torres Strait patrols from 20 October. The Air Board responded that the original availability of 7 Squadron was 14 October minus torpedo training and preferred that the whole squadron complete its torpedo training before moving north. This was now estimated to be 18 November once all arrangements had been finalised, but if urgent, one flight could be made available without torpedo training by 28 October, subject to aircraft availability. Additionally, it was estimated that the full allotment of aircraft would not be completed until 9 November. To dispatch this flight though would interrupt training for the whole squadron.

On 16 October, RAAF Command reiterated that the squadron, less one flight, be moved to Ross River as early as practicable. One flight would proceed to Ross River by 28 October with the remaining flight to continue training, and on completion, be replaced by the first flight that would return for the remainder of its training. No 7 Squadron was advised of these arrangements the following day and immediately commenced preparations with ‘A’ flight being designated to move north. When this decision came to the attention of the
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Director of Training, he commented on 19 October that the training schedule for crews coming from 1 Operational Training Unit to the Base Torpedo Unit was tight and that it would be disruptive to the training schedule for ‘A’ flight to return from Ross River to Nowra. He suggested that instead of proceeding with this inefficient and unsatisfactory training of the squadron in a torpedo role, it was preferable to have the squadron move north all together as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron, in which role the crews were already fully trained. By adopting the original proposal of splitting training by flights, it would result in a further general reconnaissance/torpedo squadron training up to the same unsatisfactory standard as 100 Squadron when it was moved into the field. This would be unfortunate as failure to achieve even some degree of success in the early stage of squadron operations was recognised as having far-reaching effects on the morale of torpedo squadron crews. It also needed to be accepted that if 7 Squadron moved north as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron, it would not be possible to convert it to a torpedo role at Nowra before October 1943 without deferring the training of one complete intake from 1 Operational Training Unit. If it was decided that a deferral was necessary to continue the training of 7 Squadron in the torpedo role, then the training of ‘B’ flight should be deferred until both flights could train together. The next available course commencement date was 21 December and all crews and their aircraft, already fitted with torpedo gear, would need to be at Nowra by that date.

In the end it was the Chief of Air Staff who decided that one flight would move to Ross River as soon as possible without torpedo training and the remaining flight would complete its torpedo training at Nowra. This decision was implemented immediately with an advance party of Pilot Officer Sawyer and 32 airmen departing Nowra on 21 October to occupy Ross River airstrip and prepare for the arrival of the squadron. This journey took four days and during the intervening period Squadron Leader Keith Parsons and crew of Sergeant Laurie Plumridge (Navigator) and Pilot Officer John Grabau and Sergeant Peter Jamieson as WAGs proceeded in A9-128 direct from Nowra to Ross River with three ground crew passengers. Keith Parsons was to take command of the advance party and be responsible for making all the necessary arrangements for the main party, consisting of six officers and 163 airmen that was to arrive at Townsville on 1 November.

On 24 October RAAF Command concurred that ‘A’ flight should not return to Nowra for torpedo training until 21 December (so as not to clash with the training of the next complete squadron to rearm) and for the first time stated that it was not essential at this stage for 7 Squadron to be trained in the torpedo role. The Air Board then confirmed that ‘A’ flight would move on 1 November
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although not fully torpedo trained; ‘B’ flight would move on 15 November and would be fully torpedo trained. In addition, the Base Torpedo Unit would now not be available to continue the torpedo training for the squadron until 12 January when it was available for the whole of the squadron with the course completing on 9 February. With all these difficulties relating to the completion of 7 Squadron’s torpedo training the Air Board sought a definitive answer from RAAF Command – did it want to accept 7 Squadron as a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron with both flights moving together about 1 November, or, was 7 Squadron to be a general reconnaissance/torpedo squadron and moved by flights as previously indicated with the subsequent probable withdrawal for torpedo training about 12 January 1943?

On 29 October RAAF Command responded that there was an urgent operational requirement for 7 Squadron in the general reconnaissance role in the North Eastern Area. Firstly, RAAF Command forwarded recommendations concerning the reorganisation of torpedo squadrons that would of necessity involve a revision of the torpedo training syllabus. The Command went on to urge strongly that 7 Squadron should be made available at once for general reconnaissance/bomber duties. This request finally decided the matter. While these discussions were underway, torpedo training continued with 22 dummy torpedoes being dropped in one exercise. Flight attacks were carried out against HMAS *Tamworth* with half the course at a time on the target ship witnessing the attacks by the other half.

When returning from one of these attack exercises, the starboard propeller of A9-105 detached. Pilot Officer Gus Swanson managed to return to the aerodrome on one engine but crashed on landing. Members of the crew sustained slight injuries but the aircraft burnt and was a total loss. ‘A’ flight had ceased training to prepare aircraft for departure on 1 November while ‘B’ flight continued training by carrying out attacks against a 2000 ton cargo ship in convoy.

On one training flight on 30 October in A9-127, Bob Wake was ready to take off loaded with a dummy torpedo when he noticed petrol vapour coming from the filler cap in the port wing. There was sometimes an accidental spill during refuelling that caused this to occur, but there was more than usual, so one of the WAGs went onto the wing to check it and reported that the wing was on fire. Wake shut the engines down and waved madly to the fire crew sitting at the junction of the two runways, who politely waved back. Then he sent the WAG running down to tell them, after which they promptly then charged up in their tanker and hosed foam everywhere. It transpired that the aeroplane fitter had seen drips of fuel collecting in the concave shaped cover below the drain cock
in the wing when it was checked each morning after refuelling for the presence of any water in the fuel. The fitter had decided that it would be safer to let this out so he had drilled a hole through the bottom of the cup cover. Unfortunately, when starting the engines they often backfired and a sheet of flame shot out the exhaust port which was quite close to the cup cover, and this was how the fire had started and was burning the self-sealing material around the fuel tank.

Meanwhile, preparations continued within the squadron in anticipation of a move at any moment. To further complicate matters, it appears that a modified plan had been arranged at Nowra and this was submitted to Eastern and North Eastern Areas for approval. It was proposed that ‘A’ flight move to Townsville on 1 November having completed approximately 10 days torpedo training. ‘B’ flight would complete its torpedo training at Nowra on 12 November and leave for Townsville completely equipped for both roles with nine aircraft on 15 November. ‘A’ flight would return to Nowra with their nine aircraft on 12 November, fit cameras immediately and complete the torpedo training by 15 January using their own aircraft, which would need to be fitted with racks and sights. The squadron would then move to Townsville together and continue torpedo training at that location by arrangement with North Eastern Area for the necessary target practice ships. This would require an assessing officer and assessing machine, and would result in the squadron being fully torpedo trained by 25 January 1943.

Finally, on 30 October, the Air Board directed that 7 Squadron Headquarters and both flights would move to Townsville as early as possible in the general reconnaissance/bomber role. Accordingly, the torpedo training of ‘B’ flight was discontinued immediately. Later that day, Eastern Area approved the move of Squadron Headquarters and ‘A’ flight on 1 November with ‘B’ flight to remain at Nowra until all necessary arrangements had been finalised. The Base Torpedo Unit, in its report on this course, commented that the decision to alter the role of 7 Squadron was greatly regretted after its excellent work in achieving efficiency in the torpedo role. However, the training standard was considered lower than desired due mainly to the lack of equipment and instructional staff. With the torpedo role of the squadron officially removed there was a subsequent reduction in establishment from 449 officers and men to 410. At the scheduled departure of ‘A’ flight no flying was possible due to heavy rain with the aerodrome becoming unserviceable. The heavy rain started to decrease on 3 November allowing conditions to improve sufficiently in the afternoon for ‘A’ flight to get two aircraft ready. The aircraft were stripped of as much weight as possible to enable them to taxi out to the runway without going through the tarmac and get to Sydney, where they would be loaded for the flight north. The
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rear echelon under Pilot Officer Bert Young with 87 other ranks left Nowra by rail on Saturday 7 November.

Beaufort A9-93 at Nowra. This aircraft was originally on strength with 7 Squadron from 18 September 1942 but issued to Base Torpedo Unit Nowra on 26 October 1942 prior to 7 Squadron relocating to Ross River.

Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

On 5 November ‘A’ flight aircraft finally departed flying direct from Nowra to Ross River in formation. John Lerew led the formation with Flight Lieutenants Tim O’Connell and Harold Croker leading the sub flights as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Pilot</th>
<th>Crew and Passengers</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A9-108</td>
<td>W Cdr Lerew</td>
<td>Sgt Trebilco, Sgt Todd, Sgt Harris, AC Storey, AC McInnes, Mr Egan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9-123</td>
<td>P/O Willoughby</td>
<td>Sgt Benjamin, Sgt Holtham, Sgt Hudson, AC1 Heffernan, Cpl Tuck, LAC Billingsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9-133</td>
<td>Sgt Hoskins</td>
<td>Sgt Mills, Sgt Pederick, Sgt King, P/O Flatman, AC Winterbon, AC Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9-132</td>
<td>F/Lt O'Connell</td>
<td>F/O Byass, Sgt Haw, LAC Hand, AC1 Sauer, Pilot Officer Hodges</td>
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<td>A9-139</td>
<td>P/O Legge</td>
<td>P/O Andrews, Sgt Lake, Sgt Marshall, Sgt Langlands, AC1 Smith, AC1 Shearer</td>
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<td>A9-119</td>
<td>F/Lt Croker</td>
<td>Sgt Planner, Sgt Higgins, Sgt Forrester, F/Sgt Wilson, AC1 Loughlin, AC1 Quinn</td>
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<td>Sgt K Furze</td>
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<td>A9-127</td>
<td>Sgt Wake</td>
<td>Sgt McCarthy, Sgt Oakley, Sgt Nelson, Cpl Parkes, AC1 Fay, AC1 Nielson</td>
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A9-133 force landed at Water Park Point near Rockhampton and did not arrive at Ross River until 10 November. Instructions were received on 7 November that confirmed the movement of ‘B’ flight to Townsville, which departed that day for Richmond although two aircraft and crews remained at Nowra pending aircraft serviceability. It was hoped that both these would proceed to Richmond the following day. This air party consisted of 12 officers and 51 other ranks. Finally on 10 November seven aircraft configured to general reconnaissance/bomber standard, which had been allotted from 2 Aircraft Depot to the squadron, left Richmond to fly to Townsville via Charleville each with a fully operational crew and three maintenance personnel. The aircraft flew in formation with the leading aircraft ahead of two V formations led by Flying Officers Sid Brasier and Ray Riley.
Chapter 4
Dispersed from Townsville to Port Moresby

The directive to the RAAF in late 1942 included keeping open the sea lanes and maintaining a constant reconnaissance of all sea approaches to New Guinea, and No 7 Squadron filled a significant gap in the air coverage between Australia and New Guinea. The squadron was now officially under the command of North Eastern Area with the responsibility, shared to some extent with two Catalina squadrons, to provide convoy escorts as well as seaward anti-surface and anti-submarine patrols over north-east Australia. These patrols ranged from south of Townsville to east of Port Moresby, around through the Torres Strait and along to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea, and out into the Arafura Sea across as far as the eastern Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, including the Gulf of Carpentaria and Cape York Peninsula. In total, their operations covered an area of some 530 000 square miles. To assist in covering such a large area, the squadron was required to maintain a permanent presence at Ross River, Horn Island and Port Moresby with temporary detachments to various forward operation bases along the Queensland coast according to operational needs.

No 7 Squadron was the first RAAF unit to be based at Ross River, and as such, on their arrival, there were no established facilities. Although the advance party had commenced setting up suitable areas for Headquarters, Messes and accommodation, facilities did not start to take shape until John Lerew and other squadron personnel arrived. The facilities had been carved out of the bush and personnel lived in tents at the base of Mount Stuart, some distance from the airstrip. The facilities for the crews were makeshift and personnel were constantly troubled by large numbers of ants, various species of snakes and sand flies. Leading Aircraftman Ted Leslie recalls a night not long after arriving at Ross River when there was a storm and some personnel found that their tents had been pitched in what was a dry creek bed that suddenly, was dry no longer, and most of their personal gear was washed away. There was just the one strip at Ross River and there was almost always a crosswind blowing. Pilots found it difficult to land in the strong crosswind and had to be very alert to keep the aircraft straight after touch down.

To provide some entertainment, squadron personnel soon rigged up dance floors and often arranged for nurses from Townsville to attend dances.
The sergeants were the first to build a dance floor in their Mess, with timber ‘borrowed’ from a stock pile delivered to the Civil Construction Corps to build a bridge some distance away. When the timber was replaced, a further consignment was taken to build the dance floor in the Officers Mess. For this and other activities in the Messes, the squadron was soon dubbed ‘the Social Seven’.

By 6 November, ‘A’ flight had officially established itself at Ross River with eight complete crews. In keeping with the squadron’s mission, three aircraft captained by Keith Parsons in A9-128, Sergeant Alan MacKay in A9-131 and Pilot Officer Jim Legge in A9-138 were immediately dispatched to Horn Island as a detachment for operational duties. The following day, two aircraft flown by Flying Officer Denis Whishaw in A9-127 and Pilot Officer Peter Willoughby in A9-132 were dispatched to Cairns for similar duties. Horn Island was located in the Torres Strait, 15 miles north west of Cape York and had low, flat terrain on the northern side with low hills in the southern and eastern sides. It was adjacent to the larger Prince of Wales Island and the smaller Thursday Island. The airfield was on the northern side of the Island and comprised two sealed intersecting runways of 5000 and 4250 feet respectively that were connected by sealed taxiways to 51 dispersal bays. The airfield was four miles by gravel road to the jetty opposite Thursday Island. Low cloud was prevalent during the wet season from December to April. Horn Island was an important strategic position, and was of considerable value as an aircraft staging point between Australia and New Guinea, as well as a base for reconnaissance purposes. It was in a commanding position whereby area patrols could be carried out west and north-west from the Island ranging out over the Arafura Sea, northerly and easterly across the Gulf of Papua to the southern coast of Papua, and across the upper reaches of the Coral Sea. These patrols offered backdoor protection or early warning on any Japanese attempt to penetrate along the southern coast of the island of New Guinea from the west or east, and there was always the possibility of Japanese incursions onto the Australian mainland.

At Horn Island, sleeping tents were established under well camouflaged areas some distance from the airstrip. There was an operations room constructed for squadrons based on the Island, Messes were established up a hill behind the airstrip and there was a duty pilot’s tower. There was also an acute lack of water on Horn Island until 1944. Up until that time the limit was one water bottle per person per day and all washing was conducted either in the sea or in the little brackish water that existed. Where available, 44 gallon drums were set up near the tents with some sort of guttering in place to catch the rain when it fell. During 1943 and into 1944, malaria was rife and outbreaks of dengue fever were
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

prevailing. Squadron personnel swam at King’s Point but this virtually ceased when large crocodiles were sighted in the vicinity. The normal scale of unit food on Horn Island during the middle of 1943 was meat and vegetables, bully beef, herrings in tomato sauce, baked beans, dehydrated potatoes, powdered milk and oily rashes of bacon—all tinned—and hard biscuits. Fresh vegetables were only provided about once a month when the stores ship had unloaded, but the supply was only adequate for about one meal per person. This gives some insight into the conditions faced by squadron personnel on detachment there.

The squadron's first Beaufort sortie was flown on 8 November by Jim Legge in A9-138 from Horn Island to carry out a patrol in an area to the west of Horn Island, known as 'Area N'. The ‘N’ patrol, with a duration of 6–6½ hours, ranged north-west from Horn Island into the Arafura Sea and to the vicinity of Cape Valsch (the southernmost point of Dutch New Guinea), then south to Wessel Island (off Arnhem Land) and then east back to Horn Island across the top of Gulf of Carpentaria. It was in the outer reaches of this ‘N’ patrol that contact with Japanese reconnaissance aircraft was always a possibility; the Japanese patrolled that area from their bases in Aru Island or Timoeka (Dutch New Guinea). During ‘N’ patrols, mail was later dropped to the radar unit on the Wessel Islands. The ‘N’ patrol was required to be flown at least once a day and sometimes twice. Later on 8 November Denis Whishaw in Beaufort A9-127 from Cairns provided the second squadron sortie, to cover for a convoy of six merchant vessels and two navy escorts. By 10 November the rear party consisting of two officers and 69 airmen had arrived at Ross River and the following day all nine complete crews of the ‘B’ flight air party had arrived. Two aircraft then proceeded to Cairns for anti-submarine patrols, and another to Horn Island; Alan MacKay in Beaufort A9-131 provided cover for a convoy of four vessels, and following the patrol landed at Port Moresby. On 13 November the first coordinated convoy protection was provided by the squadron to six vessels from dawn to dusk with Peter Paull in A9-134, Flying Officer Jim Rimes in A9-144 flying from Cairns and Alan MacKay in A9-131 from Moresby also assisting together with a Catalina A24-16 from No 11 Squadron based at Cairns. Following this escort all 7 Squadron aircraft landed at Port Moresby, but A9-144 landed heavily and the tail strut was torn off. Besides conducting patrols and escorts, 7 Squadron undertook a number of other tasks. For example, photographic surveys were undertaken of several different locations throughout Queensland, Papua New Guinea and Dutch New Guinea. Vessels that were reported in an area where no vessels should have been were also investigated and identified. The first of many such searches was also ordered on 13 November when Tim O’Connell flew from Ross River in A9-132 to investigate and identify
a ship seen in the vicinity of Port Douglas, but the only vessel located was HMAS Tolga, an auxiliary minesweeper.

By the middle of November North Eastern Area Headquarters had requested 7 Squadron’s CO, John Lerew, to make arrangements for three aircraft to be based at Wards Strip, Port Moresby and Gurney Field, Milne Bay under orders from the Air Operations Room for convoy escort patrols. Maintenance of these aircraft was to be undertaken by No 30 Squadron at Wards and No 100 Squadron at Milne Bay. Although 7 Squadron aircraft were never stationed at Milne Bay, they did stay overnight on occasions. The deployment to Wards, however, commenced a permanent presence at Port Moresby that was to last well into 1944.

In 1943, Wards Strip was the busiest aerodrome in the southern hemisphere. It was just over four miles from Port Moresby town and consisted of two parallel runways, both of 6000 feet. There were numerous taxiways and dispersal areas, low hills to the north west, east and south east and larger hills to 2000 feet in close proximity. The initial allotment of crews was as follows:

- **Wards Strip and Gurney Field**: Keith Parsons in A9-128, Sergeant Furze in A9-123, Denis Whishaw in A9-127 with a spare crew under the captaincy of Bob Wake. Jim Rimes in A9-144 was still at Wards waiting for his aircraft to be repaired and would return to Ross River when the aircraft was serviceable.


- **Ross River or Cairns**: Tim O’Connell in A9-132, Sergeant John Hoskins in A9-133 and one ‘B’ flight aircraft plus a spare crew captained by Peter Willoughby.

The above comprised ‘A’ flight and it was intended to be replaced with ‘B’ flight once that flight had completed its training, expected to be about 7 December.

Between 18 and 22 November in A9-108, Lerew visited squadron personnel and inspected facilities at Horn Island, Port Moresby, Milne Bay and Cairns. Lex MacAuley, in a biography of Lerew, indicates that during the flight from Port Moresby to Milne Bay, in poor weather, Lerew suddenly saw Japanese aircraft coming straight towards him. In this his first encounter with Japanese aircraft, Lerew turned sharply into cloud to avoid any engagement. On returning to Ross
River he then flew to Augustus Downs, at the bottom of the Gulf of Carpentaria, with Group Captain Thomas to conduct an inspection of that desolate base.¹

Photo of Ross River airfield taken from Mount Stuart in 1943 with the airstrip and taxiways clearly visible.²

Source: 7 Squadron Association. Location information supplied by Keith Parsons.

On 24 November, Sid Brasier in A9-118 carried out a search from Thursday Island to Portland Roads to locate a small grey trawler that had been reported overdue. The vessel, identified as the *St John*, was sighted in Waterhole Bay with its lifeboat missing and a barge nearby aground but there was no sign of life. That day also saw the first movement of aircraft back from a squadron detachment for servicing, in this case an 80 hour inspection. The servicing schedule for Beauforts at this time required the following:

² From left to right, the arrows signify the Engineering Officer HQ, Squadron HQ buildings, aircraft dispersal areas and the road to the squadron Mess, about one mile away.
• Routine inspections and each 40, 80 and 120 flying hour service was conducted at the squadron with the main centre for this servicing being Ross River.

• Each 240 and 480 flying hour service was conducted at Amberley and then from about mid-1943 at Macrossan or Breddan, near Charters Towers and later still at Jacky Jacky.

• For each 960 flying hour service, the aircraft had to be flown to Laverton.

Following John Lerew’s inspection of Augustus Downs, Squadron Leader John ‘Oscar’ Barton in A9-142, Peter Paull in A9-134 and Flight Sergeant Peter Hopton in A9-124 proceeded to this base from Ross River to carry out a reconnaissance of the Gulf of Carpentaria, to conduct operations reconnaissance training and to test the readiness of 29 Operational Base Unit at this airfield. This deployment had been suggested by Lerew to provide personnel with a familiarisation of the Gulf area. All three aircraft undertook patrols from Augustus Downs into the Gulf area on 28 November. They landed at Groote Island to refuel and then returned to Augustus Downs by different tracks. Two of these patrols were again conducted on 30 November and then the three aircraft returned to Ross River. Conditions at Augustus Downs were atrocious and aircraft were not based there. Other difficulties were being experienced by crews in their role at this time.

The difficulty in identifying the numerous vessels plying the waters south of New Guinea sometimes resulted in the wrong ships being escorted. Locating a convoy just before dawn, or even during daylight, without navigation aides was not easy. To be in position to escort shipping, aircraft were usually required to take off or land during darkness. Normally night cover for convoys was not required, but there were exceptions. Crews were provided with the convoy’s course, speed and coordinates for a specific time but for various reasons the convoy was not near the estimated location and valuable time was wasted in searching. This was further hampered by the almost perpetual tropical cloud base of 2000 to 3000 feet and squalls that necessitated more accurate information on locations at the time of the briefing.

December 1942 saw a spate of squadron aircraft accidents but fortunately without serious injury. These began on 5 December when Oscar Barton in A9-142 crash landed due to engine failure just after becoming airborne from Port Moresby. The starboard engine failed at 100 feet and Barton throttled back and applied brakes on landing but there was insufficient runway remaining. The aircraft went through a ditch at the end of the runway where the starboard
undercarriage was torn off, the tail strut and starboard mainplane damaged, and starboard airscrew bent and nacelle damaged. There were no injuries and the aircraft was able to be repaired.

Beaufort A9-142 after abandoning take off once airborne at Port Moresby on 5 December 1942.

Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

Five days later, on 10 December, Harold Croker in A9-119 with his crew and four passengers forced landed in the sea after take off when on a flight from Horn Island to Ross River. Croker took off from the east-west strip, and proceeded out over Wednesday Island. The port engine caught fire following a short circuit in the wing fuel tank and smoke began to filter into the cabin of the aircraft. Croker decided to land immediately and ditched the aircraft on a reef that was about two feet underwater only a quarter of a mile on the south side of Wednesday Island. The tail of the aircraft finished up about 100 yards behind the rest of the fuselage, with everyone evacuating safely. Flight Lieutenant John Furze in A9-114 was immediately dispatched to the scene but the crash boat was underway long before the search aircraft had located the aircraft. The next day
12 Repair and Salvage Unit floated the aircraft to King Point at the northern end of Horn Island and beached her.

The third accident also occurred on 10 December when Peter Willoughby in A9-161 forced landed in the sea approximately 15 miles east of Palm Island following engine failure. A submarine had been sighted about 200 miles off the coast of Queensland and North Eastern Area wanted to send a number of squadron aircraft from Ross River to search for it but Keith Parsons would not agree as a cyclone warning had been issued that day. Parsons said he would provide three experienced crews but in the end only two went; these were Tim O’Connell and himself as he did not want the less experienced pilots to fly in those conditions. Parsons carried out a search of the area but didn’t sight anything even though he was airborne for six hours. Parsons was advised to land at Cairns but didn’t have enough fuel so returned to Ross River. As it was, O’Connell had returned to base with engine trouble. Although there was no word from O’Connell, Parsons noted that Headquarters was calling a third aircraft; Parsons had not authorised a third aircraft to participate.

While Parsons was airborne, North Eastern Area Headquarters had ordered Willoughby, who had landed at Cairns the day before, to refuel and conduct a search out from Cairns. Willoughby was not experienced enough to handle the harsh conditions. First one engine failed and while trying to return to base the other engine also failed and the aircraft went straight into the sea. The automatic release for the rubber dinghy did not activate and as the plane was sinking fast, the dinghy was cut out with an axe. In doing so, the rubber was punctured in several places and its inflating equipment was smashed. All crew managed to exit the aircraft safely and the afternoon was spent in the water trying to repair the dinghy. Holes were tied up with string and then the crew took turns in inflating the tube by mouth. There was only one tin of dehydrated rations and one water bottle but there were several showers of rain that night which helped. The crew were sitting in two feet of water as they could not repair a hole they had made in the bottom of the dinghy.

The next morning there were a number of four foot sharks and then bigger ones in the afternoon that scraped the bottom of the dinghy. At dusk they had their first drink of water and were certain they had been seen from the air, although this was later determined to not be the case. By about 2200 hours, the TSS Canberra was sighted coming towards them and they were picked up after being in the dinghy for 32 hours and disembarked at Townsville some days later. Willoughby and Sergeant Lloyd Benjamin suffered shock and abrasions, as did the other two, with Sergeant Bert Holtham also having a probable fractured pelvis and Sergeant Harry Hudson a possible fractured patella. As an adjunct
to this episode, Aircraftman Les Heffernan and Percy Burrows, Willoughby’s ground crew who had flown up to Cairns with them, were told by Willoughby before he took off to wait in Cairns and they would be picked up in a day or so. The two of them then became stuck in Cairns, with no money and nothing to do except keep in touch with the Operations Room, waiting for the aircraft to arrive to collect them. This would have been tolerable for a couple of days but it went on for over a week. Then one day a Beaufort landed, with Tim O’Connell the officer commanding their flight. He was surprised to see them as they had been reported missing in action. When Willoughby’s aircraft had gone into the sea it was thought that the two ground crew had been on the aircraft and gone down with it.

Meanwhile, Parsons landed back at Ross River with the runway covered in 6 inches of water. That Parsons was able to find the airfield at all was due to the fact that he had always worked out a low level, bad weather approach at any new airfield he was flying from (in keeping with his philosophy of always being prepared for any eventuality). Approaching the coast he located Ross River itself and flew up the river. When he crossed the weir he did a 180 degree turn to port which meant he would then be at the end of the runway. Due to the low visibility he did not see the runway until quite late and pulled the power off and landed well down the strip at a much higher speed than normal. Fortunately the water on the strip pulled him up well before the end of the runway. During the intervening period between when Willoughby and crew ditched and when they were rescued, Jim Legge in A9-138 and Parsons in A9-128 conducted a search for them, the former in the Mount Spec area and the latter in the vicinity of coordinates based on information received from intercepts from Garbutt.

Two incidents occurred during December that caused some concern for aircrews and required them to be more circumspect around Allied vessels. The first occurred on 10 December when Peter Paull in A9-134 was conducting the daily ‘N’ patrol. Alex Murray, the navigator, reported that this was their first patrol equipped with radar. A contact appeared on the screen so they turned and tracked it. It turned out to be HMAS Castlemaine, a corvette. According to their briefing there should not have been any Allied ships near their position. They flew over the vessel identifying themselves but got no response. They tried again but the ship opened fire on them. This did not please Paull who flew back over it with the bomb doors open. Eventually, communications were established and the Castlemaine asked if Paull could see any ships to the east of them. Apparently, the Castlemaine was looking for the ships it was suppose to be escorting. The aircraft searched for half an hour or so without result, reported
accordingly to the ship and resumed the patrol. From information received later, it appeared that the missing convoy had passed that way a day or two earlier. On return to Horn Island a chunk of shell was found in the bomb bay. Some time later, Castlemaine berthed at Thursday Island so Paull and his crew took their chunk of shell and presented it to the ship’s captain. There were no apologies and his only response was that the Gunnery Officer would be pleased.

The second similar incident was at the end of that month when John Furze in A9-114, also whilst on an ‘N’ patrol, flew within the vicinity of a vessel berthed at Merauke, which again opened fire but caused no damage. On 15 December, Denis Whishaw in A9-127, while returning from an ‘N’ patrol, attacked a submarine in the north of the Gulf of Carpentaria. Two attacks were made, the first scoring a possible bomb hit as it dived with the crew reporting that an oil slick 80 x 30-feet formed on the water. A possible periscope was later sighted four miles away directly ahead of the aircraft and bombs were released from 700 feet. No further signs were observed with post-war investigations showing that no enemy submarine was lost in Australian waters to air attack.

Early in December John Lerew proceeded to Laverton to discuss his impending posting to command 1 Aircraft Depot and after returning to Ross River on 16 December relinquished command of the squadron to the recently promoted Wing Commander Keith Parsons. Meanwhile, patrols and escort continued throughout the remainder of the month from all bases although the daily ‘N’ patrol from Horn Island had to be cancelled on several occasions as no aircraft were available. At the end of December, North Eastern Area Command headquarters directed 7 Squadron to maintain seven serviceable aircraft at Horn Island and additional aircraft and crews moved from Ross River. Similarly, the squadron was requested to provide additional maintenance personnel to its detached flights to relieve other units of this requirement and to be self-sufficient in maintaining its own aircraft. A further incident that reminded aircrews of possible Japanese incursions through Torres Strait occurred on 30 December when John Furze in A9-122, while escorting a convoy from Horn Island, investigated two zig zag oil tracks on the water approximately ½ mile long and 10 feet wide but was unable to explain the source.

Weather conditions during the month of December were very unfavourable for the patrol work required but only very few flights had to be cancelled due to this reason. It was about this time that the application of nose art to the squadron’s aircraft was enthusiastically taken up by crews. However, the desire for nose art faded rapidly when pilots and their crews didn’t retain for long individual aircraft assigned to them particularly when those aircraft
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

needed to be serviced away from the squadron base areas and different aircraft were allotted.

Beaufort A9-119, 10 December 1942.
Forced landing on a reef near Wednesday Island.
Source: David Vincent.

The year 1943 began at a hectic pace with convoy escorts, special patrols in the area south of Merauke for a possible enemy invading force, the start of escorting single engine aircraft to New Guinea, ‘N’ patrols and the introduction of the ‘P’ patrol. This latter armed reconnaissance area patrol, which was up to a six hour flight, was from Horn Island to Merauke on the south coast of Dutch New Guinea, often landing on the then short metal strip laid out on the kunai grass. The patrol then proceeded inland into Dutch New Guinea to make contact with Australian Army patrols infiltrating towards the Eilanden River and the Digoel River area up to Tanahmera. Reconnaissance was also carried out for any signs of enemy infiltration and movement along the southern coast of Dutch New Guinea and inland rivers. During ‘P’ patrols, aircraft often dropped mail to several Army units. There was general agreement that if the Japanese were to come down towards Australia it was logical that they would come down the south coast of Dutch New Guinea so the ‘N’ and ‘P’ patrols the squadron were conducting were considered to be critical.
Map of Papua New Guinea and surrounds

Besides the introduction of the ‘P’ patrol, other administrative changes were introduced. The squadron’s detachment at Port Moresby, as with all units in New Guinea, came under the command of 9 Operational Group and the widespread use of the two letter squadron codes in operational units began to be applied to
the aircraft. No 7 Squadron was allocated the letters ‘KT’. January also saw the first of the official visits when Air Commodore Cobby, Air Officer Commanding North Eastern Area inspected the squadron. Most days saw convoy escorts down the Queensland coast, south of Port Moresby and in the Arafura Sea in addition of up to two ‘N’ patrols and two ‘P’ patrols. On 2 January Sergeant Bob Harper in A9-116 was on a travel flight from Ross River to Horn Island. Due to inclement weather he flew on instruments for one hour, prior to arriving over Horn Island at 1230 hours, just ahead of a rainsquall. He flew over the airfield and hurriedly noted the wind direction. He proceeded to make his approach downwind by mistake, as the Duty Pilot signalled urgently with a red Aldis Lamp, trying to indicate his error. However, Harper did not see this signal and landed downwind, the strength of which was 12-15 miles per hour and ran off the runway into the scrub, tearing off the undercarriage but with the pilot, crew and passengers unhurt.

Members of 7 Squadron showing mainly members of the squadron’s ground support personnel. This photo was taken at Ross River around the beginning of 1943.³

Source: Alf Humble.

³ (1) Padre Ivor Church, (2) Pilot Officer Bob Commins, (3) Flying Officer Ray Riley, (4) Flying Officer Dave Harrison, (5) Flying Officer Jack Grabau and (6) Wing Commander Keith Parsons.
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

Starting on 21 January Flight Sergeant Len Gairns in A9-108 was on a ‘P’ patrol when he sighted a twin engined aircraft at 3000 feet but no further action was taken. Also on the same patrol a 60 foot motor launch was sighted with one mast and a flush deck and although no recognition signals were acknowledged, again no action was taken. The following day Gairns was on an ‘N’ patrol when two miles south of the lowest point of the Wessel Islands he sighted a column of smoke that appeared on the approach of the aircraft but nothing untoward was noticed. However, on 27 January, again whilst on an ‘N’ patrol, Gairns’ crew observed messages on a beach of North Wessel Island to the effect that a ship was bombed 25 miles to the south west. The crew later sighted 10 men with a message written in the sand ‘PATCAM - bombed - no food - plenty water’; emergency rations were immediately dropped. The survivors were from the vessel HMAS Patricia Cam, a general purpose vessel used for the transportation of personnel and supplies around the north and north-western coastline. Early on the morning of 13 January 1943 Patricia Cam sailed from Darwin carrying stores and passengers for several outlying missions, including the Reverend Leonard Kentish, Chairman of the Methodist Northern Australian Mission District. At 1330 hours on 22 January, when Patricia Cam was near Wessel Island, a plane was seen and heard by several of the ship’s company when it was just on the point of releasing a bomb. The Japanese floatplane had dived from out of the sun and landed a bomb amidships sinking the vessel within a minute. Both ship’s boats were destroyed but the life-raft remained intact. One sailor went down with the vessel and while the survivors were bunched together in the sea the aircraft returned and dropped its second bomb, killing three. The plane then continued to circle, the rear machine gunner regularly firing into the scattering survivors, but without scoring any hits. The plane then alighted on the water taking Reverend Kentish prisoner. The 18 survivors landed on a small rocky islet about two miles west of Cumberland Strait and succeeded in lighting a fire within a few minutes of landing. This was kept going to attract attention. There was ample fresh water but the only food was provided by shellfish and an edible root shown to them by the aboriginal passengers. Food and a first aid kit were dropped to the survivors the following morning and they were rescued by HMAS Kuru on 29 January and returned to Darwin two days later. Many years later it was discovered that Reverend Kentish had been executed by the Japanese.

Meanwhile, another aircraft force-landed in the sea. Peter Paull and crew in A9-134, one of the 50 or so Beauforts fitted with De Havilland constant speed airscrews instead of the Curtiss electric fully feathering type, were conducting an ‘N’ patrol on 24 January. Alex Murray, the navigator, stated that on this occasion, they were flying the route in reverse and were on the last leg back to Horn Island some 140 miles out and at 5000 feet when the starboard engine failed. They tried
everything to get the engine going again but to no avail, and as the airscrew couldn't be feathered, it just kept windmilling around with the consequent huge drag on the aircraft. The bomb load—and everything else that could be—was jettisoned while they struggled on with the port engine at full power and emitting clouds of black smoke. Flying Officer George Esslemont was operating the radio and broadcast that they were returning to Horn Island with the aircraft flying on one engine and losing height. Keith Parsons then informed the RAAF crash rescue boat to put to sea but the boat crew did not consider it worth sailing until they knew the location of the ditching. However, Parsons told them to go anyway and he would forward a message to them providing details of where the aircraft had ditched — all he knew was the aircraft was, at that time about 150 miles north, towards the Dutch New Guinea coast. Paull had both feet on one rudder pedal trying to keep the aircraft straight but they gradually lost height and ran out of fuel. Esslemont continued to relay their position but decided to stand up and see what was happening. The aircraft subsequently ditched about 15 miles north of Booby Island. Esslemont was unaware that the aircraft was just about to hit the water and while the others were strapped in or braced against the bulk heads, Esslemont was in the aisle way and he finished up being propelled forward over the main spar, past Paull and over Murray, head first into the navigator's compartment, sustaining head injuries and concussion. The aircraft floated for 37 minutes on its empty tanks allowing sufficient time for the dinghy to be inflated, Esslemont to be assisted out and some gear to be salvaged. It sank at 1947 hours, by which time it was getting dark. All of the crew suffered some injuries but Esslemont with a concussion was the most serious. Fortunately the location of the ditching was confirmed by direction finding bearings from Laverton in Victoria and Pearce in Western Australia and the coordinates relayed to the crash rescue boat. John Furze and his crew quickly took off in A9-114 to look for them but they hadn't realised the patrol was being flown in reverse, so they headed off on the wrong track. However, Paull's crew had managed to salvage the Very pistol and some cartridges and were able to attract their attention. They were located at 2020 hours and Furze directed the boat, which picked up the injured crew at about 2100 hours. It was probable that if the crash rescue boat had waited for details of the ditching to be confirmed they would not have been able to find the crew. These ditchings seemed to have inspired one of the Operation's Officers to originate an alternative squadron motto 'PRANGUM IN DRINKUM'.

The routine of convoy escorts and area patrols continued and with each sortie lasting some six to seven hours, coupled with the high operational demand, very quickly resulted in aircraft reaching the 240 hourly service. It was not uncommon now for anti-submarine patrols over convoys to be from dawn to dusk requiring
three or four aircraft depending on the distance of the convoy from airfields. February was a particularly bad month for air operations due to violent electrical storms and other adverse conditions, with rain falling practically every day. On a number of occasions during the month, aircraft tasked with escorting convoys either could not find the vessels, had to return and land at the nearest airfield, or could not take off at all. One of the more unfortunate weather incidents occurred on 22 February 1943, when Sergeant Fred Turner in A9-157, with Sergeants Ted Delaney (navigator) and Bruce Melrose and Cyril Hughes (WAGs) were on a convoy escort over the Gulf of Carpentaria but were unable to rendezvous with the vessels near the Wessel Islands due to the appalling weather conditions. Running low on fuel, Turner searched for an emergency landing ground but had to eventually land on the beach about eight miles south of the Mapoon Presbyterian Mission on Cape York Peninsula. The crew walked across country to Mapoon during which time the tide came in and partially submerged the aircraft. This was pulled out of the water and later towed to the Mission, with the aid of five horses and some 150 locals. The aircraft was dismantled over a period of three weeks and the component parts were loaded on to luggers and transported to Horn Island. A couple of weeks later the locals were suitably rewarded for their efforts when gifts were dropped at the Mission from a squadron aircraft.

Beaufort A9-131 ‘Saucy Sue’ (KT-F) at Ross River, 1943.4

Source: 7 Squadron Association.

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4 This aircraft was on strength with the squadron from 26 October 1942 to 22 June 1943 and later served with 1 Operational Training Unit and 9 Communications Unit before being authorised for write-off in May 1946.
On 15 February Flight Lieutenant Ivor Church was posted to the squadron as Chaplain and it was not too long after this that the squadron began also to be called the ‘religious squadron’ with senior officers named Church, Parsons and Peter Paull. With the move of additional fighter squadrons to New Guinea, on 21 and again on 22 February the detachment at Horn Island escorted one fighter squadron of Kittyhawks on each day to Port Moresby. A couple of days later Wing Commander Parsons in A9-144 undertook a square search for a reported raft containing several men. The search was carried out for 1½ hours about 150 miles out into the Coral Sea off Cooktown but all that was sighted was a floating tree stump with roots sticking up, which was reported to look remarkably like four men standing up in a raft. At the beginning of March, Catalina A24-25 was reported overdue and Parsons and Squadron Leader Ralph Wiley, over two days, searched in the vicinity of Cairns to Cooktown and up to 25 miles inland without result. No trace of the missing aircraft or crew was ever found. Then on 6 March, John Furze in A9-196 was taking off from Wards Strip to take over convoy escort duties from Flying Officer John Lemcke in A9-140, when smoke was seen coming from the wing and Furze immediately turned 180 degrees and returned to land. The engines and fuel were turned off and a successful landing was made but the aircraft ran off the end of the runway and into a ditch, badly damaging the undercarriage. Fortunately, there were no injuries. Again for the month of March the weather caused a number of cancelled sorties and for those that could be flown, there were an increasing number of convoys that could not be located as the wrong course or location had been given—in some cases, the convoy being up to 100 miles from the given position. The convoy escorts, a six or seven hour flight over water, patrol after patrol, were monotonous but necessary.

It was now about five months since the squadron had moved to Ross River and the facilities for the personnel were improving. The Army Canteen provided the squadron with beer and through the generosity of Vestey’s Meat Works, which abutted the bottom boundary of the airfield, Vestey’s cool room was made available for the squadron’s use. As can be expected, the squadron therefore had a good supply of beer and the Officers Mess generally consumed one keg on most nights. Sunday church services were held although there were no proper facilities. A short inter-denominational statutory service, from the RAAF Service Parade Book, was held after the Commanding Officer’s Parade every Sunday on the parade-ground, followed by a communion service in the small mess-hall for those interested. However, most people who were inclined to attend church did so in Townsville, because Sunday night leave would be granted and after-church hospitality was provided for those attending services.
By the beginning of April the aircraft position of the squadron was becoming critically low, with its ability to provide the required flights in doubt. At this time there were 13 aircraft on strength, three at 11 Repair and Salvage Unit (240 hourly), four at 12 Repair and Salvage Unit (240 hourly) and with one allotted to the squadron from 1 Aircraft Depot and one allotted to the squadron from the 12 Repair and Salvage Unit pool. There were nowhere near enough aircraft for 7 Squadron to cover all of the tasks assigned to it. To complicate matters further, the requirements of the ‘P’ patrol were now extended to include a search of the Princess Marianne Strait and along the Digoel River to Mappi. On 4 April Boomerang aircraft of No 84 Squadron began to arrive at Horn Island for fighter defence of the area and this was opportune as in the early hours of that morning an unidentified aircraft had headed into the Horn Island area from the northwest with the alert being sounded at 0150 hours and the all clear given at 0300 hours. There was no contact during this incursion.

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5 Front row, left to right: Flying Officer Dave Harrison (Adjutant), Flight Lieutenant Harold Croker (Officer Commanding ‘B’ flight), Wing Commander Keith Parsons (Commanding Officer), Flight Lieutenant Tim O’Connell (Officer Commanding ‘A’ flight) and Padre Ivor Church.
Towards the end of a dawn to dusk cover for a convoy on 10 April, Peter Willoughby in A9-223, the last detail, advised base that a submarine periscope had been sighted. MV *Darval* fired one shot to starboard at the suspected submarine and turned to port. MV *Wilcannia* signalled ‘submarine’ several times and fired one shot in the same direction as the *Darval*. Willoughby in A9-223 thoroughly searched the area but there were no further sightings. It was only 15 minutes after the first sighting that Willoughby was forced to leave the convoy and return to Horn Island. There were no further incidents. Meanwhile at Wards Strip a fitter was running up A9-122 when the aircraft jumped its chocks and accidentally hit a tree causing damage that was fortunately repairable locally. Although the reason was not recorded, the granting of any leave to units within the North Eastern Area was suspended until further notice on 11 April, and all aircrew and maintenance personnel then on leave were recalled. This would appear to have been based on an intelligence alert concerning the Japanese air offensive, the ‘I-Go’ Operation, but the suspension of leave was
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lifted only two days later. About this time there were reports of a float plane flying over Mackay and soon after there was a panic about reports of ships and a possible landing in the Gulf of Carpentaria on the west coast of Cape York Peninsula. A squadron of fighter aircraft had been sent to the area but there was an urgent need for ammunition, belted up and ready for use. The armourers at Horn Island belted and boxed the ammunition. On 12 April Bob Wake in A9-223 loaded himself and his crew into the aircraft, then filled it up with the boxes of ammunition so that there was no hope of the navigator ever getting out of his compartment or the wireless operator out of his seat. The ammunition was delivered to Augustus Downs but the whole matter was a false alarm. It seems probable that these incidents were related to the suspension of leave.

On 12 April, Pilot Officer Alf Humble in A9-129 from Wards was providing escort for a convoy from dawn until it reached anchorage in Port Moresby Harbour. Humble took off well before dawn to reach the location of the convoy and then as the convoy was approaching the harbour entrance, a large Japanese raid on the town and airfields developed. This was about the last of the significant raids on Port Moresby. Allied fighters were airborne and heavily engaging Japanese aircraft. USAAF P-38 Lightnings and P-39 Airacobras were chasing Japanese Zeros low down over the harbour and had shot down one that crashed into the sea near the convoy. Humble was concerned about being mistaken for an enemy aircraft by the US fighters and flew in amongst the convoy for protection. Over the next week, the squadron escorted a number of P-40 Kittyhawks from Horn Island to Port Moresby and Wirraways the other way. Gus Swanson in A9-132 conducted a search on 23 April from Wards for the Empire Flying Boat, VH-ADU Camilla, which had made an emergency open sea landing in bad weather on a flight from Townsville, but no sightings were made. At the end of April, Bob Harper in A9-132 carried out a search from Horn Island to Daru and beyond for a Walrus Seaplane X9510 that was overdue. The aircraft was located apparently undamaged on Cap Island with personnel signalling from nearby. A crash rescue boat was dispatched to assist.

Although there were numerous fatal Beaufort accidents at training establishments and at other squadrons, there were none at 7 Squadron in the seven months that the squadron had been operating the Beaufort. This was the cause of an investigation by the DAP and followed the RAAF Court of Inquiry into aircraft missing to seaward from 1 Operational Training Unit. A DAP representative, Mr Len Egan, was sent to Ross River to discuss the squadron’s success given that it was operating at about 1000 flying hours per month. Keith Parsons believed that the Beaufort production program was saved from a Royal Commission because of 7 Squadron’s good record. The DAP supplied a quantity
of beer to assist in getting the aircrew to talk freely. By about 2200 hours Egan had asked Tim O’Connell what he thought of Beauforts and after expounding their virtues stated that if the Commanding Officer would let him he would take one up there and prove how good they were. Parsons had said to O’Connell jokingly ‘yes, and I’ll come up and formate on you.’ He didn’t think any more of this and carried on drinking and talking as he had thought O’Connell had since gone to bed. Of course everyone had drunk a considerable amount by this time. All of a sudden they heard a Beaufort start up and taxi out. Parsons with a few others drove down to the airstrip but by this time O’Connell was in the air. Parsons thought he should formate on him and Egan said that he’d go too. Parson’s aircraft was always at the first dispersal so he organised the Duty Crew to light the runway flares. Parsons took off and tried to call up O’Connell who was too busy ‘beating up’ the Townsville hospital to answer. Eventually he managed to reach him and persuade him to return as the runway was now fully lit.

Aircrew and senior squadron officers at Ross River.6

Source: Keith Parsons.

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6 Those identified include Wing Commander Keith Parsons (2nd from left), Flight Lieutenant John Furze (5th from left), Flying Officer Ken Miller (4th from right – Intelligence Officer), Flight Lieutenant Tim O’Connell (3rd from right) and Flight Lieutenant Dave Harrison (far right – Adjutant).
Parsons believed that the secret of success for safe and efficient operations was that all section leaders and aircrew were taught to anticipate and plan for the unforeseen happening, and to take responsibility for the activities of their sections. The result was that Egan could attribute no one factor to the squadron’s success but good leadership and *esprit de corps*. This *esprit de corps* within the squadron was noted by Padre Sherlock when he arrived in the squadron later in the year. He commented that Parsons was a keen sportsman, who was very anxious to develop a good spirit within the squadron, and very keen to build up morale. He also felt that by the mixing of aircrew and ground-staff, and commissioned and non-commissioned officers together in the one team was a way that this could be done.

Jim Rimes and his crew in front of Beaufort A9-123 ‘Slippery Sam’ (KT-Q) probably taken at Horn Island in early 1943.\(^7\)

Source: W. A. Pretty Collection at State Library of SA.

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\(^7\) *Left to right:* Jim Rimes, Arthur McDonald, Arnold Horstmann and Wally Pretty. This aircraft was with the squadron from 25 October 1942 to 8 July 1943 then served with 1 and 5 Operational Training Units before placed into storage in January 1946 and struck off charge in February 1953.
About this time, Bob Wake was conducting a test flight at Ross River with a full load of ground staff. Wake had seen Parsons get in his car and go down to the gate leading to the highway to Townsville, so he thought it would be safe for a little thrill for those who came on the flight. On completion of the few tests that needed to be carried out he came over the hills at the back of the camp, pushed the nose well down and screamed around the taxiway before doing a tight circuit and landing. The squadron utility met him when he had parked the aircraft with the grim news that Parsons would like a word. It had eventuated that Parsons had not gone into town at all but was sitting outside his tent in a deck chair and had quite a good view of the performance. Parsons explained that the squadron was getting a few new pilots who did not have the same level of experience as Wake, and while admitting that he was quite impressed with the show suggested that a week as Orderly Officer should help cool his enthusiasm. These new crews were then starting to arrive direct from 1 Operational Training Unit and some were terrified of the Beaufort as they had been convinced by instructors at that unit that a Beaufort could not fly on one engine. To increase confidence in new crews, Parsons would fly over the airfield on one engine to demonstrate that it could be done but he did stress that it could not maintain height for long, probably covering about 100 miles. This was about the extent of the introduction that could be given to squadron life as there was neither the time nor resources available.

In late April a Catalina was on a travel flight when it sighted a submarine in the process of attacking a ship. The Catalina was not armed and therefore was unable to prevent the attack. Following this incident, North Eastern Area advised all squadrons that whenever an aircraft was on a travel flight it was to be armed and to follow a coastal route if possible so as to be able to attack any enemy naval vessels sighted. The month of May saw a succession of official visits to the squadron at Ross River that resulted in some disruption to the normal routine. The first visitor was Air Commodore McCauley, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, followed by Air Commodore Lukis, Air Member for Personnel. Then for three consequetive days the Governor-General Lord Gowrie VC accompanied by Air Commodore Cobby, Air Officer for North Eastern Area, inspected the squadron and its surrounding units.
Another first in improvised tasks for the squadron detachment at Horn Island occurred on 3 May when Flight Lieutenant Phil Ashton in A9-205 was tasked to search for enemy aircraft thought to be in the area. Unfortunately no sightings were made. While undertaking an ‘N’ patrol on 16 May Peter Hopton in A9-296 sighted a possible Japanese Aichi E13A three seat floatplane, code named ‘Jake’, but was unable to engage it. This was to commence a series of encounters and radar contacts with the Japanese that was to occur for the remainder of the year. A further extension of the Horn Island detachment’s operational responsibilities commenced from 20 May when Parsons in A9-255 and Peter Paull in A9-254 provided cover for a convoy sailing across the north of the Gulf of Carpentaria before landing at Millingimbi. Both aircraft were refuelled and then proceeded to provide cover for other convoys before returning to Horn Island two days later. This was continued in June when Sergeant Karl Clively in A9-132 and Warrant Officer Tom Kitchen in A9-138 operated from Groote Eylandt where they provided cover for convoys bound to and from Darwin. During the latter part of May, a number of photographic surveys were undertaken from Horn Island and there were now two ‘P’ patrols and one ‘N’ patrol required to be flown daily. May ended up as one of the busiest
months for the squadron although sorties were settling into a routine with some 200 reconnaissance, escort or patrol sorties flown comprising 1005 operational hours and 189 non-operational hours.

Beaufort A9-124 flying the Governor General on a tour of Breddan, Macrossan, Woodstock and Charters Towers in May 1943.

Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

June 1943 began with the squadron receiving notification to prepare to move to Jacky Jacky (later Higgins Field) at the tip of Cape York Peninsula by mid-July. This move would have consolidated the squadron and made operations and administration much easier but it was to be another nine months before the move would eventuate. By now, the tropical summer had commenced and the improved weather conditions meant that the number of sorties cancelled due to adverse weather decreased to almost zero. Even with the problems caused by the weather the majority of activity in first six months for the squadron was from Horn Island but operations from Port Moresby now began to increase, including more sorties towards Milne Bay. Peter Willoughby in A9-128 provided cover for three vessels towing a disabled torpedo boat to Milne Bay and directing a crash
boat to the site of a B-24 Liberator that had forced landed. Other aircraft covered the towing of a floating dock into Port Moresby and then down to Milne Bay.

A further indication of the difficulties being experienced by aircrews is described by Jim Legge when landing at Cooktown’s Mission Strip on 11 June 1943. Legge and his crew were carrying out an anti-submarine patrol in A9-114 ahead of a convoy travelling up the Queensland coast between Cairns and Cooktown and were to leave the convoy at dusk to make a night landing at Cooktown’s Mission Strip. The weather completely closed in around the convoy and also along the coast by the time they got there. As there was a radio beacon at the civil aerodrome some distance from the Mission Strip, they were able to determine their position accurately but could not find the flare path due to low cloud and rain. With the hilly nature of the country and Mt Cook itself at over 1000 feet high being near the civil aerodrome, they had to keep flying above that height over the area where they knew the Mission Strip to be until the flare path was sighted. This took about two hours of constant searching. They flew along the line for several minutes and then did a couple of circuits to loose height and timed each leg of the circuit to bring them in along the line of the flare path each time. At the completion of the third circuit, in fairly heavy rain, they were low enough to attempt a landing and managed to get down safely. Flying on instruments over such a confined area for this length of time was a great strain on the pilot.

Meanwhile Japanese aircraft were taking a further interest in Horn Island after carrying out some minor bombing raids the previous year. On 1 June a Japanese aircraft was in the vicinity and a yellow alert was issued at 2155 hours but the all clear was given later without any activity further developing. Then on 15 June an alert was issued at 2323 hours when a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft was also in the vicinity but again nothing eventuated. Three nights later, shortly after midnight, the air raid alarm sounded and a Japanese aircraft dropped eight bombs on the Island and in the vicinity causing little damage. Searchlights picked up the enemy aircraft and P-40 Kittyhawk fighters of No 86 Squadron attempted to intercept but were thwarted by low cloud and were unable to locate the aircraft. A further air raid yellow warning was sounded at about 1000 hours on 21 June followed closely by the red warning, however the all clear sounded half an hour later. The final alert during the month was on 29 June when a Dinah reconnaissance aircraft flying at about 12 000 feet flew near Horn Island.
Priority air operations to cover convoys necessitated that several aircraft be assigned to each convoy resulting in both ‘P’ patrols and the ‘N’ patrols being cancelled as no other aircraft were available. The lack of aircraft was frustrating for both Headquarters and the crews themselves and was compounded by incidents such as that which occurred on 25 June when Alf Humble in A9-120, Flying Officer Eric Gogler in A9-141 and Peter Paull in A9-254 provided cover for the vessel *Muliama* departing Mitchell River. This was a dawn to dusk escort and despite the aircraft circling the area to seaward from the mouth of the Mitchell River for six hours the vessel did not depart. During the first few months of 1943 reports were being received by Army authorities of strange lights, suspicious vessels and possible landings by small parties of Japanese along the Queensland coast in the Gulf of Carpentaria. A number of land patrols were ordered without any real confirmation being established. On 15 June Gogler was accompanied by Army Warrant Officer Wearne and flew a reconnaissance and photographic survey along the eastern shoreline of the Gulf to inspect
the area for possible Army operations and likely Japanese landing areas. On 16 June Flying Officer John Milne in A9-123 flew an ‘N’ patrol and thoroughly investigated a contact on the aircraft’s radar but no sightings made.

Two days later Peter Hopton in Beaufort A9-296 was flying the morning ‘N’ patrol with the cloud base of about 1500 feet and scattered clouds and showers, which cut visibility. Accordingly the crew were relying on radar for indications of submarines or aircraft. About 70 miles north-west of Wessel Islands, Flight Sergeant Ron Stoner was on the radar when he reported a contact six miles to port. The other WAG was Flying Officer Burk Salter. Hopton turned towards the contact and for a few minutes the crew were searching the water for a submarine as well as the sky for an aircraft. A Jake was spotted at about the 9 o’clock position through a gap in the clouds as the operator picked up the contact four miles to port. Hopton turned and gave chase, climbing very gradually from 1500 feet to reach the Jake at 4000 feet, keeping below and behind all the time. Since they were unobserved, Hopton decided not to jettison the bombs but still managed to gain very rapidly on the Jake at 170 to 180 knots. He pushed the nose up getting a good view and fired at about 200 yards range. The navigator, Flying Officer Basil Walters and Hopton opened

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8 This aircraft was received by the squadron on 11 April 1943 and remained on strength until 18 August 1944. It was placed into storage in November 1945 and disposed of in August 1949.
We Never Disappoint

fire at almost the same time. There was a five second burst from the wing guns and both magazines from the nose guns. Tracer was hitting the Jake in just the right places and some of the rounds had been seen exploding. The starboard wing root caught fire. Throughout the burst the Jake flew straight and level, then suddenly turned sharply to port and dived. Hopton followed and fired another burst but the Beaufort couldn't catch up. The Jake dived straight into the sea and exploded. The crew of the Jake must have been killed by the gun fire as there was no return fire or movement inside the aircraft. Hopton flew over the spot where the float was sticking out of the water but nothing more could be seen and he immediately returned to base as fuel was low. This was the first kill credited to the squadron.

In the middle of June, 7 Squadron commenced a more aggressive role with respect to seeking out possible enemy incursions into Dutch New Guinea. Armed reconnaissance sorties were undertaken with aircraft operating in pairs. Sid Brasier in A9-241 and John Lemcke in A9-222 undertook a reconnaissance of the Mappi area for enemy shipping movements but there were no sightings and this was followed on 21 June with Lemcke again and Flying Officer Cliff Tuttleby in A9-128 carrying out a reconnaissance of the Dogeil River to Jobdom area for enemy sea craft. Tuttleby in A9-124 then flew Air Vice-Marshal Cole, who was on a tour of operational areas prior to taking up command of North Western Area, from Wards to Horn Island where he met with the squadron’s officers and discussed operational matters with Keith Parsons. Eric Gogler in A9-141 flew Cole from Horn Island to Coomalie Creek and then back to Millingimbi where Cole remained. If 7 Squadron was already stretched to the limit of its operational ability then the order for six experienced crews to be attached to 100 Squadron compounded the problem. No 100 Squadron was providing support for the consolidation of the Trobriand and Woodlark Islands and this operation was accorded the highest priority. The crews were Phil Ashton, Harold Croker, Peter Hopton, Gus Swanson, Bob Harper and Fred Turner with four crews departing on 30 June and one each on 3 and 4 July. The last of the crews returned in early August.

The statistics for 7 Squadron during June were even more exceptional than the previous month. The squadron undertook 257 sorties, including five at night, and flew 1250 operational hours and 272 non-operational hours. Aircraft captains for the month of June comprised the following:
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Flight Lieutenant Ashton  Flight Lieutenant Brasier  Sergeant Clively  Flight Lieutenant Croker  Pilot Officer K Furze  Flying Officer Gogler  Flight Sergeant Harper  Pilot Officer Heysen  Flying Officer Hopton  Pilot Officer Hoskins

Flying Officer Humble  Warrant Officer Kitchen  Flying Officer Legge  Flying Officer Lemcke  Pilot Officer Mackay  Flying Officer Milne  Wing Commander Parsons  Flight Lieutenant Paull  Flying Officer Rimes  Flight Sergeant Scaife

Flying Officer Swanson  Flight Sergeant Turner  Flying Officer Tuttleby  Pilot Officer Wake  Flying Officer Willoughby

Beaufort A9-138, 2 July 1943.\(^9\)
Source: David Vincent.

Then on 22 July Gus Swanson in A9-145 was travelling from Ross River to Macrossan for a 480 hourly inspection when the starboard engine failed just prior to becoming airborne. Swanson cut power and applied brakes but the aircraft ground looped at the end of the runway and the port undercarriage collapsed. There were no injuries to crew. During July the squadron undertook a number of support tasks. The ever increasing requirement to escort single engined aircraft between Horn Island and Port Moresby continued with flights

\(^9\) The aircraft was providing protection to a convoy 20 miles from Merauke when the starboard engine failed. The pilot managed to make Merauke airfield for an emergency landing but the presence of vehicles on the airstrip forced him to land on only the final 500 yards. The aircraft crashed into debris at the end of the strip and the undercarriage collapsed.
of P-40 Kittyhawks, P-39 Airacobras and Spitfires moving to and from New Guinea. On 5 August, Parsons in A9-370 searched for a possible submarine reported in a position about 100 miles east of Townsville and although no submarines were sighted there were a number of whales in the area. After dusk on 7 August Eric Gogler in A9-196 was returning to Ross River from Cooktown and while flying at 2500 feet, a white light, possibly a star shell or flare, was sighted. This exploded at 3000 feet and about 25 miles east of Dunk Island and remained visible for about two seconds. Despite a search, there were no surface or radar sightings to indicate the source of this light.

There was some excitement at Ross River on 16 August when Beaufort A9-383 ground looped on landing causing disruption to operations. The aircraft was being ferried from Laverton to the squadron and soon after touching down it made an uncontrollable swing to the left that developed into a ground loop. The starboard tyre burst and the aircraft went through a post and wire fence, the wire wrapping around the airscrew and engine, causing considerable damage. It was later found that the tail wheel steering lock had sheared. The aircraft was converted to components.

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Beaufort A9-145 at the end of the Ross River Strip on 22 July 1943.¹⁰
Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

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¹⁰ This aircraft was being ferried for servicing to Macrossan but lost power on take off. Flying Officer Gus Swanson cut the engines and applied brakes but the aircraft ground looped at the end of the runway and the port undercarriage collapsed.
Some 7 Squadron Aircrews

Left to right: Harold Croker, Reg Planner, Jeffery Forrester, Jack Higgins
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Left to right: Basil Waters, Peter Hopton, Burk Salter and Ron Stoner
Source: Australian War Memorial (NEA006).

Left to right: Bob Wake, Bruce Nelson, Laurie McCarthy and Doug Oakley
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Left to right: Peter Willoughby, Lloyd Benjamin, Bert Holtham and Bill Hudson
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Left to right: John Milne, John Tennant, Norm Birt, Ron Grinblat
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Left to right: Keith Furze, Frank Douglas, Don Fraser, Jim Martin
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Left to right: Alf Humble, Bonython Jones, John Prance, Frank Murphy
Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

Left to right: Mike Heysen, Colin Harvey, Eric Reid and Jim Payens
Source: Mike Heysen.
On 20 August Pilot Officer Andrew McWilliam in A9-223 was undertaking an ‘N’ patrol when a possible submarine or ship was sighted through a break in the clouds about 120 miles west of Cape Valsch. The vessel had a dark hull and was sighted from 1500 feet travelling north-west and trailing a long wake. A search was conducted from 250 feet but the radar did not provide any indication. The weather was poor with heavy rain and no further sightings were made. Then on 31 August Alf Humble in A9-370 from Ross River was providing cover for a convoy when a possible submarine was sighted about 80 miles north-east of Cooktown heading north. The sighting of a black object against the white foam was made about ¾ mile to starboard but there was no radar contact. The aircraft circled the area but no further sighting was made except for a heavy wash in a moderate sea. During July and August a number of sorties and travel flights from Horn Island were terminated early due to engine problems, which may be indicative of the wear being placed on the engines in the aircraft stationed there.

Meanwhile, personnel of the detachment at Port Moresby, who had moved camp from the valley near Wards Strip to an improved site at the top of the hill, were experiencing further difficulties when there was an outbreak of dysentery. This, however, seemed trivial compared to another hazard experienced about this time. Aircrew from the squadron detachment were being lectured by
an RAN officer on ship identification in a hut on the hilltop when the Army commenced live firing practice down in the valley. A short time later firing practice commenced with Bren light machine guns. Suddenly a burst of Bren gun fire ripped through the sides of the hut. All squadron personnel dived to the floor but the RAN officer remained on his feet and continued with the lecture unperturbed. Another inconvenience at Port Moresby was that no vehicular transport was provided. Fortunately if the Americans had trouble with a vehicle they dumped it. Seeing an old Ford utility dumped outside Port Moresby, detachment personnel recovered and repaired it to a point where it could be used for transport around Port Moresby. The utility was nick-named ‘Cleopatra,’ the name being painted down the side. Squadron personnel used Cleopatra on a number of occasions to drive up as far as possible into the Owen Stanley Ranges and from there walk along the Kokoda Trail for a little way. There were also picture shows at various locations around Port Moresby several nights a week. Bob Wake remembered that squadron personnel would take their waterproofs and go off in the utility. If the moon was nearly full, the pictures were sometimes interrupted by three shots from a rifle if Japanese aircraft were approaching. Some Americans used to immediately up and take off to get to the slit trenches, leaving their much superior wet weather jackets on the ground where they had been sitting. The Australians would pick them over, then go up to a vantage point to see what was happening. These night raids never did very much damage, the only time a slit trench was really needed was when the nose caps and debris from the Allied anti-aircraft fire started to whistle down.

Bob Wake also recalls that he was rostered to take off from Port Moresby early one morning when it was still dark to fly an anti-submarine patrol over a ship enroute to berthing in the harbour. It had been very wet and the taxiway from the parking bay had a considerable amount of water lying around. Wake was taxying the aircraft on a taxiway leading to the airstrip, only occasionally using the landing light as they had been instructed to do, when just ahead he saw that a drain had been dug right across the taxiway – it was not marked with any red lights and he certainly had not been warned about it at the briefing before take off. Brakes did not help much and he slithered forward with the main wheels into the drain. He shut the engines down and the crew inspected the aircraft as well as they could in the dark. Although the airscrew tips had not contacted the ground, it was obvious it was going to take some time to get the aircraft out and checked over for damage. Wake got the crew and gear to another Beaufort, and started off in that one. Because the taxiway was blocked it meant he had a long winding route to follow to get out onto the main airstrip. Along the way he got onto the edge of the taxiway where a strip of steel runway
matting had been placed over a bog hole. The wheel caused the end of the matting to poke up into the turning airscrew, some of which shot through the aircraft like shrapnel between Wake and Warrant Officer Laurie McCarthy, the navigator. Wake did not attempt a third try.

September was to prove a most significant month for the squadron in terms of contact with the Japanese. On 6 September Sergeant Meath Hammond in A9-364 while on an ‘N’ patrol and about 150 miles north of Cape Wessel received a radar contact to port about 18 miles distant. The contact was lost after about 15 seconds and a search of the area provided no further sightings. Then on 9 September Jim Legge in A9-329 was conducting an ‘N’ patrol at 1200 feet when about 54 miles south-west of Cape Valsch the radar indicated a contact 10 miles

11 **Back row left to right:** Cliff Lewis, Alan Haslam, Laurie White and Ron Miles.  
**Front row left to right:** Eddie Thomson and Doug Patton.
to port. He turned towards the contact but then lost it and despite a search no further contact was made. About 10 minutes later there was another contact at eight miles to port. Legge turned to port and about one minute later sighted a Jake at 3500 feet on a northerly course about five miles distant and about 45 degrees to port. He was now about 500 feet below the Jake. He advised base that he was engaging an enemy aircraft and pursued the Jake by losing height to 2700 feet and increasing speed to 200 knots. The crew of the Jake apparently spotted the Beaufort and turned towards a large cloud bank in the distance. When about one mile behind the Jake it disappeared into the cloud bank and was not sighted again, although the area was searched thoroughly.

In a bid to strike back at Australian air ascendancy, the Japanese had decided to make a heavy raid on Merauke on 9 September and managed to penetrate the fighter screen with three bombs dropped on the airstrip, destroying one Boomerang and splinters damaging the wing tip of A9-341. This is the only recorded incident of a 7 Squadron aircraft being damaged on the ground, even if only slightly, from enemy action.

**Beaufort A9-323 KT-N flown by John Lemcke low over the aircraft dispersal area at Horn Island in 1943 with undercarriage stuck halfway down.**

*Source: Alan Storr.*

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12 Originally coming into land, Lemcke was warned by personnel playing cricket near the end of the airstrip that the landing gear was not fully down (even though the panel indicators showed it was). Lemcke was able to later shake the gear down into the locked position using some aggressive manoeuvres and landed safely.
Just under a week later Keith Parsons, while on a ‘P’ patrol, sighted an aircraft about 70 miles west of Cape Valsch and three miles distant and 1000 feet above, his height being 3000 feet. After about two minutes, it was identified as a Jake and the Beaufort was spotted at that time. The Jake immediately made for the cloud cover below, tops of which were about 2500 feet. Parsons altered course to intercept the aircraft and increased speed to 180 knots. The Jake entered the clouds and was followed by the Beaufort and sighted shortly after through a gap with an opening burst given at 150 yards. The Jake took violent evasive action and returned fire with a burst of 15 to 20 rounds which passed very close to port. Parsons followed the Jake through a violent diving turn and fired another burst which forced the Jake into clear sky below the cloud layer. At this stage the navigator’s nose guns jammed. On recovering from the dive, the Beaufort pulled up under the Jake about 100 yards behind. The Jake returned fire and one bullet penetrated the Beaufort’s main starboard petrol tank but did not result in a fire. Parsons again opened fire, straddling the after part of the Jake and seeing the rear gunner slump inwards and the gun go out of control. No more fire was encountered from the Jake. In the breakaway from this attack, the rear turret was able to fire two bursts, during the second burst bullets were seen to enter the Jake. The port beam gun also engaged at this time and hits were scored as a tracer was observed ricocheting from the engine nacelle or propeller. Parsons again followed the Jake through a gap in the cloud with another stern attack being made where he closed to 50 yards but both wing guns refused to fire (it was later found that one had a dud round and the other a mechanical defect). The Beaufort was then manoeuvred into position to give the turret guns best position to engage the Jake and several bursts were fired, more rounds entering the Jake. The Jake was finally lost in thick cloud and although radar contact was made eight miles to port, nothing further eventuated. The engagement lasted for 22 minutes during which the Jake pilot used effective evasive action throughout although the Beaufort was able to stay with the Jake in all manoeuvres. A total of 700 rounds were fired.

The next interception was on 20 September when again Jim Legge in A9-329 was flying an ‘N’ patrol at an altitude of 4500 feet in a position 35 miles west of Cape Valsch when a radar contact was made seven miles to port. Almost immediately an aircraft was sighted at the 10 o’clock position at about 5500 feet. Legge turned towards the aircraft and pursued at 170 knots, gradually gaining height. As the Beaufort approached, the aircraft was identified as a Jake. The approach was designed to keep the Beaufort obscured under the tail of the Jake and this enabled Legge to get to within 100 yards without being observed. The opening bursts of fire from the wing and nose guns took the crew of the Jake
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

completely unawares. Legge overshot in his approach and pulled up over the Jake and then turned sharply to port. The turret and beam guns put good bursts into the Jake, which peeled away to starboard. The Jake made for the water and the Beaufort followed making attacks from the starboard quarter. During the second and subsequent attacks intermittent and inaccurate return fire was observed from the Jake’s rear gunner, who may have been wounded in the initial attack. There were puffs of smoke coming from under the port wing. The Beaufort’s wing guns jammed at this stage but the navigator Flying Officer Les Andrews got in a couple of bursts and in breakaways both turret and beam guns put more bursts into the Jake. Finally the Jake made a forced landing in the sea and the pilot dived overboard. The Beaufort then climbed to 1000 feet and Legge attempted to bomb the Jake with a 250 pound general purpose bomb fused for instantaneous detonation. The bomb undershot and failed to explode. The Beaufort then descended to 100 feet and Andrews straddled the Jake with a burst from the nose guns which caused the Jake to burst into flames. The stoppages in the wing guns were due to the links jamming in the link chute, which was probably caused by them being thrown back up the chute during violent manoeuvres when the guns were still firing. A subsequent conclusion from the engagement was that all crews needed more and regular bombing practice. This was the squadron’s second confirmed victory. The other members of the crew were Flight Sergeants Doug Marshall and Blair Lake.

With all this activity from Horn Island and Merauke, more routine operations were continuing from Port Moresby and along the Queensland coast. On 22 September Meath Hammond in A9-241 conducted a search from Cooktown to Coen and return for a missing Dragon A34-90 but no sightings were made; this aircraft was eventually located on Wenlock Strip. After having travelled down to Ross River from Port Moresby four days before, Eric Gogler was returning to Moresby in A9-389 on 27 September when he sighted a surfaced submarine that gave the incorrect identification code letter for that day. A challenge was issued and again the incorrect code letter signalled. The decision was made to further investigate and with bomb bay doors open and cleared for action he manoeuvred into position and dived on the submarine. Seeing the aircraft diving into attack, the US Navy submarine crew realised they had the wrong code letter and with what must have been frantic activity they were able to correct their mistake and signal the correct code letter.

On 30 September 1943 Andrew McWilliam was detailed to ferry A9-255 from Ross River to Cooktown to carry out a patrol. In making the approach, the aircraft sank suddenly. McWilliam checked but the aircraft bounced and landed the second time on the port wheel. This, in conjunction with a cross wind, caused
a swing to port. The pilot tried to correct the swing and may have been successful, had not the starboard wheel struck a mound of gravel, three feet high on the edge of the runway. This damaged the starboard undercarriage so that next time it touched the ground the undercarriage collapsed and the wing tip hit the ground. The aircraft ground looped to starboard coming to rest at right angles to the strip. On 3 October the squadron had another visit from Air Vice-Marshal Jones, Chief of Air Staff, this time accompanied by Air Commodore Mackinolty, Air Member for Supply and Equipment. They were shown around the Ross River facilities and a few days later were in Port Moresby where they visited the squadron’s detachment. On 12 October Peter Paull in A9-377 conducted a search for a submarine sighted nine miles south of Port Moresby but did not make any sightings. Increased vigilance was required from the next day following this sighting but subsequent searches failed to find any further evidence.

Beaufort A9-381 coded KT-S flown by Jim Rimes in formation off Port Moresby in early October 1943.\textsuperscript{13}

Source: Gogler Family.

By this time, the squadron had greatly improved its living conditions, which the following article in \textit{The Express and Journal} of September 1943 demonstrates:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{13} The aircraft served with the squadron from 19 August 1943 to 3 March 1945. It was placed into storage in October 1945 and stuck off charge in August 1949.
\end{quote}
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

THE EXPRESS AND JOURNAL, SEPTEMBER 18, 1943

"WE NEVER DISAPPOINT"

R.A.A.F. Reconnaissance Squadron's Fine Record Of Achievement

"We never disappoint"... A RAAF bomber reconnaissance squadron tucked away in the bush of a northern station is well justified in using this motto.

These Beaufort boys have a grand total of operational hours without mishap. Last month they reached the million and a quarter miles mark on patrols—works carried out day in, day out, rain or shine, and have only been stopped twice by weather.

The squadron’s first “kill” is recorded in the operations book merely as “attacked and destroyed Jake”—but were those boys thrilled! That enemy float plane just whetted their combat appetites.

“He is just the greatest guy,” is the way every man in the squadron describes his chief, young Tasmanian wing commander, who has had nine years in the service, and who since taking command, has never lost a crew. “The Chief” is well known for his insistence on going up himself when there is bad weather ahead; has an unblemished reputation for keeping his ETA (estimated time of arrival) when returning from operations, no matter what the weather.

“The Winker” does much work, ‘up top’ as his men, and recently celebrated his birthday by reaching the 2,000 hours mark. Usually quiet spoken, he can be relied on to give a rousing pep talk if his unbeaten cricket team is not up to its usual winning standard. He knows all his men personally and takes an individual interest in each.

When the “Chief” and his boys moved to their new station some time ago, it was just bush. Now they have suit a well set out camp that it is to be copied for other bush units. The rough but well used post office, the airmen’s and seaplane’s messes—the canvas hangars, the two oil drums and a fine open-air dance floor—are included in the squadron’s “home comforts.” The “Chief” his men have as much re-

the squadron. They have sent them more than 2,500 cigarettes, provided wireless and gramophone records, and their welfare committees look after the interests of the men’s wives at home.

INTERSTATE ‘TEAM’

Around him the CO—who has two brothers also serving as pilots in the RAAF—and a grand team of interstate men of the RAAF. Among them are Flt-Lt. Peter Paull, who has escaped from two falls into the “big drink;” Flt-Lt. Phil Ashton, former member of the famous Ashton brothers’ polo team in New South Wales; the “Adj.” Flt-Lt. David Harrison, of Lismore, NSW, who stood for Parliament shortly before he joined the RAAF, and although he was defeated “still talks hard,” according to his friends in the squadron mess.

PO Peter Willoughby, of Mornington, Victoria, has survived 33 hours in a dinghy in shark-infested waters. PO Peter Hopton, of Victoria, has the first Jake score to his credit, and is one of four brothers in the RAAF. PO Mike Heyman, is a son of the famous Australian artist. PO Jim Leigh, formerly a teacher at Geelong College, Victoria, can be relied on. “As you know,” he quotes Shakespeare to the crew if they are in a tight spot.

Formerly with No. 3 Squadron in the Middle East, PO Norman Hodges, of Sydney, knows all there is to know on how to keep the squadron’s aircraft serviceable. PO Alan Mackay, of Sydney, just married, just commissioned, has a log-book that records more flying hours with Beauforts than any other pilot in Australia. And PO Alan La Fontaine, former star footballer and captain of Melbourne Football team, now captains the squadron team.

The “Chief”s own crew of “curly-headed boys” comprises PO Jack Grabau, of New South Wales, PO Peter Jamieson, of South Australia, and Flt-Sgt. Laurie Plumridge, of Victoria.

With such splendid comradeship among his men, it is no wonder that the wing commander has a squadron that upholds its motto, “We never disappoint.”

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Just over a week later an enemy submarine, possibly the same one, was reported in an area about 200 miles north-east of Townsville. John Lemcke in A9-370 conducted a search from Ross River but no further sightings resulted. Patrols continued during the month together with many convoy escorts and a number of other sorties. Crews commenced a photo reconnaissance of the Merauke area which continued over the month, weather permitting. On several occasions, by the time the aircraft had gained the height necessary for photographs, the weather had built up obscuring the ground. On 19 October Eric Gogler was tasked to search along the coast and adjacent hinterland between Cairns and Cooktown for a missing Boomerang aircraft. Visibility started at about 10 miles but decreased to zero during the flight and a search of the Mareeba area could not be completed. He did not locate any sign of the aircraft (although it was sighted three days later) but by 25 October he was trying to locate the ground party that was searching for the missing Boomerang pilot, as they had themselves become lost. By the middle of the month an announcement was received from North Eastern Area on Honours and Awards accorded to the squadron – Wing Commander Keith Parsons, Squadron Leader Peter Paull and Flying Officer Peter Hopton each received a Distinguished Flying Cross and Flying Officer Jim Legge and Pilot Officer Alan MacKay received Mentioned in Despatches. The squadron Chaplain, Padre Ivor Church departed on posting on 22 October to be replaced by Flight Lieutenant Charles Sherlock.

On 27 October 1943, 75 Wing was established at Horn Island to control all units in the vicinity including 7 Squadron. This satisfied a long held need for better coordination of activities in the area. No further indications of Japanese activity occurred until 10 November when Meath Hammond while on ‘N’ patrol in A9-222 made a radar contact west of Cape Valsch. He was unable to home in on the contact and with no further indications continued the patrol. Flight Lieutenant Charles Cox in A9-446, newly posted to the squadron, was on an ‘N’ patrol on 11 November at 2000 feet flying south about 65 miles south-west of Cape Valsch when radar indicated a contact at eight miles to starboard. Cox altered course immediately and one minute later the turret gunner sighted a Jake flying south-east at 7000 feet about two miles distant. The Beaufort increased power and climbed allowing the Jake to pass so that the Beaufort was astern and about 3000 feet below the Jake. Maintaining position in this blind spot, Cox climbed to within 200 yards of the Jake when fire was opened with wing and nose guns. This was maintained to a range of about 50 yards. Bullets were observed hitting both the wing roots and fuselage. Brown smoke issued from the engine cowling and wing roots and the Jake nosed down suddenly and turned to port, losing height in a long shallow dive. Cox turned to attack the Jake
again when at about 4500 feet. During the turn, the turret gunner fired a short burst at 600 yards range. The navigator Pilot Officer Frank Coombs fired a two second burst from the nose guns at 250 yards after which an explosion occurred in the port wing and then the Jake rolled and dived steeply into the water. On impact with the water there was another explosion and a flash of flames. No survivors or wreckage were seen. It appeared that the Jake was out of control from the first attack as it took no further evasive action. The other members of the crew were Pilot Officers Fred Park and Jack Musgrove and an American meteorological unit corporal named Litnick was on board as a passenger. This encounter resulted in the squadron’s third confirmed victory and was the last Jake to be shot down by the squadron. The Japanese finally assigned these patrols to the Mitsubishi G4M twin-engined bomber, code named ‘Betty’, a type that the Beauforts could not match in speed and which were much more formidable.

The Chief of Air Staff, Air Vice Marshal Jones shows an Army delegation around the squadron facilities at Ross River on 3 October 1943. The aircraft, A9-397 KT-M, was received by the squadron that day and was on strength until May 1945 before it was struck off charge and converted to components in March 1946.

Source: David Vincent.
A Japanese Aichi EI3A1 'Jake' Seaplane.
Source: Japanese Imperial Navy via Warbird Pictures (public domain).

At the bar in the Sergeants Mess at Ross River 1943.\textsuperscript{14}
Source: 7 Squadron Association.

\textsuperscript{14} Left to right: Lloyd Hull, Ron Miles, Stan Botham, John Tracey, Ray Carlton, Dave Meekin, Hugh Roche, Alan Haslam.
An unfortunate accident occurred on 5 November when Leading Aircraftman Les Greenaway, a driver with the squadron was in Flinders St Townsville collecting personnel returning to Ross River from standdown leave. The tender he was driving would not start and it was thought that a fuel blockage was the cause. The fuel line was disconnected and being dark, a match was lit to assist. Unfortunately, this ignited the fuel and Greenaway was badly burned, dying two days later. George Bowyer was also badly burned but recovered. Some others in the vehicle were burned when the flaming canvas canopy fell in on them. On 17 November Wing Commander Geoff Nicholl and crew were posted in from No 8 Squadron. Nicholl arrived following a disagreement with Air Commodore Hewitt over the torpedo attack on Japanese shipping in Simpson Harbour, Rabaul. Nicholl’s posting to the squadron was intended to replace Keith Parsons as Commanding Officer but common sense prevailed and Nicholl returned to 8 Squadron on 9 December once Hewitt was moved. Meanwhile, the role of the squadron was beginning to become more offensive in nature. Beginning on 24 November Peter Paull in A9-377 was based at Merauke to carry out a reconnaissance over several days of areas north of Merauke to the Owen Stanley Ranges, eastwards to the Fly River, west across to the coast and back towards Merauke through the hinterland of this area. There were no enemy sightings over the three days.

Beaufort A9-397 in the dispersal at Ross River. This aircraft was with the squadron from 3 October 1943 to 26 May 1945 after which it was struck off charge and converted to components in March 1946.

Source: 7 Squadron Association.
The first strike or bombing mission for the squadron, a role that it was to transition to almost exclusively, occurred on 27 November 1943. Keith Parsons in A9-458, Peter Paull in A9-377, John Lemcke in A9-345, Flying Officer Mike Heysen in A9-447 and Meath Hammond in A9-395 and crews participate in bombing and strafing raid on Kaukenau area of Dutch New Guinea, refuelling at Merauke on the outward flight and returning direct to Horn Island. The task assigned to the squadron was to attack installations in the area from a height of 60 to 200 feet. The aircraft flew from Merauke to De Jong's Point and from there turned north and approached the target at 200 feet at 180 miles per hour. There was good visibility of 30 miles and 30 x 250-pound general purpose bombs with 11 second delay fuses were dropped together with 9 x 20-pound fragmentation bombs. A total of 8900 .303 inch rounds were fired in strafing during the bomb run with light machine gun and 20mm anti-aircraft fire from the ground being experienced. Keith Parsons dropped his six bombs on dump areas and personnel between the Timoeka Strip and the dispersal loop and fired 300 rounds in strafing huts and personnel in the same area. He then dropped three fragmentation bombs and fired 500 rounds at the Japanese encampment at Iwarep. Meath Hammond dropped three 250 pound and one 20 pound bombs on a possible dump area at Timoeka Strip. The remaining 250 pound bombs straddled the western end of the strip. One 20 pound bomb was dropped and 2500 rounds were fired strafing the dump and dispersal area and huts on the eastern bank of the Timoeka River. Mike Heysen dropped his 250 pound bombs between Keaukwa Village and the wharf and two 20 pound bombs on huts 10 miles east of Keaukwa and fired 1800 rounds in strafing Keaukwa village itself, a small boat at the wharf and the wharf area. His aircraft was struck by 20mm anti-aircraft fire and sustained a small hole in the port side of the fuselage at the cockpit. Peter Paull then dropped six 250 pound and two 20 pound bombs on Keaukwa village and fired 750 rounds in strafing the village and 800 rounds in staffing huts from Keaukwa to Iwarep. Two huts were destroyed and a medium fire started at Keaukwa. Finally, John Lemcke dropped three 250 pound bombs in the jetty and stores area at Kaukenau and a further three and one 20 pound bomb on Kaukenau village, and fired 2250 rounds in strafing the same area. A large fire was started in the centre of the village with dense black smoke visible for 60 miles. All aircraft returned safely. The conclusions from this strike were that the area was only lightly held and the strip was not in use. On the return from this strike, John Lemcke's flight rigger suggested that he might like to have a look at the rear of his aircraft – it was riddled with bullet holes. The turret guns had continued to fire when swung from port to starboard and shot up the
rudder, tailplane and rear of the fuselage. Furthermore, the nine strand elevator cable had but two strands remaining.

Officer’s Christmas lunch at Ross River, December 1943. Other officers and men of the squadron were similarly celebrating Christmas at Horn Island and Port Moresby.15

On 4 December a combined RAAF Sports Carnival was held at Townsville and 7 Squadron won the points score, which was not surprising given the sporting ability of the personnel and the encouragement for competition. Then on 14 December, Flying Officer Colin Francis in A9-448 conducted a search from Horn Island for an overdue C-47 Dakota A65-3, coded VH-CTC. This aircraft was on a flight from Townsville to Merauke via Horn Island when its

15 Front left seats from left: Padre Charles Sherlock, George Esselmont, Mike Heysen, unknown and Bill Waddell.
Front right seats from left: Ken Miller, Charles MacKnight, Ron Appleton, Alan Storr and unknown.
port engine failed and it was forced down in the sea. The crew and passengers abandoned the aircraft. Francis located them in the vicinity of Turtle Head and Reid Point, seven survivors in a dinghy and seven in the water clinging to its sides. Francis dropped another dinghy which kept the survivors afloat until air/sea rescue launches arrived. To provide further support, Peter Paull in A9-377 was diverted and ordered to remain overhead as long as possible. Taking off from Horn Island again shortly after returning, Paull and Meath Hammond in A9-222 failed to locate the dinghy again due to adverse weather conditions but rescue launches were sighted about 10 miles from the general vicinity. Trying again just over an hour later after landing Hammond had to return to Horn Island because of the weather. Undeterred, he tried again two hours later but again was forced to return. The survivors were eventually rescued by the launches about three miles off Reid Point and returned to Horn Island. Two days later Peter Paull in A9-377 was conducting an ‘N’ patrol when about 180 miles north of Cape Wessel he sighted a Betty at 6000 feet. He attempted contact but the Betty out-climbed the Beaufort and disappeared towards the Aroe Islands.

Christmas lunch in the Sergeants Mess at Ross River 1943.
Source: 7 Squadron Association.
Dispersed From Townsville to Port Moresby

From 20 December Alf Humble in A9-461 travelled to Cairns for duty with the Army Chemical Warfare Section and assisted in chemical warfare experiments over the following week. These tests were conducted in the Innisfail area and included the testing of mustard gas on volunteers. Here Humble dropped canisters of this gas in the jungle so that scientists, including a number from Britain, could measure its spread underneath the canopy. There was virtually no knowledge of how mustard gas would behave in tropical conditions. Humble was not informed that there were Army volunteers acting as guinea pigs in the jungle during these experiments.

Then on 12 January Karl Clively in A9-447 was on an ‘N’ patrol when he sighted an enemy aircraft which he could not engage. The aircraft was thought to be a Betty and was first detected by radar about 180 miles north of Cape Wessel. Although he attempted to intercept, the Betty headed towards the Aroe Islands at 9000 feet and was under observation through binoculars for 13 minutes but the closest Clively managed to approach the Betty was five miles, after which he disengaged and continued the patrol. This as with other engagements reinforces the ascendancy that the squadron had over Japanese aircraft when sightings or contact were made. Whilst on an anti-submarine patrol escorting a convoy on 15 January A9-458 piloted by Flight Lieutenant John Dures crash landed in the sea about 50 miles north east of Cairns. The aircraft was flying at normal height near the convoy when first the starboard and then the port engines cut out in rapid succession, later thought to be an air lock causing fuel starvation. An SOS signal was transmitted and the crew took up their ditching positions. By this time the aircraft was down to 500 feet and losing height quickly so Dures opened the bomb doors and jettisoned the depth charges. A rough sea was running and the aircraft hit the water with the bomb bay doors open. The ditching was made about 2½ miles from HMAS Bowen, which immediately sped to the scene. On impact, the aircraft broke in two at the turret and rapidly filled with water. Dures with a lacerated mouth and Flying Officer Arthur Prentice with a dislocated right shoulder managed to get out of the aircraft with both also suffering shock and abrasions. The aircraft only floated for 30 seconds and the two other crew members, Flying Officer Ken Shepley and Flying Officer Herman Hoppe, navigator, were not able to exit the aircraft before it sank. Dures and Prentice managed to inflate the dinghy and were picked up about 10 minutes later by a whaler from the Bowen. The whaler continued to search the area for a further 15 minutes with no sign of Shepley or Hoppe. The two survivors were later transferred to TSS Canberra for medical treatment and were disembarked at Port Moresby three days later (Prentice remained unfit for flying duties for a couple of months). A ship remained at the location for a further hour in case the
others did manage to survive but nothing was sighted and they were presumed killed. These were the first squadron casualties in a Beaufort aircraft accident and the first air casualties in almost 18 months.

Two Beauforts taxying out at Ross River.
Source: Beaufort Restoration Group.

Flying Officer Geoff Gadsdon in A9-461 was on an ‘N’ patrol on 16 January when a wireless message was received from Horn Island that an unidentified aircraft was reported heading west about 100 miles due south of Merauke but despite a search no contact was made. Three days later Eric Gogler in A9-277 was also on an ‘N’ patrol when an unidentified aircraft was indicated on the radar flying in a northerly direction about 120 miles north of Cape Wessel. He homed in on the aircraft but due to the weather it could not be located and there was no further radar contact. Mike Heysen in A9-345 was conducting an ‘N’ patrol on 23 January when he encountered a Betty about 150 miles south-west of Merauke. He pursued the Betty for 33 minutes but could not close the distance and decided to abandon the chase and return to Horn Island.
Then on 26 January Geoff Gadsdon in A9-461 was also on an ‘N’ patrol when he sighted a Betty about 150 miles north west of Cape Wessel. The Betty was heading north west at about 8000 feet and the Beaufort turned towards the Betty and began climbing from its height of 1600 feet. Although observed for 10 minutes Gadsdon was unable to overtake it and again had to abandon the pursuit. If these two sightings weren’t enough, four days later Mike Heysen in A9-345 was on ‘N’ patrol when his crew sighted a submarine of unknown nationality about 180 miles north of Millingimbi heading east at 5 knots. Although the nationality was not confirmed it was determined to be Allied and
no further action was taken. It was during the last week of January that weather conditions were severe and resulted in a number of patrols, travel flights and convoy escorts being abandoned.

Beaufort A9-277 (KT-F) after it ran off the taxiway and sank into soft earth (on transit to Port Moresby), Horn Island – January 1944.16

Source: Gogler Family.

On 31 January Eric Gogler in A9-277 and Mike Heysen in A9-345 travelled from Horn Island to Merauke to stand-by under orders of 72 Wing for a strike or armed reconnaissance of enemy barges or personnel in the vicinity of the Eilanden River. Both aircraft were refuelled and armed with 6 x 250-pound bombs. The following day they searched from Haninjo Bay to Torpedo Boat Island for barges reported to be in the area. The two Beauforts were escorted by four P-40 Kittyhawks from 86 Squadron and were part of a larger operation which had resulted in several barges being destroyed the previous day. Visibility

16 This aircraft served first with No 32 Squadron, then with 7 Squadron from 11 October 1943 to 6 June 1944. It then served with 100 Squadron at Tadji where it crashed on 7 July 1944 and was converted to components.
was excellent at 20 miles and they spent two hours in the search area, examining all the streams from Flamingo Bay to 10 miles beyond Torpedo Boat Island. They searched 10 to 12 miles inland but all that was sighted was an oil slick and wreckage on the Lorenz River. While no Japanese soldiers were sighted some small arms fire was observed. After not being required for any further operations, both returned from Merauke to Horn Island on 2 February. On arrival at Horn Island the weather was particularly bad with heavy rain and very poor visibility. Gogler landed first but when Heysen touched down the aircraft was covered in spray, which nullified to a large extent the effect of the brakes. This necessitated a swing at the end of the runway to avoid going into a swamp, which caused the aircraft to go over a ditch. The port undercarriage collapsed doing damage to the port main plane, engine, aileron and flap. No crew members were injured.

It is unfortunate that 7 Squadron’s Unit History Sheet and Operations Record Book for the month of February 1944 are missing from the official records and therefore activities for that month are not well represented here. On 21 February orders were received for a strike the next day on installations in the Timoeka area and eight aircraft were prepared. To record the operation a photographer from 84 Squadron was to fly in one aircraft and take pictures. Early next morning the eight aircraft took off from Horn Island in heavy rain en route to Merauke. One aircraft A9-368 experienced engine problems and the pilot Flight Sergeant John Bracken had to ditch 400 yards off-shore about five miles south of Merauke. Without warning the starboard engine on A9-368 failed about 20 miles out due to a sudden drop in fuel pressure. The gauges showed sufficient fuel in all tanks and although the navigator Pilot Officer Tom Daymond worked the wobble pump, this was ineffective. By this stage, the height was down to 500 feet and Bracken decided to jettison the bombs. Even so Bracken was unable to maintain height on the port engine and he was forced to ditch the aircraft at 1030 hours in about six feet of water. All crew members safely made it into the dinghy and were picked up by the RAAF crash rescue boat from Merauke at 1200 hours. Bracken suffered lacerations to the face and scalp and was unfit for flying duties until the middle of March. The other two crew members were Flight Sergeants Andrew Frank and Lionel Parkes. This was the second such loss due to fuel failure in about six weeks.
Beaufort A9-345 at the end of the runway at Horn Island on 2 February, 1944. This aircraft over shot when landing in heavy rain and poor visibility and ground looped to prevent ending up in the sea.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{center}
Source: Mike Heysen.
\end{center}

At Merauke, Keith Parsons, for whom this strike was his last operational flight with the squadron, gave the briefing and instructed crews to make one pass only and not go around again as it was unclear whether there would be any air opposition or how intense the anti-aircraft fire would be. All seven remaining aircraft were each armed with 6 x 250-pound bombs and were to attack at very low level in line astern formation. Fuel tanks were topped up and a course was set in formation over De Jong’s Point to a predetermined position upon which the formation turned due north. They flew below 100 feet after crossing De Jong’s Point and below 50 feet after turning north. Upon reaching the coast approximately three miles south-east of the target area at about 1230 hours the formation went into single file at approximately 180 knots and attacked. Anti-aircraft fire commenced when the aircraft were about a mile offshore. The seven remaining aircraft were A9-329 Keith Parsons (Red Leader), A9-447 Karl Clively (Red 2), A9-277 Eric Gogler

\textsuperscript{17} The aircraft arrived on strength with the squadron on 3 October 1943, was repaired after this incident and continued to serve with the squadron until 25 August 1944. It later served with No 6 Squadron and was disposed of in August 1949.
(Red 3), A9-448 Wing Commander Eric Cooper (Blue Leader), A9-241 Flight Sergeant Tom Campbell (Blue 2), A9-461 Charles Cox (Blue 3) and A9-465 Andrew McWilliam (Blue 4). Keith Parsons led the attack and turned over the possible radar site in a strafing run. He then turned port and flew over a petrol dump on the Keaukwa River dropping a stick of 6 x 250-pound general purpose bombs with 11 second delayed action fuses spaced 120 feet across the area. One bomb hung up and exploded on western bank of the river. The breakaway was made in a circuit to strafe a barge in a creek off the second tributary. On the run out a group of huts at Aroeke were strafed and two barges were observed about half a mile north of the position. In doing so Parsons left his bomb bay doors open so that the turret gunner had the opportunity to continue to strafe (the hydraulics for the bomb bay doors and the turret were on the same system so that the turret would not operate while the bomb bay doors were being opened or closed). Parsons was in a shallow dive to improve his strafing run and pulled up to avoid some palm trees. He forgot that the bomb bay doors were still open and this affected the airflow resulting in a slow response from the controls. The aircraft went through the tops of the palm trees, scattering bits of fronds everywhere. Laurie Plumridge was in the nose of the aircraft on the nose guns during this and didn’t think he would see his 21st birthday in a couple of days.

RAAF official photograph taken from Beaufort A9-277, one mile offshore as the low level flight approaches Timoeka, Dutch New Guinea to strike Japanese installations on 22 February 1944.

Source: Gogler Family.
Eric Gogler was next and following closely behind turned outside the east end of strip and followed Parsons making a run on the port side of the aiming point. He saw Parsons’ bombs straddle the petrol dump area and released his own bombs on a line of about 12 huts behind the beach defences. However, four of his bombs failed to release but the others (including 1 x 20-pound fragmentation bomb) exploded leaving huts burning fiercely. His aircraft fired approximately 600 x .303 inch rounds in general strafing of the target area. From the back hatch, the 84 Squadron photographer, Leading Aircraftman Thompson, took 10 handheld oblique photos on the run over the target and later obliques of waterways for about 15 minutes after leaving the target area. There was considerable return fire and his aircraft was damaged when an explosive bullet holed the starboard side fuselage near the tail wheel with four small holes in the tail plane.

A relieved crew next to A9-277 at Merauke, Dutch New Guinea, following return from a strike on Timoeka on 22 January 1944 during which the aircraft was slightly damaged by anti-aircraft fire.18

Source: Gogler Family.

18 Crew are Leading Aircraftman Thompson (RAAF photographer), Flying Officer Eric Gogler, Flight Sergeant Bill McAllister, Flight Sergeant Eric Thacker and Flying Officer Ron Pacey.
Andrew McWilliam overshot the primary target, made a sharp turn to starboard and then released 6 x 250-pound bombs spaced 120 feet apart with 2 x 20-pound fragmentation bombs released after crossing the beach in primary target area. Tom Campbell turned over the primary target area dropping 6 x 250-pound bombs spaced at 80 feet, though the last two may have overshot. Black smoke was seen by the tail gunner though results were generally unobserved. On the run out, six huts on the eastern bank of the Timoeka River upstream from the end of the airfield were strafed. Eric Cooper, who was preparing to take over command of the squadron, turned over the radio station area and released 6 x 250-pound bombs spaced 120 feet apart plus 1 x 20-pound fragmentation bomb and strafed the area on the way through. All bombs fell in target area but the results were unobserved. Charles Cox was last through and attacked bomb dumps in the jetty area with 6 x 250-pound bombs spaced 120 feet apart. Additionally, 1 x 20-pound fragmentation bomb was dropped, all in the jetty area, and it was estimated that bomb hits were within 600 feet of the centre of the target. The beach area and observation post in trees were strafed and two columns of smoke were seen rising from points in the target area. Karl Clively turned in over the bomb dump area at the western end of the airfield where 2 x 20-pound instantaneous fragmentation bombs were dropped. His intended targets were to have been ammunition dumps at the western end of the airfield and an Army headquarters area but having failed to locate either aiming point he made a run north of the target area, turned to port and came around again to make a bombing run over the bomb dump area. The starboard beam gunner put a burst of about 100 x .303 inch rounds into the anti-aircraft position on the beach at the eastern end of airfield and all guns strafed the general area. Because Clively had disregarded the orders at briefing and having missed the aiming point turned around for another run, he was the last aircraft in the target area and was heavily hit by medium and light anti-aircraft fire. Both main planes and the starboard oil cooler were holed and aileron control was affected. After his run, Keith Parsons quickly circled around out to sea to follow the last aircraft and thereby keep the formation tight. All aircraft then rendezvoused at the mouth of the Aika River when Clively reported that he had been hit by anti-aircraft fire and of his intention to proceed down the coast to Merauke. Parsons then flew around Clively’s aircraft to assess the damage and observed oil streaming out of his starboard engine and holes in both mainplanes. Parsons then told Eric Cooper to lead the remainder of the flight back to base while he stayed with Clively and attempted to shepherd him back.
As a result of the anti-aircraft fire, Clively had been wounded by a piece of shrapnel in the right forearm and the WAG, Flight Sergeant Ron Smith, received skin abrasions on his back. Parsons instructed Clively to get as much height as he could while still having oil pressure and to throw as much as possible out of the aircraft to save weight. Clively managed to climb to about 5000 feet before there was a total loss of oil pressure some 20 minutes from target area. He then feathered the starboard engine while he still had control of the aircraft but had to apply full power to the port engine. When the starboard engine was cut, the vibration of the aileron control became continuous and the oil temperature in the port engine began to rise. Approaching the mouth of Digoel River the port motor began losing power and started smoking. After assessing the situation Parsons advised Clively that he had better ditch while he still had some control. Parsons then flew ahead to survey the coast to find a possible landing area but the only cleared area sighted was a swamp so he advised Clively to ditch on the beach to give the crew their best chance of survival. Clively did this successfully.

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19 This aircraft was with the squadron from 16 July 1943 to 8 February 1945. It later served with No 15 Squadron before going to storage in October 1945 and struck off charge in August 1949.
in a few feet of water and after observing them inflate the dinghy Parsons flew back to Horn Island. After landing he then provided air/sea rescue with information on where they had ditched as he was unwilling to broadcast this over the radio. The other crew members were Flight Sergeant Ken Templer, navigator, Flight Sergeant Edgar Pierce WAG and squadron Signals Officer, Flight Lieutenant Jack Furze, who was on the strike as a passenger.

Supplementing the monotonous food rations through fishing was a favourite pastime.  
Source: Mike Heysen.

Meanwhile, some aircraft had returned directly to Horn Island and others diverted to Merauke to refuel. The subsequent Intelligence Report suggested that the strike was satisfactorily completed as practically all bombs fell in the target area. There were no sightings of barges moving on the waterways or movement

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20 Taken on Horn Island in about January or February 1944 were, left to right: Alan Haslam, unknown, Bill Barton and Colin Harvey.
of motor transport or personnel. Intelligence therefore suggested that the certainty of preparedness of gun crews reflected ample warning of attack despite an approach designed to defeat possible radar interception. Owing to heavy tropical growth over the whole area and the high trees fringing the beach, the results of the bombing and strafing and confirmation of the information on the target were difficult to assess.

Ken Templer provided an account of events after the ditching, which are summarised as follows. Just before 1600 hours A9-447 ditched about 100-yards from the edge of the mangroves in about 2½-feet of water. The dinghy was immediately inflated and as the aircraft had by this time settled on the bottom food and water supplies were salvaged together with two parachute packs, a Very pistol, 10 cartridges and two ground sheets. They then went ashore in the dinghy but the mud was soft and sticky. They dragged the dinghy along using the trailing aerial as a tow rope to the mouth of a small creek; and then along this to the edge of the trees where it was moored. They then set off inland to find dry ground, struggling for about two miles, but were later to discover that this was a mistake, as the tide was to rise about 14-feet and all ground for a considerable distance inland was inundated. They found a large log and decided to camp there, rigged a parachute as a tent and then dressed the wounded men.

By 2300 hours water was lapping against the log and, using a torch carried by Clively, they tied all their gear as high in a tree as possible. The log floated and they tried to sleep again but were not particularly successful – mosquitoes were plentiful and it was also raining. At daylight they picked up their gear and waded back through the water towards the shore. The gear was secured on a fallen tree and ground sheets stretched out to catch rain water. Unfortunately this was tainted by powder from a signal cartridge which had fallen apart although some water was caught in water bottles from the streams running down a slanting tree trunk. As the tide receded, a search for the dinghy revealed only a broken wire. After some breakfast they set to work chopping down small trees and then building a platform about 4 feet above high water mark. While this work was in progress two Vengeance aircraft appeared and Very flares were fired to attract their attention. The two aircraft circled and dropped a package, which landed in the water but was washed out to sea. Work progressed slowly throughout the day but ceased when a Catalina escorted by two Kittyhawks was sighted. Very lights were fired again and the Catalina landed close inshore where they were picked up by the aircraft’s dinghy and flown to Merauke. Here they spent a couple of days in the hospital after which they were flown back to Horn Island and then onto Jacky Jacky airstrip.
Chapter 5
Together at Jacky Jacky

After almost nine months since it was first mooted that No 7 Squadron would move from Townsville to Jacky Jacky on Cape York Peninsula, orders were finally issued in early March of 1944. Jacky Jacky, also referred to as Higgins Field, was located 18 miles south of Cape York and 24 miles from Horn Island on flat, low country that was moderately timbered and therefore unsuitable for forced landings. There was one sealed runway of 7100 feet with gravelled taxiways to 60 dispersal bays, all of which were sealed. There was a slight hump in the centre of the runway but it did have an electric flare path for night flying and a control tower. The advance party had flown to Jacky Jacky in a USAAF C-47 Dakota coded VH-CJM on 12 January to prepare facilities for the squadron. This party consisted of Flying Officer Alan La Fontaine and 12 other ranks.

Meath Hammond, Alan Storr, John McGuigan and Ron Appleton next to their aircraft Beaufort A9-205 (KT-U).
Source: Alan Storr.
The headquarters of 7 Squadron then moved from Ross River on 14 March and came under the command of 75 Wing. The main party travelled by train from Townsville to Cairns about 16 March and were billeted there for almost a week before embarking on the converted merchant vessel SS *Islander*, reaching Jacky Jacky on 26 March. The ground party of the rear echelon, including most of the heavy equipment, embarked at Townsville on the MV *Gorgon* on 23 March, disembarking at Thursday Island; this party comprised eight warrant officers and sergeants and 103 airmen under the command of Flight Lieutenant Henry Aitkens. However, it was a much simpler move for the detachment on Horn Island whereby six officers and 40 other ranks departed for Jacky Jacky by RAAF barge on 8 March. These moves obviously impacted severely on the squadron’s ability to provide operational flights from Ross River, Cooktown or Cairns, and in fact no sorties were flown from these bases during March. The camp area for 7 Squadron was in complete bush, and the squadron had to start establishing itself as a squadron again. Adding to the inconvenience was the local wildlife and conditions; it was not uncommon for pythons up to 15 feet long to be shot near the camp area.

Prior to the move, on 2 March, A9-329 captained by Tom Campbell became bogged off the dispersal taxiway leading to No 2 Strip on Horn Island as a result of rain and bad repair. The aircraft was towed out backwards by tractor and drawbar but this resulted in damage to the rear of the tail strut, which had bowed and cracked. The most economical repair was the complete replacement of the stern frame, however, the aircraft was considered safe for a ferry flight to Jacky Jacky provided that precautions were taken to make a tail light landing. Again at Horn Island the squadron detachment took to the slit trenches when the air raid alert was sounded at 0150 hours on 4 March as an unidentified aircraft approached from the north-west. The all clear was sounded at 0300 hours. Then on 9 March, Army Intelligence gave warning of an impending Japanese raid and all necessary precautions were taken, however no raid eventuated. Sorties continued from Wards and Horn Island during early March, mainly to escort or locate missing aircraft. Meanwhile, Jacky Jacky’s operational capacity was increasing when the advanced party of No 23 Squadron equipped with Vengeances arrive pending the imminent move of the remainder of the squadron, which occurred at the end of the month. Escorting single engined aircraft from Horn Island to destinations such as Gove and Wards and return continued to be an important role for the squadron during March and April. Flight Sergeant Ian Mathieson, a WAG in Bill Dawson’s crew, recalled escorting P-40 Kittyhawks from Horn Island to Port Moresby. As Kittyhawks had inadequate horizon indicators, they were unable to fly unescorted over large
areas of ocean. On one occasion they had a group of 11 to look after. They were faster than the Beaufort so keeping them under observation was akin to a chicken looking after its chicks. The Kittyhawks flew over Dawson, under him and at all sorts of levels. A couple even tried formation flying, formating on the Beaufort with one on each side and the wings sitting under the wings and tail of the Beaufort. This made it difficult to concentrate on where the other nine were and Bill Dawson had to tell them in no uncertain terms to desist.

On 17 March, Phil Cooper in Beaufort A9-364 was undertaking a modified combined ‘N’ and ‘P’ patrol. At 1500 feet and about 150 miles west of the mouth of the Eilanden River, a clear radar contact indicating an aeroplane showed about 12 miles to starboard. The aircraft was under observation for about one minute when it disappeared at about 16 miles range. Meath Hammond in A9-196 from Wards conducted a search on 23 March for a life raft and possible life boat with survivors on board but returned to base due to adverse weather without any sightings. Geoff Gadsdon in A9-205 continued searching next day for the life rafts and life boats about 20 to 30 miles off Hood Point, but again without
success. Although the records are incomplete, there was some discontent within the squadron amongst the aircrews at the time taken for replacements to be posted in for those who had completed their tour. Certainly, many crews spent considerably longer on operations than normal but this seems to have been more due to the delay in trained crews becoming available from 1 Operational Training Unit and because those crews coming through were required to replace casualties for those Beaufort squadrons in New Guinea. From the available documentation, North Eastern Area Headquarters was quite concerned at the correspondence received from the squadron on this issue, even stating that they were 'alarmed' at the attitude of those complaining. This Headquarters went so far as to remind the squadron that 'conditions of service in 7 Squadron have been far from onerous, and members have enjoyed periods of leave during their operational tour which have been denied to members serving in forward areas'. However, the squadron was advised that 10 complete crews would be available for posting by the end of April to relieve those who had completed their tour.

Harry Read in A9-370 was on convoy escort out from Jacky Jacky on 6 April at 1300 feet and about 150 miles due west of Horn Island when a radar contact was received to port at about four and a half miles distance. Read turned in the direction of the contact but there was no indication on homing for 90 seconds, so the radar was switched back to search and immediately recorded a contact one and a half miles to starboard. After about 10 seconds this contact disappeared into the sea and the area closely searched but there were no sightings. Read then warned the convoy. By the middle of April the 7 Squadron detachment at Wards Strip, Port Moresby was withdrawn to Jacky Jacky ending some 17 months continuous presence there. On 1 May the squadron had its first accident at Jacky Jacky. Flight Sergeant Rex Southee in A9-336, who had just been posted to the squadron, was running up the aircraft prior to a familiarisation flight of the area. After receiving the green light to taxi down the runway to reach the take off position from the dispersal road, about halfway down the strip Southee observed three Vengeance aircraft pass low over the strip, break formation and lower their wheels in preparation to land. He immediately taxied to the edge of the runway, still facing the same direction, and applied the brakes. By this time the Vengeances were on final approach. The first aircraft landed short and on the left hand side of the strip, passing the Beaufort at little more than taxying speed and with plenty of clearance. The second Vengeance A27-85 touched down further along the strip and to the right. Upon approaching the Beaufort it appeared to veer towards it and the starboard wings of each collided at about 20 to 30 miles per hour. There were no injuries but the damage sustained to the Beaufort also included to the centre section, necessitating a complete overhaul.
In May 1944, RAAF Command had considered and revised the disposition of units and proposed a rearrangement for the North Eastern Area (other than those units in Dutch New Guinea) and the Eastern Area. This revision was partly based on initial indications from RAAF Headquarters that there would be enough Lockheed PV-1 Venturas available to equip two RAAF squadrons. No 32 Squadron was designated to be equipped with Venturas and was at that time equipped with Beauforts, operating with one flight from Lowood and one from Bundaberg. No 13 Squadron was already equipped with Venturas and was to commence operations during May from Cooktown. It was originally thought that 13 Squadron would replace 32 Squadron at Lowood but Venturas could not operate from Bundaberg unless extensive works were undertaken to extend the aerodrome and provide satisfactory airstrips. Such work was likely to take considerable time and therefore 13 Squadron was moved to Cooktown in lieu of 32 Squadron. No action had yet been taken to re-supply 32 Squadron with Venturas due to the aerodrome works required. RAAF Command considered it necessary to concentrate both Ventura squadrons in the same general area, to facilitate maintenance and associated supply requirements; accordingly, both squadrons were to be based in the North Eastern Area. To facilitate this requirement and avoid the additional construction required at Bundaberg, RAAF Command proposed that 7 Squadron at Jacky Jacky (an aerodrome already suitable for Venturas) convert from Beauforts to Venturas instead of 32 Squadron, with that squadron remaining in Eastern Area and continuing to operate from Lowood and Bundaberg. This proposal would therefore result in an Order of Battle for North Eastern and Eastern Areas as:

- **North Eastern Area (other than Dutch New Guinea):**
  - 7 Squadron (Venturas) at Jacky Jacky.
  - 13 Squadron (Venturas) at Cooktown.
  - 9 Squadron (Walrus) at Bowen.
  - 20 Squadron (Catalinas) at Cairns.
  - 23 Squadron (Vengeance) at Jacky Jacky (pending re-supply).

- **Eastern Area:**
  - 32 Squadron (Beauforts) at Lowood.
  - 107 Squadron (Kingfishers) at St George’s Basin.
  - 21 Squadron (Vengeance) at Camden (pending re-supply).
  - 11 Squadron (Catalinas) at Rathmines.
Once all these arrangements had been effected, No 15 Squadron (Beauforts) would be sent to New Guinea. No 7 Squadron’s brush with the Ventura continued for almost two months. On 10 May RAAF Headquarters informed RAAF Command that there were no major administrative difficulties in the proposal to rearm 7 Squadron with Venturas, but proceeding with this would be dependent on the supply from overseas; a date at which rearmament would commence was not available. The following day, RAAF Headquarters was able to advise that the total number of Venturas expected to be available to the RAAF by the end of 1944 was 53. This number was considered insufficient to maintain two full squadrons to the end of that year, however, the estimated requirements of 49 aircraft for one and a half squadrons could be satisfied based on establishments of 29, maintenance reserve of 12, reinforcement reserve of 2 and permanent wastage of 6. RAAF Command was asked whether it would agree to rearm one flight only of 7 Squadron to begin with, the remaining flight continuing to operate Beauforts until such time as a further allocation of Venturas became available from overseas.

By 20 May, RAAF Command had agreed to the revised establishment, and RAAF Headquarters proceeded with allocating aircraft to rearm 7 Squadron with 10 Venturas including one dual, estimated to be by approximately 1 June. Some Venturas, at that time under operational fitment or modification, were immediately available to the squadron and the completion of these aircraft was given priority. Less than a week later three Venturas had been identified for allotment to 7 Squadron with the first A59-68 received on 2 June and the second A59-70 the following day. It appears that the third aircraft, A59-75, received some minor damage en route and was flown to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot for repairs, after which it was to be forwarded on to the squadron. By 7 June North Eastern Area Headquarters confirmed that the squadron would consist of one flight of now nine Venturas and the squadron establishment was altered to provide for ‘A’ flight with Beauforts and ‘B’ flight with Venturas. However, the next day RAAF Headquarters confirmed that 7 Squadron was to revert to an all Beaufort squadron instead of the planned one flight of each type. This was because the United States would not entertain bids for Venturas in 1945 and accordingly the available Venturas in Australia would need to be stored as wastage replacements for 13 Squadron to enable that squadron to continue to operate these aircraft until at least 30 June 1945. This was officially confirmed the following week, and from 17 June the Venturas were being allotted elsewhere. By 26 June A59-68 and A59-70, the Venturas received, were flown to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot where they joined A59-75. Six other Venturas were allotted to 7 Squadron but their delivery was cancelled before they were received.
Together at Jacky Jacky

Sergeant Fitzpatrick, Senior Mess Steward, at his tent at Jacky Jacky with ‘Jake’ the cockatoo.

Source: Gogler Family.

Once the squadron had been able to settle into its new base, another strike was planned against Japanese installations in the Timoeka area. Beginning on 5 May Eric Cooper in A9-329, Geoff Gadsdon in A9-381, Charles Cox in A9-370, John Bracken in A9-220, Max Grainger in A9-205 and Phil Cooper in A9-364 flew from Jacky Jacky to Merauke and over-nighted to prepare for the strike the following day. Ian McKinnon in A9-465 also flew to Merauke as standby in case one of the other aircraft became unserviceable, but the aircraft was not needed. The aim of the strike was to attack the radio station, dumps and installations in the Keaukwa Village area and the attack altitude was to be at tree top height of about 60 feet. With Eric Cooper leading, the aircraft left Merauke at first light on a direct track to south of Cape Steenboom, where the flight turned up the coast about five miles offshore and then made a sharp turn to starboard for the run in to the target. The last 50 miles were flown at 50 feet after being at between 150 feet and 300 feet for most of the flight; the centre of the flight was over the
We Never Disappoint

radio station. The aircraft flew parallel tracks over the target area in a north easterly direction and were spaced about 75 yards apart and each aircraft carried 6 x 250-pound bombs with 11 second delay fuses that were dropped about 50 yards apart. The aircraft were at 160 knots and pilots released the bombs when they reached the beach line. All front guns were firing as soon as the beach was in range and the whole area strafed with 7100 x .303 inch rounds. All bombs were dropped according to plan except for all six bombs on A9-370, which hung up, as did the port wing bomb of A9-220 although these were later jettisoned safely. The element of surprise was good as only a few inaccurate machine gun shots were observed. The break away was made to starboard and all aircraft rendezvoused at Cape Steenboom and proceeded down the coast directly back to Jacky Jacky. The Keaukwa Village area was well bracketed with bombs and strafed but the only observed results were the bomb bursts rising above the tree tops. The only damage received was to A9-220 where the starboard wing and mainplane were holed from the explosions of the bombs dropped from A9-364.

A possible Japanese incursion into the central highlands of Dutch New Guinea prompted an urgent response from the Allied High Command. No 7 Squadron was to provide a maximum effort with all available Beauforts and the following account incorporates information previously written by Sergeant George Berry. On the morning of 11 May all air crews were required to report to the briefing room at once where an Army liaison officer briefed crews that several big Japanese flying boats had been seen on Lake Paniai in the Kemandora Valley of the Wissel Lakes area. The informant was a coast watcher or a local native, and Army Intelligence had decided that this information was genuine and were very concerned. It was mentioned during the briefing that the Lake was at an altitude of about 6000 feet, but no-one questioned whether flying boats had the performance capability to make a water take off at that altitude. Following a now familiar format, all available aircraft were flown from Jacky Jacky to Merauke and over-nighted to prepare for a strike the following day. The crews were captained by Eric Cooper in A9-329, Geoff Gadsdon in A9-381, Charles Cox in A9-296, Ian McKinnon in A9-389, Max Grainger in A9-364, Meath Hammond in A9-223 and Pilot Officer Bruce Hinge in A9-255. Further information reported that the Japanese were already at Waniboe and probably had 10 seaplanes on Lake Paniai. The population in this area were suspected of giving assistance to the Japanese and 7 Squadron was to destroy the seaplanes and bomb Wandai, Tamera, Wanipaeja and Toegoepa Villages.
Together at Jacky Jacky

Seven aircraft from 7 Squadron were tasked with attacking 10 Japanese seaplanes reported to be on Lake Paniai in the highlands of Dutch New Guinea. This photo taken from Beaufort A9-223 shows ‘B’ flight approaching the target.

Source: Ron Appleton.

The aircraft departed Merauke and climbed to 10 500 feet over the highlands north of the target area. Two hours later, after a long climb, the flight turned down the Siriwo Valley and approached Lake Paniai from the north-west. At about this time an unidentified aircraft was sighted and the formation closed up, though the aircraft was presumed to be a B-25 Mitchell returning from the same target. When the formation arrived over the target area, no aircraft were visible on Lake Paniai—only a few native canoes—and the flight circled in line astern to bomb Enarotali from the south-east. Each aircraft dropped 4 x 250-pound bombs with 11 second time delays from between 8000 feet and 6000 feet with 500 rounds fired in canoe strafing and a further 1680 rounds into the village area. After bombing, all aircraft circled Lake Paniai to regain altitude and the whole lake area was thoroughly searched. The only physical signs of enemy presence in the area were a single tracer shot which passed under A9-329 and was thought to be either a 20mm or .5 inch round. On gaining sufficient altitude, the aircraft returned to Merauke to refuel prior to flying back to Jacky Jacky. With the Japanese now on the defensive throughout New Guinea, North Eastern Area Headquarters decided to revise the reconnaissance patrols conducted by 7 Squadron. The ‘P’ patrol was to commence on 23 May and every alternate day.
thereafter. The patrol was to proceed in a clockwise direction while the ‘N’ patrol was in an anti-clockwise direction. By early June there was a severe shortage of aviation fuel at Merauke resulting from delays in shipping and supplies were made available from stocks held at Jacky Jacky; refuelling facilities were no longer available at Merauke except for emergencies. A shuttle service to move large quantities to Merauke continued over the next few days, but in doing so stocks at Jacky Jacky had reached such a low level that there was a danger of the squadron having to cease operations unless replacement stocks were expedited. By the middle of the month the shortage of fuel was still causing concern with aircraft refuelling at Horn Island to help conserve supplies at Jacky Jacky. A week later a shipment arrived in time to avert a serious situation as there were only 400 gallons remaining and any further delay would have seen all aircraft grounded. Travel, ferry and escort flights continued during the month with flights extending as far as Nadzab in Papua New Guinea. This was in addition to normal reconnaissance and anti-submarine patrols.

On 8 June Flying Officer Gordon Smylie with Flight Lieutenant Jack Waite as navigator were on their first anti-submarine patrol from Jacky Jacky when the port engine failed about 240 miles west of Cape York and Smylie had to return to base. The engine was feathered and the return flight continued on the remaining engine. The starboard tanks were getting low and so Smylie attempted to pump petrol from the port tanks. The automatic pump did not respond and the crew took it in turns to pump by hand with the wobble pump. The aircraft just made Jacky Jacky and due to the uncertainty of the fuel situation, Smylie decided to land down wind, into a setting sun. The windscreen was covered with salt and was difficult to see through, so Waite was able to direct Smylie through the flat panel windows in the nose of the aircraft. Smylie made a safe landing and just as he touched down the starboard engine cut out and it was later ascertained that there were only 80 gallons of fuel left. The other crew members were Flight Sergeants John Debnam and Arthur Carey. Two days later Smylie and his crew were again returning to Jacky Jacky, this time from a convoy escort in A9-294, when the undercarriage collapsed on landing. A considerable amount of damage to the aircraft resulted but Smylie was only slightly injured and the remainder of the crew escaped unscathed.
On 13 June, A9-220 was engaged on an anti-submarine patrol over the Arafura Sea when it crashed from unknown causes in the vicinity of the convoy it was escorting. The aircraft was captained by Flight Sergeant Owen Keats and was operating alone. The aircraft arrived over the convoy at about 1330 hours and circled the convoy several times. At 1400 hours, the aircraft crashed into the sea south east of the convoy. The crash was not actually observed but the crew of HMAS Inverell sighted the aircraft overhead at about 1000 feet and then saw a column of water and an orange flash six miles away followed by a dull thud, on the course followed by the aircraft. Radar contact with the aircraft was lost at the same time. There was no prior indication that the aircraft was in trouble and at no time were any messages received from the aircraft. HMAS Inverell reached the scene of the crash in 20 minutes. All that remained on the surface was a large patch of oil, pieces of wood, two life jackets and a submerged emergency dinghy. There was no sign of any members of the crew. The water was disturbed and there were many dead fish in the vicinity. From these signs, the Commanding
Officer of HMAS *Inverell* was of the opinion that the depth charges on the aircraft had exploded when the aircraft struck the water or shortly afterwards, almost certainly killing the crew outright. A search for possible parachutists from the aircraft was carried out for three miles down wind without success. Harry Read in A9-296 was detailed to relieve Keats and arrived over the convoy at 1530 hours where HMAS *Inverell* confirmed what had happened. Keats and his crew of Flying Officer Fred Davies navigator and Flying Officers Ray Arnold and Bill Blain (WAGs) were declared missing believed killed. Keats and crew were posted to the squadron on 27 May and the accident occurred on their second operational flight.

In the middle of June, 23 Squadron with its Vengeances left Jacky Jacky for Menagle in New South Wales to reform, leaving 7 Squadron as the sole operational squadron at this location. John Matthews in A9-222 was ordered to proceed to Daru on 18 June and drop a message to the launch AM531 to effect the rescue of Group Captain Steege and Flying Officer Sebibe who forced landed on Dibiri Island in Kittyhawk A29-359 and Spitfire A58-175, respectively. Supplies were dropped to the two pilots and they were informed that a rescue launch was on its way. Matthews was also to carry out a search for Flying Officer Hurley in Kittyhawk A29-353 who was thought to have also crashed into the sea near Dibiri Island but was believed to have been killed; there were no signs of any wreckage or survivors.

Towards the end of June the squadron was detailed for another strike on the Timoeka area. On 25 June Eric Cooper in A9-329, John Matthews in A9-196, Flying Officer Ossie Morgan in A9-381, Phil Cooper in A9-395, Charles Cox in A9-370, Bruce Hinge in A9-465, Harry Read in A9-296, Flight Sergeant Athol Gibson in A9-212 and Flying Officer Bill Dawson in A9-389 travelled to Merauke from Jacky Jacky to again prepare for a strike the following day. These nine aircraft were to bomb and strafe dumps and installations at Keaukwa Village and Timoeka airfield areas in a low level daylight attack. The formation set course from Merauke for a point about 50 miles south of Timoeka where ‘A’ flight turned due north with the intention of making landfall at Cape Steenboom while ‘B’ flight turned north-westerly for 42 miles before turning north intending to make landfall at Kokenau. Owing to the restricted visibility along the coast, both north and south of the intended targets, map reading was impossible. Offshore from Timoeka and Keaukwa the cloud was down to the water with heavy rain. As a result both flights overshot and were forced to cross the coast and circle inland seeking both targets. ‘A’ flight was thought to have crossed the coast about five miles north-west of the Kwaukwa area. When Matthews and Phil Cooper saw the first foliage each dropped their 6 x 250-pound bombs with 11 second
time delay, on what was thought to be Tauroke Village. A turn to starboard was made and Eric Cooper’s stick of six bombs fell in a line slightly west of Keaukwa Village clearing. Morgan dropped his stick on a southerly run. As ‘B’ flight crossed the coast, Gibson and Dawson each dropped sticks of 6 x 250-pound on what the crews thought was Keaukwa Village area. Later it was considered more likely to have been Aroeke. These two aircraft did not follow the balance of the flight that turned to port and flew on a north westerly course inland parallel to the coast. When ‘B’ flight leader sighted ‘A’ flight aircraft, they were then about to turn over Kokenau area. Hinge and Read each dropped their sticks of six on a north easterly run from the sea on a hutted area, possibly Tauroke. Cox then dropped six on a later run towards the sea over a hutted area that was thought to be Kokenau. Results of the bombing were generally unobserved due to the nature of the terrain, the low level of the attack and the poor visibility. Phil Cooper made a strafing run over Japero where one of three huts was set on fire. All aircraft returned to Merauke along the coast and Read and Dawson were fired at while passing Cook’s Bay.

Squadron administration and ground staff who were seeking to become aircrew were offered the opportunity to apply on 27 June when a mobile recruiting unit arrived at Jacky Jacky to interview potential applicants. At this time, North Eastern Area Headquarters advised that further Honours and Awards had been made to members of the squadron—Member of the Order of the British Empire to Flight Lieutenant Norm Hodges, Engineer Officer, Distinguished Flying Cross to Flying Officers John Lemcke and Alan MacKay and Mention in Despatches to Flying Officers Jim Rimes and Bob Harper. Single aircraft bays had been cut into the bush at Jacky Jacky and these were widely dispersed. It was the duty of the squadron’s armed guards to watch over the aircraft. Very often, the guards were 19 or 20 year olds, who had the unglamorous yet important task of spending an eight hour shift in the loneliness of the bush during the night. Padre Sherlock made it a point to visit and bring comfort to these men and others doing similar routine tasks. The Padre’s Jeep with the coffee urn holding four or five gallons in the back was always a welcome sight.

While waiting for a posting following the completion of their tropical tours, some pilots and crews assisted No 13 Aircraft Repair Depot flight test squadron aircraft after servicing. Other crews continued with offensive operations. Charles Cox in A9-370 and John Bracken in A9-377 were tasked with departing from Jacky Jacky on 2 July for Merauke to carry out a bombing and reconnaissance operation over Japero area the following day. Just after take off in slight drizzle, A9-377 crashed approximately two miles east of the north-west end of Jacky
Jacky runway about 0510 hours. The aircraft was noticed to take off normally but within two minutes it was observed at 200 feet with flames issuing from the starboard wing. Bracken attempted to control the aircraft but the engines cut out and it dived into the ground at a sharp angle and burst into flames. Bracken and his crew of Pilot Officer Tom Daymond, Flight Sergeant Andrew Frank and Flight Sergeant Lionel Parkes were all killed instantly. The cause of the accident was considered to be failure of the starboard engine following a break in the fuel line that resulted in fuel spraying onto the exhaust manifold. Athol Gibson in A9-212 was later dispatched to Merauke to join Charles Cox in preparation to complete this operation.

Padre Sherlock at his tent at Jacky Jacky.

Source: Gogler Family.

Both aircraft departed Merauke at first light on a direct course to Laags Island and then along the coast to Japero. Cox was in the Japero area for 35 minutes and in a westerly run dropped a stick of 5 x 250-pound delayed action bombs spaced 80 feet apart at 160 knots on huts in the area. The stick covered the hutted area but no results were observed. Five hundred .303 inch
rounds were fired in strafing huts. Gibson dropped a stick of 3 x 250-pound bombs on huts with one being completely destroyed and another partially destroyed. Although no personnel or signs of activity were observed, one tracer round passed over the starboard wing. Both aircraft then set course for Otakwa but became separated in cloud \textit{en route}; Cox was over Otakwa for 20 minutes. There were 59 small huts counted in two rows on either side of a wide street and three large huts at the southern end. Cox dropped 12 x 20-pound instantaneous fragmentation bombs in a low dive from 1500 to 300 feet from north to south on Otakwa. The bombs fell in the village but no results were observed. The aircraft was holed in the tail assembly and fuselage by splinters from these bombs, so Cox immediately set a direct course for Merauke. Gibson missed Otakwa after leaving Japero so a course was set for Koeperopoka but due to adverse weather he returned to Merauke.

In the middle of July three aircraft were tasked with providing a dawn to dusk escort for a convoy about 150 miles south of Merauke. Towards dusk, Athol Gibson in A9-212 picked up a radar contact 11 miles on the port side. The indication was similar to that of a ship and a faint IFF was seen from the same position. On homing, the contact disappeared and despite a 15 minute search of the area no sightings were made. The following day Gordon Smylie in A9-381 carried out a modified ‘N’ patrol when about 100 miles due east of Mappi a contact was observed at 1500 feet and about six and a half miles to port. The contact was observed for two minutes but was lost on homing. A search was conducted for a further 10 minutes but again no sightings were made. A third indication occurred on 20 July when Flight Sergeant Bill Higgins in A9-465 was on an ‘N’ patrol when about 150 miles north of Cape Wessel there was a radar contact indicating an aircraft to starboard at between six and eight miles distance and this continued for some 25 minutes. Visibility was very poor and all attempts to home in on the contact were unsuccessful.

On 21 July John Matthews in A9-395, Gordon Smylie in A9-461, Ossie Morgan in A9-381, Charles Cox in A9-370, Bill Higgins in A9-471 and Flying Officer Ray O’Farrell in A9-241 travelled from Jacky Jacky to Merauke, in preparation for another strike on Timoeka and Keaukwa areas the following day. The aircraft flew from Merauke to Cape Steenboom and then along the coast to Timoeka. The formation flew below 100 feet in pairs; the first flight turned over the two small islands at the mouth of the Timoeka River and on a north westerly course made a run over the south eastern end of the airstrip. The first two of Higgin’s stick of 6 x 250-pound bombs fell across the gun positions and installations and the remainder along the edge of the strip. Cox’s run was to the north of and parallel to Higgin’s and probably covered some of the dump area
and quarters situated there with 2 x 500-pound and 2 x 250-pound bombs. Both aircraft broke away to starboard and circled over Aroeka Village in a strafing run where 2080 rounds were fired in strafing during the bombing run. The bombing runs of this flight were confirmed by the second flight as they were flying parallel to the coast offshore. O’Farrell turned and crossed the coast on a north easterly run dropping 2 x 500-pound and 2 x 250-pound bombs. The first stick fell between the beach and the roadway, 1050 rounds were fired in general strafing and hits were observed on three watercraft and a hut. Matthews turned and began a north easterly bombing run and a stick of 6 x 250-pound bombs were released from the first fringe of trees and 900 rounds fired in general strafing. Hits were observed on three moored vessels and three canoes in the Aroeka River.

The third flight followed the second by about 200 yards, and strafed a barge about 500 yards offshore from the mouth of the Keaukwa River before turning on their bombing runs. Many hits were observed by both crews and the turret gunner in A9-381 reported the barge being enveloped in heavy black smoke. Another barge was observed at the mouth of the Keaukwa River. Morgan released a stick of 6 x 250-pound bombs as the aircraft passed directly over a hut on a north-easterly run and 950 rounds were fired in strafing the barge offshore and huts on the bombing run. Smylie turned starboard after strafing the barge offshore and made a bombing run with 6 x 250-pound bombs on huts near the shore. Two thousand and fifty rounds were fired. Hits were also observed on a barge moving upstream in the mouth of the Keaukwa River and on fuel drums on the edge of a small clearing to the north of the strip. During the bombing runs there was machine gun fire from the barge offshore, and intense but inaccurate light fire from the beach area with some tracer considered to be 25mm from a position near the east end of the strip. The strike was considered successful and all bombs were dropped in the designated area, although generally, results were not observed due to the terrain and nature of the attack.

On 27 July a warning order was received that the squadron was to be prepared to move to Tadji in New Guinea and to come under the command of No 10 Operational Group.

The Allied offensive in the South-West Pacific Area assaulted and captured Aitape, with its airstrips at Korake and Tadji, on 22 April 1944. The Australians were to relieve American ground and air units, which were to continue the advance towards the Philippines. One more strike was flown before the end of July; John Matthews in A9-412, Gordon Smylie in A9-461, Ossie Morgan in A9-381, Rex Southee in A9-395, Bill Dawson in A9-389, Bruce Hinge in A9-296 and Athol Gibson in A9-212 travelled to Merauke for a follow up strike on the
Together at Jacky Jacky

Timoeka and Keaukwa areas. Each aircraft carried 6 x 250-pound bombs with 11 second delayed action fuses and departed Merauke for Cape Steenboom. The first flight in finger four formation flew along the coast to Timoeka while the second circled Cape Steenboom. Over the sea, the formation flew below 100 feet and the first flight turned over the two small islands at the mouth of the Timoeka River, where the formation broke up in heavy cloud. Matthews passed over the target area, but was unable to distinguish it due to the weather. The aircraft broke away to seaward and returned to the rendezvous point in Pasang Bay. Remaining in the area till all the aircraft reached the rendezvous point, Matthews instructed Smylie to bomb Japero. Matthews returned to Keaukwa along the coast with the intent of bombing the dump area. These bombs were thought to have undershot the target, although this and the Japero area were strafed. Smylie and Southee passed over the target area but were unable to identify any target features and proceeded to Japero. Here, in bad visibility, a stick of 3 x 250-pound bombs were dropped on a northerly run parallel to the west bank of the Otakwa River. Bombs were seen to burst in the vicinity of huts but further results could not be observed. A second stick of 3 x 250-pound bombs was dropped on a south-easterly run across the dump area, which was also strafed. Morgan was able to orientate himself from the airstrip and dropped all six bombs across installations behind the beach and close to the jetty at the mouth of the Keaukwa River. Southee made a bombing run to the north of the strip and five bombs were dropped in the dump area with over 2000 rounds fired in general strafing. After circling at Cape Steenboom, the second flight flew along the coast and turned to make a northerly run over the dump area in V formation. Dawson dropped six bombs but was fired upon from anti-aircraft positions at the north-western end of the airstrip. Hinge flew a similar course but did not drop his bombs as Gibson passed underneath him. Turning starboard, a run was made on a south-easterly heading and six bombs were dropped at a jetty and the adjacent area at the junction of the Keaukwa River and the third tributary off the western bank. Some 2200 rounds were fired in strafing the anti-aircraft positions at the strip and in the general area. Gibson, flying a similar course, dropped all six bombs on dump areas. By this time, the airstrip had been well cratered and was heavily grassed and obviously unused. The weather on this raid had the cloud base at 200 feet with steady rain and visibility less than ½ mile.

Soon after, seven aircraft travelled to Merauke to prepare for a strike in the Keaukwa area to destroy dumps and installations near Keaukwa and Japero. Bruce Hinge in A9-370 was the standby aircraft but was not required. On 3 August six Beauforts operating in pairs were led by John Matthews with each aircraft carrying 6 x 250-pound bombs with 11 second delayed action fuses.
The first pair comprised Matthews in A9-412 and Rex Southee in A9-448. The second pair was Harry Read in A9-296 and Bill Higgins in A9-212. The third pair was Ossie Morgan in A9-595 and Ray O’Farrell in A9-465. After leaving Merauke, the aircraft flew to Cape Steenboom and over the sea flew at about 100 feet in a loose V of pairs. At Cape Steenboom, the second pair did a complete circuit while the first and third pairs flew directly to the target; the first pair inland and the third pair offshore. Matthews and Southee on a north-westerly heading passed to the north of the strip that was not seen owning to cloud and drizzle in the vicinity. The primary target of the dump area was overshot and Matthews’s bombs were dropped near Kokenau. Some 900 x .303 inch rounds were fired in strafing huts, canoes and stores in the target area. Southee, realising he had flown over the primary target, did a sharp turn to starboard and dropped 6 x 250-pound bombs on what the crew considered was the dump area. Approximately 1500 .303 inch rounds were fired in strafing the general area, at a large village and two vehicles in a clearing near the village. Some five minutes after the first pair, Read and Higgins on a north westerly course dropped parallel sticks of bombs across the dump area. Almost 2000 rounds were fired in strafing in the general area and in the Japero area. Morgan and O’Farrell, circled offshore, were unable to see the airstrip in the restricted visibility and consequently passed the mouth of the Keaukwa River before recognising the target. Turning sharply to starboard, the two aircraft flew in an easterly direction and dropped their bombs over the dump area between the jetty and the village at the mouth of the Keaukwa River. Morgan and his crew fired almost 2000 rounds in strafing huts at Kokenau, a small boat containing six to eight Japanese, stores in a clearing and in the Japero area. O’Farrell and his crew fired 1150 rounds in general strafing at stores in the jetty area and huts about five miles up stream. During the strike there were some white puffs from the beach in the jetty area and these were the only indication of anti-aircraft fire. The aircraft safely returned to Merauke to refuel and then proceeded back to Jacky Jacky.

For two days from 22 August, Warrant Officer Perc Smith in A9-397 carried out a search for missing Norseman A71-1 without result and then Ray O’Farrell in A9-241 and Gordon Smylie in A9-397 carried out a search for the same aircraft between Jacky Jacky and Merauke. During the search a report was received that A71-1 had crashed in the sea eight miles south-east of Boigu Island and that there were three survivors, who were rescued by native canoe, and three missing. Both Beauforts were diverted and searched the area for the missing personnel but made no sightings. During this time Bill Dawson and crew in A9-440 with Alan La Fontaine and three other ranks travelled to Tadji where the three other ranks remained as the advance party detachment at the new
location while the others returned to Jacky Jacky. Single-engine aircraft escort flights continued and on 31 August John Matthews in A9-595 accompanied 12 Kittyhawks of No 82 Squadron from Jacky Jacky to Wards and the day after Ray O’Farrell in A9-241 escorted a further nine Kittyhawks to the same location.

At the beginning of September various preparations commenced for the move of the squadron. Firstly the main advance party with Alan La Fontaine as Officer-in-Charge and 21 other ranks departed from Horn Island in two Martin Mariners for Tadji. Eric Cooper travelled to Townsville to discuss with North Eastern Area Headquarters the pending move and personnel issues with particular reference to posting south airmen who had completed their operational tour. Captain Tully, the Army Liaison Officer, delivered lectures to aircrews on military map reading. This was followed a week later by exercises for aircrews in practical map reading on the ground and living off the land. The exercises consisted of short compass bearing marches of approximately five miles each. Air exercises, including bombing practice, were conducted as part of the training program for the squadron’s new role. The move of the squadron from Ross River to Jacky Jacky had also shown the need for leisure facilities for the men. This was in addition to the regular sporting activities that were available, including the inter-unit sports competition. The suggestion of Flying Officer Ray Cocking that an Arts and Crafts Competition and Exhibition be held was eagerly adopted. The exhibition was organised by Cocking and with a most enthusiastic committee, classes in various arts and crafts were conducted; these included woodwork, leatherwork and pearl shell carving. The interest was overwhelming with approximately 150 entrants. The judges came from North Eastern Area Headquarters and more than 400 visitors attended from a number of units. The same day this exhibition opened—6 September— the RAAF Boxing and Wrestling Team, accompanied on tour by Colonel Sir Donald Cameron, visited Jacky Jacky and staged a program of boxing and wrestling matches. A suitable ring was built and bouts were staged by Herb Narvo, Heavyweight Boxing Champion of Australia, Eddie Scarfe, Olympic and British Empire Games wrestling representative and Bern Tamplin, RAAF Wrestling Champion. Supporting acts were provided by the squadron, including musical selections by the 7 Squadron band. With a reduction in operational activity it was decided to encourage squadron personnel to take a more active interest in healthy recreation and to also enable them to spend their stand down hours away from the precincts of the camp. To facilitate this, trucks were made available each day to take personnel to Red Island Point and other beach areas where swimming was reasonably safe. Airmen were permitted to take rifles and a limited supply of
ammunition. Part of the day was spent fishing, swimming and under instruction in bushcraft and musketry.

To mark the pending departure of 7 Squadron, farewell dinners were celebrated in both the Officers Mess and the Sergeants Mess, with personnel from 33 Operational Base Unit and 1 Repair and Salvage Unit and other units at Jacky Jacky. Additionally, the airmen of 7 Squadron and 33 Operational Base Unit held a similar function. This was arranged by the combined welfare committees of both units and it was decided that the officers and sergeants would wait on the airmen at this dinner and afterwards provide a program of entertainment. The function took place on the evening of Saturday 16 September, and took the form of a buffet dinner with fish, crayfish and oysters, all supplied with the assistance of aborigines from the nearby mission stations. An issue of airmen’s beer was also arranged to coincide with the night and the after dinner entertainment consisted of comedy sketches, music and singing.

The 7 Squadron orchestra performing as part of an inter-service function on Thursday Island attended by General Sir Thomas Blamey and other high ranking officers during a visit to the Torres Strait area.

Source: Ron McGrath.
Following on from earlier training exercises, and with a view to improving the standard of map reading by aircrew, a series of cross-country traverses on foot of approximately 30 miles distance along selected tracks was organised, beginning on 22 September. The course was covered in two days, the first day being approximately 16 miles of four bearings designed to carry the party clear of swamps and rough country so long as the map was read correctly. The second day was six bearings to cover the remaining distance back to camp. The rations and equipment that the crews could carry were similar to those that they could expect should they be forced down. This was to force the crews to live on game, which was readily available along the route. The training was conducted under the supervision of No 48 Australian Squadron Air Liaison Section, Australian Imperial Force.

On 25 September Tiger Moth A17-589 with an ANGAU passenger went missing along the south western coast of New Guinea and a major search was initiated. This aircraft was being ferried from the mainland to No 33 Squadron at Milne Bay when it was slightly damaged at Daru. Once spares were obtained, the aircraft made an unauthorised flight, against specific orders, and was seen flying south towards the mainland during the late afternoon and subsequently disappeared. A search was conducted from Horn Island to Daru and Turnaround Islands as well as all islets, reefs and shoals in between. The aircraft and crews involved in this search were: Ray O’Farrell in A9-327, Gordon Smylie in A9-461, John Matthews in A9-412, Bill Higgins in A9-607, Phil Cooper in A9-595, Rex Southee in A9-397 (although this aircraft returned early due to engine trouble), Harry Read in A9-440, Flying Officer Norm Raw in A9-356 and Bill Dawson in A9-599. No sightings were made. Further flights continued searching for A17-589 over the same area, without success, but the search was widened to include down the coast to Port Moresby. At the end of September a dinner was held in the Officers Mess to farewell Eric Cooper, who was posted to command 71 Wing at Tadji, and to welcome Squadron Leader Oscar Barton as the new temporary Commanding Officer. Ordinary rations were supplemented by fish and other seafood provided by local aborigines. Barton officially assumed command on 2 October.

The operational activities of the squadron were limited during September in preparation for the move to Tadji. Early in the month it was decided to impose a limit of 100 flying hours per week in order to prolong the service life of engines and airframes as much as possible. This was to provide the aircraft in the best possible condition for when the move occurred. The level of 100 hours per week was the minimum considered necessary to keep the aircrews in proper flying practice and enable them to carry out the training necessary for their new role.
However, even at the end of September, no definite date had been given for the departure of a ship from the Jacky Jacky area with the main party and heavy equipment. As it was, several aircraft were approaching service requirements. In addition, the ground crew needed to be kept occupied to prevent morale lagging. There was a noticeable desire among personnel to be on their way and their interest in further training was waning. To overcome this, the variety of training was widened but was of limited success. Up to three aircrews had been sent away on short operational leave but all leave for ground crews had been cancelled. The excellent camp site obtained for the squadron at Tadji and the manner in which the advance party were enjoying the new location contributed to the eagerness to move. Information and advice had been received from the experienced officers of No 8 and No 100 Squadrons and this was passed onto all aircrews.

From 6 October weekly conferences were held for all squadron specialist officers. At the first conference, officers were advised that the camp site at Tadji was sufficiently advanced for the squadron to move in immediately. The delay in moving was the result of no ship being available but Barton expressed his desire...
to move the squadron as soon as possible, and to this end intended to approach North Eastern Area Headquarters to ascertain if the squadron could be moved by aircraft. It was calculated that 20 C-47 Dakota aircraft would be required but failing that a smaller number with more frequent trips would suffice. If no aircraft could be made available, then he proposed using squadron aircraft. Although there was nothing definite about an air move, Barton asked all officers to commence planning. Later in the afternoon Barton reported to the Adjutant’s Office that a bushfire was burning about two miles north of the airstrip and was threatening petrol dumps, a bomb dump, the wireless transmitting station and Army camps. Barton ordered the Adjutant, Flight Lieutenant Ken McCullough to muster all personnel and to arrange for their transportation with firefighting equipment to the scene of the fire. Parties were sent immediately and patrols were posted on the main road leading north to Red Island Point to keep the fire in check and to keep it on the eastern side of the road. The Army assisted with transport, water tankers and personnel. Composite parties were detailed to remove all petrol drums from the area where the fire was rapidly approaching and these were loaded on vehicles and transported to safety. Approximately 250 drums of petrol were saved before the fire reached the roadway with the resulting loss of petrol drums being negligible. A party established a firebreak around the wireless transmitting station and this action saved the building. The wind was blowing from a northerly direction and during the afternoon the wind velocity reached 45 miles per hour. It was found impossible to check the fire until it reached the main roadway where their efforts were successful. By about 2100 hours the fire was under control and mopping up parties remained on duty until about 0800 hours the following morning. The only casualties sustained by the squadron were two minor cases of burns and one sprained ankle.

After attempting for some time to erect a facility for church services, Padre Sherlock was finally able to dedicate a chapel for members of the squadron on 8 October; ironically the squadron could only use this chapel for three more weeks until it was to move to New Guinea. While waiting for the squadron’s move to eventuate, operational activities continued. Phil Cooper and crew and Flight Sergeant Henry Lodge and crew, together with three ground crew departed by air for Mareeba to carry out searchlight cooperation exercises for about two weeks. On 11 October Ray O’Farrell in A9-364 and Rex Southee in A9-448 carried out a search of Prince of Wales Island to investigate a report of a person waving a red flag three days previously. The two Beauforts were to search from dawn to dusk and carry supplies that would be dropped if necessary. An air sea rescue craft and a search party would travel to the Island at first light. A red and white flag was sighted on the beach in the approximate position indicated
but was thought to be a Navy flag. This was later confirmed by a ground search party. Rex Southee in A9-397 carried out a search for a C-47 Dakota reportedly crashed on coral sands at Halfway Island about 75 miles from Horn Island on the direct route to Port Moresby. The Dakota was found on the sandbank at the position indicated with the crew of four uninjured. Information was passed to an air sea rescue boat which proceeded to the scene.

Further delays to the squadron’s move resulted from an outbreak of smallpox at the native hospital in Merauke on 13 October and full quarantine measures were instituted throughout the area. Although the outbreak was among the natives, with the daily transfer of personnel between several bases, no chances were being taken. Quarantine precautions for personnel having left Merauke were instituted and all personnel who had left there during the previous 14 days were to report immediately to a service medical officer. Aircraft were not to land at Jacky Jacky, Horn Island or Merauke, as all three bases were now under quarantine. Shortly thereafter, quarantine was lifted from Horn Island and Jacky Jacky, provided that transient personnel did not stay overnight. Merauke was still quarantined and aircraft could not land. Not long after the quarantine was instituted the Army labour battalion used for ship loading duty at Red Island Point were restricted from leaving Thursday Island. Army Movement Control requested that RAAF units at Jacky Jacky provide any available personnel to assist with the loading of cargo onto a ship. The squadron organised several parties and they carried on until recalled for packing for the squadron move. A highlight at this time was a cricket match played between a combined team of RAAF personnel from the area and a visiting team of Test and interstate cricketers captained by Stan McCabe. The RAAF was all out for 114 while the visitors made 7 for 213.

On 18 October came the news that everyone had been waiting for with notification that the squadron would be moved by air. C-47 Dakota aircraft were to arrive on 20 October, giving the squadron only two days notice. Plans for the move were quickly finalised and the earlier effort to prepare for this eventuality now paid dividends. By the time the Dakotas were to arrive, detailed instructions and directions in regard to the move were forwarded to the advance party at Tadji. Various transport squadrons provided 11 Dakotas as follows:

- 34 Squadron at Parafield – three aircraft under Squadron Leader Baker.
- 35 Squadron at Guilford – two aircraft under Squadron Leader Hopkinson.
Together at Jacky Jacky

- 36 Squadron at Townsville – six aircraft under Squadron Leader Henry.

However, as it eventuated, only 10 Dakotas were used owing to one becoming unserviceable.

This was the first time it had been attempted to move an RAAF operational bomber squadron, with ground staff and the majority of its equipment, from one base to another by air. When the Dakotas arrived they were loaded the night before, flew to New Guinea in the morning, and were unloaded and returned in the one day, being reloaded before evening for the next day’s run. Materiel and men were shifted on a priority system. First priority went to equipment and personnel required to start the camp. Then followed the gear necessary to keep the sections operating for the next couple of weeks. There was a considerable amount of work in listing of priorities, weighing, packing, tagging and loading. Every item of equipment and every man had to go on the scales. Lifts had to be limited to plane capacity and made up on the weight of individual items. The Army also sent a gang with cranes and trucks to assist with the move. A make-shift movement’s office was established in the vicinity of the equipment dumps and a giant information board was erected upon which was recorded the progress of the move. The real problem centred on the heavy vehicles. Nothing larger than a Jeep would fit into a Dakota. But with assistance from No 1 Repair and Salvage Unit, everything of a larger size that could be dismantled was, including a 500 gallon refuelling tanker. The chassis of 3 ton trucks had to be cut through with an oxy-acetylene torch and re-welded at Tadji. The squadron equipment officer, Flying Officer Maurie Hocking, acted as controller of lifts and the squadron engineer officer, Pilot Officer Alex Muirhead, handled such engineering problems as the loading of over-sized trucks and the question of priorities of machine tools. The men worked in gangs and were rostered on over the period from 0400 hours to midnight. The move was completed in 48 trips.
Commencing to load the Australian Dakota A65-40 (VH-CUM) late in the afternoon, ready for a dawn departure the following day.

Source: 7 Squadron Association.

Group portrait of 7 Squadron taken at Jacky Jacky, shortly before the squadron left for service at Tadji, New Guinea.

Source: 7 Squadron Association.
Together at Jacky Jacky

The speed with which the movement was put into effect was due in a large measure to the organisation behind it, overseen by Oscar Barton with Ken McCullough making sure things were done. The conception, planning and movement of the squadron was a superb feat of organisation within the limited time available.\(^1\) Following the successful move of the squadron’s main party and equipment to Tadji, the move of its 19 aircraft followed. This was carried out in two stages, the first being 12 aircraft departing on 29 October with the aircraft proceeding independently from Jacky Jacky direct to Tadji. On Wednesday 1 November the remaining seven Beauforts departed following the return of extra aircrew from Tadji. A rear party comprising 45 personnel under the command of Bob Triggs remained at Jacky Jacky with ancillary transport pending uplift by sea. There was, however, one further task assigned to the squadron before it left Jacky Jacky, when Athol Gibson in A9-471 carried out a search on 29 October for two USAAF P-47 Thunderbolts missing between Daru and Horn Island. No sightings were made.

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\(^1\) Additional information on the move is included in Appendix 9: Details of 7 Squadron Airlift to Tadji.
We Never Disappoint
Chapter 6

Operations from Tadji, New Guinea

No 7 Squadron was part of 71 Wing, which consisted of three Beaufort squadrons (the other two being No 8 and No 100 Squadrons) and other units based at Tadji. The role of 71 Wing was threefold; in its capacity as a maritime reconnaissance force, the squadrons were expected to provide anti-submarine protection for the naval forces using nearby Humboldt Bay as a harbour. They were also required to carry out independent strikes against Japanese targets and to provide close support for the 6th Australian Division. The latter role involved bombing and strafing attacks in a manner usually reserved for fighter-bombers.

The 7 Squadron camp was at Aitape, about five miles west of the airfield. The climate here was reasonably pleasant for the tropics because of the coastal location, however mosquitoes were plentiful and the danger of malaria infection high. Although the airfield and surrounding areas had been occupied, the whole area had not been cleared of Japanese, so there was strict security enforced within the perimeter of the camp area. There were well-defined sentry posts but no barbed wire, and tents and facilities were in a cleared area. Although guards were posted, aircrew often slept with their service revolvers handy should Japanese troops enter the area. The tent lines for 7 Squadron had been established among the coconut plantation near the beach. The surf at Aitape could be heavy and there had been a number of drowning accidents that involved mainly US personnel who were unaccustomed to the surf, unlike the Australians. As a consequence, a Surf Life Saving Branch had been formed to undertake swimming and beach patrols and the personnel in 7 Squadron took steps to form such a club. Tadji airfield was built on a coastal shelf covered with trees and swamps and a few open grass areas. The runways and taxiways were located on low terraces about one mile inland from the coast. There were two runways with the southern runway operational and the northern runway used as a taxiway and parking area. The operational runway was 4800 feet of steel matting and under RAAF control. Squadron aircraft were grouped together so that each squadron had its own dispersal areas and workshops.

With the sudden move of the squadron there was still one unresolved issue that could now be addressed, and one that Eric Cooper, as Commanding Officer of 71 Wing, was fully aware. With his support, Oscar Barton approached Headquarters Northern Command with a list of the airmen whose length of service in northern areas merited urgent consideration for posting south. Most
of the men identified had been with the squadron for an unbroken period of two years. Three long serving members were Leading Aircraftman Harry Read, a flight rigger, who joined the squadron at Laverton on 17 March 1942 and was posted out on 13 December 1944; Arthur Harries, a Fitter 11E, from 29 January 1942 to 27 February 1945; and Dudley Welsh, also a Fitter 11E, from 17 February 1942 to 15 February 1945. Both fitters had been posted to No 1 Operational Training Unit for several weeks when most of the squadron was absorbed into that unit.

As the squadron started to settle into its new campsite, Oscar Barton addressed all personnel and outlined his plan to have the squadron in operation by the end of that week. Officers and section commanders then agreed that they could have the squadron fully operational as from Friday morning, 3 November. True to his word Barton led a formation of nine aircraft on that day for the squadron’s first strike from Tadji to locate and bomb targets of opportunity between Niap and Wewak. In what was probably an introductory raid to get the squadron adjusted to the area and the type of operations to be carried out, 18 bombs were dropped with some minor strafing carried out. Aircraftman Les Heffernan, a flight rigger, recounts that they had only been at Aitape a few days when the airmen were ordered by Oscar Barton to go on parade every morning. The airmen were embarrassed to be standing there on parade while Army units would pass on their way into combat and considered they should not be standing at attention but getting on with the job of keeping the aircraft serviceable. When no-one appeared on parade one morning Barton came and asked what was going on, and tried to order everyone out on parade. They refused, and then he ordered Sergeant Yule, followed by Corporal White, to get on parade. They had to go because they were ordered by name. Barton gave way when he realised that he would have to order everyone out onto parade individually. The airmen certainly had not been impressed watching the soldiers go off to fight while they were required to be on parade.

On 6 November the squadron was asked for a maximum effort. Five aircraft carried out anti-submarine patrols in areas A and B, to a depth of 350 miles north-west of Tadji, with three other aircraft travelling to Hollandia to continue these patrols, although they were later cancelled due to weather conditions. A further seven aircraft carried out a strike to bomb an enemy concentration of motor transports near the western end of But Airstrip. All 16 bombs landed in the target area and beach positions were strafed. Since not all the squadron’s equipment was able to be flown to Tadji in the C-47 Dakotas, several flights were made in Beauforts back to Jacky Jacky to collect some essentials. Bruce Hinge managed to fit a further 3000 pounds of equipment into A9-323 that included
a Chevrolet utility engine, bomb components and other items. On 7 November Bill Dawson in A9-599 carried out a night reconnaissance for three and a half hours in the vicinity of Kairiru Island for a submarine reported to have been sighted in the area. Flying at 1500 feet, a total of seven flares were dropped with four bombs aimed at a village at Cape Karrawop, followed by a strafing of Kairiru Village. There were no sightings of a submarine. Then, on 8 November, John Matthews led three other aircraft to bomb 20 brownish objects 15 feet square in the bed of a creek at Suain East that were considered to be stores. The target area was located but not bombed due to very low cloud in the narrow valley. This force consequently proceeded to But Airstrip area and bombed a clearing containing a hut in the centre and suspicious surroundings. All up, 15 bombs fell in the target area.

Map of the Wewak – Aitape area.


Although considerable work by the advance party—and then the remainder of squadron personnel—had enabled the accommodation to be reasonably complete, there was still work required to bring other facilities to a satisfactory level. This included fencing off the camp area, building a guard house and lockup and the construction of a secure store for rations and other consumables. There
were improvements required to all Messes. Progress was satisfactory although construction work and reassembly of the transport had been delayed because of the lack of manpower due to flying commitments.

On 9 November five aircraft carried out anti-submarine sweeps in areas A and B while a further two sorties were cancelled due to weather. Two further aircraft carried out anti-submarine sweeps in area C, which was an area generally north-east of Tadji to a depth of about 120 miles. These night time patrols were carried out at 2000 feet, and off the But area three lights were seen on the beach spaced about 1000 yards apart. Two flares were dropped at which point the lights were extinguished and these lights reappeared as the aircraft left the area. The next day Oscar Barton led seven other aircraft to bomb anti-aircraft positions at Cape Wom, Wewak Point and Cape Moem. The aim of the strike was to suppress these positions while a Catalina effected the rescue of four crew members of a USAAF B-25 Mitchell shot down off Wewak. Spasmodic but effective anti-aircraft fire from Boram had earlier brought down three low-flying aircraft of the Combat Replacement and Training Centre. The crew from the Mitchell that ditched in the sea managed to climb into a dinghy and paddled
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desperately to prevent themselves drifting shoreward. A Beaufort from 71 Wing was sent immediately to prevent the enemy sending out boats to capture the Americans. Meanwhile, a Catalina from Madang was to rendezvous over the area with 22 Beauforts drawn from 7, 8 and 100 Squadrons that were tasked with striking these positions during the rescue period. The Catalina landed right under the Japanese guns while the Beauforts heavily bombed the Japanese positions. The bombing was so effective that not a shot was fired from the shore and the Americans boarded the Catalina safely.

Anti-submarine sweeps were conducted throughout areas A, B and C by four aircraft on 12 November. Three aircraft returned due to adverse weather and the fourth aircraft, flown by Gordon Smylie in A9-461, had engine trouble 20 minutes out when the port magnetos started to play up and he turned back. John Debnam, the Wireless Operator, recalled that he advised the tower they would be landing east to west, which was contrary to normal. Smylie landed in steady rain and on touch down the port wheel hit a pot hole underneath the Marsden matting. As a result the aircraft bucked savagely to starboard and Smylie did the only thing he could in such a situation, he increased power to both engines to settle the aircraft in for another landing. The port engine did not respond and all the power went into the starboard engine. This sent the aircraft careering straight towards the dispersal hut which was surrounded by dozens of Army and RAAF personnel waiting for a flight out. Smylie managed to get the aircraft back onto the strip but it was still doing over 100 miles per hour. He braked hard before running out of strip but the brakes locked up and the aircraft went into a ditch. The port undercarriage collapsed and the port mainplane was damaged—severe enough for the aircraft to be converted to components. Fortunately there were no injuries to the crew.

On 14 November three aircraft were tasked to bomb buildings and barges at Lake Karamamba. Oscar Barton in A9-607 was forced to return to make an emergency landing due to engine trouble and Gordon Smylie was unable to even take off. John Matthews in A9-412 flew the only squadron aircraft able to rendezvous with Beauforts of 8 Squadron and a Boomerang of No 4 Squadron. The village on the west shore of the Lake was bombed with all bombs landing 50 yards north of target. After bombing, Matthews also experienced engine trouble and immediately returned to Tadji. A reason for the limited contribution to operations was that about 10 days before, it was noticed that cases of influenza had begun to multiply among personnel in the squadron and this naturally caused concern with the already low strength of aircrews being further depleted. The number of complete serviceable air crews available per day had varied from between one and five out of the 15 crews on strength. This small outbreak was
epidemic in nature as it appeared suddenly among the personnel newly arrived at Aitape some 10 days after their departure from Jacky Jacky. The area around Jacky Jacky was noted as being quite free from respiratory diseases; medical opinion considered that the complete absence of the minor infections there had caused a sharp loss of individual resistance to these diseases that had serious consequences on arrival at Aitape, an area never altogether free from them.

In keeping with the standard previously set at Ross River and Jacky Jacky, the squadron set about constructing an Officers Mess of some note. In very quick time the Mess was ready and on 18 November an ‘at home’ was held to mark its official opening. The opportunity was taken by the officers of the squadron to become acquainted with the Commanding Officers and officers of RAAF and other Allied units in the area. The Mess became one of the best in this area with shaded light decorations and a beer garden. On learning that limited supplies of beer were to be made available to all ranks of all the Services in New Guinea, the squadron’s Welfare Committee had organised working parties to construct a separate beer garden on the beach area adjacent to the camp. Here the men were able to spend the evening hours beneath palm trees and near the water. Additional support came from the members of the Beaufort Squadron’s Adoption Fund at the DAP at Mascot, which adopted 7 Squadron for the supply of special comforts.

On 20 November the first of the supply dropping sorties was carried out by Ossie Morgan and crew who flew two details at Army request to Babieng. Then Oscar Barton led four other aircraft to bomb enemy bivouac areas. The strike was led in by a Boomerang aircraft of 4 Squadron that dropped smoke bombs at the limits of the target area. All bombs were concentrated within 200 yards of the target and strafing runs followed but the results were not observed due to cloud, smoke and dust. The strike was successful though due to the excellent cooperation with the Boomerang and this emphasised that under such conditions it would have been impossible to operate otherwise with any degree of accuracy. On this strike, Army officers were carried as passengers to observe the bombing first hand. The level of cooperation that developed between the RAAF and AIF units through working closely together on operations was a notable aspect of operations in the New Guinea area, and led to a strong bond of friendship between them. Many AIF officers made official and social visits to the squadron and on almost every strike several of them flew in the squadron’s aircraft. Back at Jacky Jacky the rear party had cleared up the site, sealed latrines and arranged for remaining consumables to be flown to Tadji. By this time the effective strength of the squadron had now risen to 17 crews with three other incomplete crews, even though only three were available due to continued
illness. Operations remained restricted for this reason with only a further 10 anti-submarine patrols flown up until the end of the month and squadron aircraft participated in two strikes on each of Ranimboa and Sahik villages and one strike on Megahen.

There was considerable excitement on 1 December when Avro Lancaster PD328, under the command of Wing Commander McKinley RAF, arrived at Tadji during a world navigation flight. Between 21 October and 14 December 1944 this Lancaster, operated by staff of the RAF Empire Air Navigation School, undertook a round-the-world flight visiting numerous Commonwealth operational and training centres. While at Tadji the crew gave a lecture to all aircrew of 7, 8 and 100 Squadrons on the latest navigational and radar developments. This lecture was followed by a demonstration of the apparatus in the aircraft. The same day, Oscar Barton in A9-607 led five other aircraft to bomb and strafe Selnaua Village. Barton proceeded to the target and advised of weather conditions before the remaining aircraft took off. Only Barton was able to bomb, using incendiaries that could be dropped from 500 feet, with cloud preventing all other aircraft from bombing with their load of high explosives.

Crews flew anti-submarine patrols, searches or naval cooperation photographic sorties during the first week of December and on 4 December Oscar Barton led seven other aircraft to bomb and strafe Sahik village in the Nanu East area. A total of 38 bombs, six incendiary devices and 3800 rounds of ammunition were expended on this target. There was excellent coverage of the target with bombs through the village and in the timber on all sides. Work was progressing satisfactorily on the camp area, albeit slowly, owing to flying commitments with the squadron still supplying fatigue parties and the airstrip fire crew. Over the next few days strikes were flown against Musimbilim, Selnaua, Sowam and New Sahik Villages with up to 10 aircraft. As a result, Musimbilim Village was demolished. Then on 13 December crews bombed a number of enemy positions under radio instructions from the ground forces. During the bombing of some of these targets the forward troops were within 280 yards of the enemy positions being targeted. The positions of the forward troops were clearly noticeable as ground to air markers had been laid out.

By the middle of the month, squadron aircraft continued to be assigned to carry out various anti-submarine patrols and to strike at Japanese positions in and around native villages. Strikes with follow up strafing were conducted practically every day with anti-submarine patrols on most days. On 20 December during an anti-submarine patrol, Oscar Barton in A9-607 sighted no submarines and investigated a seaplane sighting that proved to be a submerged aircraft. He dropped anti-submarine bombs on the submerged aircraft but these overshot
and results could not be observed. He also sighted a sampan type houseboat of about 70 feet in length that appeared to be new or in rebuilt condition. He scored a direct hit on this vessel with two 250 pound bombs leaving debris only. Then while cruising along the coast, Barton sighted another 70 foot sampan at the mouth of the Sepik. Rising to 2000 feet, he released a bomb that scored a direct hit, leaving the boat under water. Leading up to Christmas, strikes were carried out against enemy installations at Suain East and Nagrubu Village on the Keram River with strafing of Sepik River villages.

Christmas celebrations at Tadji were held on 24 December due to Christmas Day itself being an operational day. A small orchestra of seven players had been formed during the month and after several rehearsals played to appreciative audiences at the Christmas functions in the Officers, Sergeants and Airmen’s Messes. The airmen’s Christmas dinner was served at noon and following the normal custom, the men were waited on by the officers and sergeants, who partook of their meal later in the day. Squadron Leader Len Parsons flew A9-323 to Kerowagi, a small airstrip 5000 feet up in the mountains inland from the Madang, to collect some fresh food to supplement the rations for the Christmas lunch. He returned with a pig and potatoes, onions and mountain tomatoes. These latter ingredients were made into a good rich tomato soup and followed up by the Australian Comforts Fund hamper and a bottle of beer for each airman. It was also about this time that the squadron radio hour, which was broadcast throughout the camp each evening between to 1800 hours and 1900 hours, commenced. Musical recordings were interspersed with news commentaries, educational sessions, medical talks and other talks of general interest. In case the Japanese were thinking that offensive activities would be minimal on Christmas Day six aircraft proceeded to the operational area to await ground instructions. The strike was dispersed to several areas with one aircraft bombing a Japanese bivouac area and two bombing Musinau, collapsing three huts and strafing the area. Three aircraft bombed Karasau and two huts in the centre of the village were left burning; this area was also strafed. Musinau Village and slopes were again the target on 27 December where seven aircraft landed bombs in the target area with a good coverage of the centre of the target and the eastern and western slopes. Four huts were observed to blow up and many others were later observed destroyed. The village and slopes were well covered except for the southern end where 15 to 20 huts remained untouched. Perembil Village was then bombed and strafed on the last day of the year. Anti-submarine patrols continued during this period with targets of opportunity along the coast attacked on the return to base.
The New Year began with a combined RAAF sports meeting and native sing sing. The competitors from 4, 7, 8 and 100 Squadrons, No 12 Repair and Servicing Unit, No 37 Operational Base Unit and 71 Wing took part in the events which were keenly contested for excellent prize money. In the end, 7 Squadron ran out winners of the carnival. Several aircraft were still required for anti-submarine sweeps during that day and Ossie Morgan in A9-595 sighted no submarines or barges but bombed a red roofed hut on Valif Island. This was a direct hit and there was a hole in the roof but the bomb did not explode. Gordon Smylie in A9-607 also made no sightings but bombed positions where lights were seen at Wewak Point. Three bombs landed in the sea but the fourth was on target. One of the first strikes in the New Year was on a Japanese pillbox beyond the Danmap River, made by formations led by the newly promoted Wing Commander Oscar Barton and Flight Lieutenant Syd Wright. A Boomerang pilot reported that the target was practically obliterated. The Army took the position soon after and reported that 41 of the 60 bombs dropped fell dead on the target, destroying the pillbox and an area cleared for 25 yards around it. Syd Wright led strikes on 2 and 3 January against Perembil Village and to bomb and strafe Asiling Village with incendiaries, which started extensive fires and burnt out the centre of the village. Three days later Oscar Barton led 12 aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions in the area from Matapau to Cape Djeruan. Due to the accuracy of the attack and the confidence of the ground forces in the ability of the squadron, Australian Imperial Force troops were able to advance almost to the target area before the completion of the attack. That same day, 11 aircraft bombed and strafed a suspected enemy headquarters in the area of But West.

Strikes continued over the next week with attacks on a suspected enemy headquarters, a gun position and possible barge loading point, the New Supari, Selnaua and Bombisini Villages and enemy gun positions south of Wewak Airstrip and old buildings at Wewak Mission. Flying Officer Norm Raw also led three aircraft to bomb and strafe an enemy headquarters near But West with all 14 bombs falling in the target area and 5300 rounds fired.

The year 1944 had ended with 950 tons of squadron stores still at Jacky Jacky awaiting transport to Tadji. These stores included the safe, chairs, parachutes, tents and flies, but no shipping space was available and they continued to be managed by the rear party consisting of seven airmen. On 12 January, an enemy submarine sank an American tanker in Humboldt Bay and the United States 7th Fleet called on 71 Wing to carry out anti-submarine operations in this area. The 7th Fleet was concerned about the submarine threat to Hollandia, which was then a major port for the departure of convoys to the Philippines.
and the transfer of fuel from overseas tankers to smaller tankers for forward movement. It appears that the RAAF thought this an over-reaction and made representations to the 7th Fleet that anti-submarine searches be reviewed, and if possible, eliminated. This was met with a refusal. Not only did these patrol duties strain the resources of 71 Wing but the situation was aggravated by the difficulty, common in other areas, of obtaining precise information on shipping movements.

Early in January RAAF personnel visited forward Army positions in the coastal areas from Aitape to Cape Niap. The aim was to observe the results of air strikes, Army dispositions and methods and the organisation of patrols to better understand the topography, to contact the troops in forward positions and visit the outer perimeter of operations. The squadron representatives were led by Oscar Barton and Captain Urquhart, the squadron’s Army Liaison Officer, and included Barton’s crew, Syd Wright and crew, the Intelligence Officer Flying Officer Glen Pearson and Ossie Morgan. The Headquarters of the 19th Infantry Brigade hosted the group. At Cape Niap they saw considerable evidence of the strike by 12 of the squadron’s aircraft on 6 January that had enabled the AIF troops to move in immediately after strafing and occupy the positions. Trees were heavily damaged by shrapnel and bomb craters appeared to have caused a minor fall of earth, however, the impression was formed that a considerable weight of bombs, well placed, was necessary to produce results on anything like a moderate scale in the jungle. Accuracy was essential as was precise target information.

On 13 January Syd Wright led six aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions at Selaminger. The target was inaccessible, so targets of opportunity were attacked, mainly huts located in various positions. The windshield of A9-595 was shattered by shrapnel from the bombs of another aircraft but there were no injuries to the crew. Minor anti-aircraft fire was also experienced but no hits were scored on any aircraft. In the early part on January the squadron was seriously under strength, and although some replacements had arrived by the middle of the month, the service party and both flights were still deficient of technical mustering, particularly Fitter 11E, Fitter 11A, flight riggers and flight mechanics. This was soon rectified and those who had been advised of their posting south a month before were finally able to get away. As could be expected, the standard of new technical postings was not up to that of the experienced squadron personnel who were leaving. This was also due in many cases to the technical mustering not having had any previous experience on servicing Beauforts.

Norm Raw was returning from an anti-submarine patrol in A9-364 on 16 January and after receiving permission to land from the tower, made the
normal approach from west to east. As the aircraft touched down the starboard tyre blew out. Raw kept the starboard wheel off the ground by use of aileron for 30 or 40 yards and as it touched again attempted to keep the aircraft straight by use of brakes and the opposite engine. After a further run of 50 yards a swing to starboard started and developed rapidly. The aircraft swung off the strip and into a ditch and the undercarriage collapsed, resulting in further serious damage to the aircraft structure. Subsequent examination of the starboard tyre, which was badly damaged, pointed to the possibility of a protruding piece of metal strip matting having cut the tyre at the moment of landing, but this could not be definitely established.

![Beaufort A9-364 (KT-V) after its accident on 16 January 1945.](source: Beaufort Restoration Group.)

Strikes and other operational sorties continued for the remainder of the month. Urgently needed wireless equipment was dropped for the Army over a period of three days, and at least one strike was conducted on each day. Numerous villages, stores dumps and enemy positions were bombed and strafed during this period, including one concentrated mission when 46 bombs landed in the target area and 15 000 rounds were fired in strafing. Bill Dawson led nine aircraft on 28 January to bomb and strafe Terawon Village where 50 bombs landed on the target and surrounds, destroying at least 12 huts and cratering...
the adjacent area. On this strike Wing Commander Hutchinson and Squadron Leaders Fletcher and Drake, all RAF, flew in squadron aircraft to experience operations in New Guinea. The following day two villages were bombed and strafed with over 20,000 rounds fired providing excellent coverage of the areas. During these operations only one aircraft was holed by return fire. The squadron steadily built up its scale of effort and operations were mainly in direct support of advancing AIF troops in the jungle. Results were reported throughout as having been good, and on a number of occasions aircrews had the satisfaction of hearing first hand descriptions from AIF officers and men of the damage done from their attacks.

By January the aircrew position in 71 Wing had deteriorated to a point where crew strengths were barely two-thirds of establishment. In 7 Squadron, between 19 January and the end of the month, 26 aircrew were posted to their home States at the completion of their tropical tour and this, together with many of the senior ground crew being posted home, left the squadron temporarily very low in manpower, particularly when the arrival of replacements was delayed. Torrential rains at the end of the month brought creeks and rivers up beyond flood levels and the majority of bridges in the area were washed away. Although the rains were of a relatively short duration, the roads from the campsite to the airstrip were badly washed out and transport had to be towed through the larger washaways. Operations were held up as a result but AIF engineers, working under difficulties and with little equipment, soon had the roads serviceable again. Most of the squadron's camp area remained dry but small sections of the airmen's lines in the centre were flooded for two days. By the end of the month the squadron received 50 books from the RAAF Educational Services in the form of a small circulating library. These books covered a wide range of subjects and in addition to combating boredom were hoped to assist members to improve their outlook on world affairs and formulate their plans for the future.

On arrival at Aitape it was immediately decided to pay particular attention to camp hygiene and general cleanliness of sleeping areas for the airmen, sergeants and officers. To provide some incentive, Oscar Barton instituted a points system in connection with the airmen's tents, which were inspected every Tuesday morning. A Corporal or senior Leading Aircraftman was placed in charge of each tent. Two prizes were awarded weekly for the best tents and further prizes were awarded for the most improved tent. Once inspections started it was found that airmen, after stand down or on rest days, were continually occupied with making improvements to their tents, with many combing the area for discarded equipment left behind by the Americans that could be utilised. Ingenious ideas and gardens were continually being installed and improved upon, wells were
sunk outside of tents and rockeries and ferneries added. Trellises were made of jungle timber and converted into attractive rustic designs. As the squadron had now been at Aitape for about three months, many of the tents had evolved from the bare 12 x 14-foot military tent to ‘tropical villas’. Some airmen had obtained species of tropical orchids, flowers and shrubs and vegetable seeds from Australia. Following the standards set by the airmen, a high standard was subsequently required of the officers and sergeants, whose tent areas had also greatly improved.

With Army units better established in the forward areas, the marking of targets by mortar smoke was introduced and was increasingly used until practically all Army request targets were indicated by this method. With smoke marked targets the possibility of incorrect identification, formerly a concern to all aircrew, was virtually eliminated. The bomb loads carried during January were generally standardised as two 500 pound and four 250 pound bombs with one second delay fusing, this delay being required to achieve penetration of covered earth defensive positions. On 28 January A9-660 was being delivered to the squadron by Wing Commander Nigel Barker with crew of Flying Officer Allan Dalglish, navigator, and WAGs Colin Chisholm and Alf Bate. This crew was being posted to the squadron for flying duties as supernumerary aircrew, although it was intended that once sufficient experience had been gained Barker would take over from Oscar Barton. The aircraft was reported missing en route from Port Moresby to Lae via the Kokoda Gap. One of the passengers in the aircraft was Flight Sergeant Bill Pratt, a WAG in Perc Smith’s crew, who was returning to the squadron from a short operational leave. On leaving Port Moresby for Tadji via Lae, Barker agreed to escort a P-40 Kittyhawk (A29-649). Nothing was heard from either aircraft from the time they left Port Moresby. When it was known that they had not arrived at Lae, signals were sent to all airfields in that part of New Guinea asking for information on the aircraft. All replied that nothing had been heard from them. A search was organised and aircraft thoroughly searched the route which they had intended to take and a large additional area over which they may have flown. During all searches no trace was found of either aircraft. The subsequent Court of Inquiry was of the opinion that the two aircraft collided or flew simultaneously into mountains while in close formation and flying in rain or low cloud. Both aircraft were discovered in 1961 near Myola.

To provide for increased safety in this area of operations, all new pilots were given a dual check on arrival at the squadron. Before carrying out any bombing sorties, pilots flew as a passenger on at least one strike. Also, sufficient daylight operations were flown to ensure adequate knowledge of local conditions and
terrain before being detailed for night operations. During the early part of February, anti-submarine patrols continued, again in some extremely poor weather. On 11 February A9-599 was lost while on an anti-submarine patrol in Area A in weather that was considered satisfactory for such an operation. The crew consisted of Ray O’Farrell, with navigator Flight Lieutenant Ron Thomas and WAG Warrant Officers Jim Starling and Clyde Warbrook. The crew took off after midnight, then entered the patrol area and flew out to sea. Nothing was heard of the aircraft from that time on. When it became obvious that it was overdue, everything possible was done. An immediate check of other airfields was made to establish that it had not made an emergency landing elsewhere. When it was found that this was not the case, all available squadron crews took to the air in the morning and made a thorough search of the patrol area and the area surrounding it up to the maximum limit of endurance. Aircraft from 100 Squadron and a Catalina also joined the search. Although the visibility was excellent, no trace of the aircraft or crew was seen. Allied Air Forces again made representations to the 7th Fleet concerning the shipping cover at Hollandia, pointing out that RAAF forces at Tadji were fully employed in supporting the land forces in the Wewak area and were based there for that particular purpose. The air cover was absorbing a great part of the RAAF’s effort at the expense of support for the ground forces. Again a request was made that these day and night patrols up to 100 miles seaward of Hollandia be reduced or eliminated altogether. The 7th Fleet finally agreed that due to the reduced likelihood of submarine attack these anti-submarine patrols could cease. The cancellation of these patrols by the middle of March following the unexplained loss of O’Farrell and his crew was received with relief by all crews. Although long overdue and small compensation for the loss of an experienced crew, these patrols were not considered to have served any useful purpose. The identification of every suspicious radar contact received during the patrol was impossible, with one crew logging 53 surface contacts. That the aircraft engaged on these patrols had a deterrent effect on enemy submarine activity seems hardly likely when a submarine succeeded in torpedoing a vessel in Hollandia Harbor while the patrol was active. Whether the loss of O’Farrell and his crew influenced the 7th Fleet’s decision is not recorded, but was likely instrumental. Anti-submarine patrols were now only carried out in response to specific requests.

Close support of the ground forces remained the predominant task and the squadron carried out a number of strikes to reduce a force of enemy troops holding a high ridge on Nambut Hill that threatened the Australian Imperial Force’s forward line of communication in the Abau area. In the later stages of these attacks, 500 pound bombs with rod extensions were used to bomb on
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mortar smoke indications laid 150 yards from the forward troops. Because of the high standard of accuracy attained by crews, these very close strikes were completely successful, enabling troops to take the feature with minimal casualties. Oscar Barton led strikes over the second week in February to bomb and strafe Kumango, Bombita and Sowan Villages. Similar strikes continued over the third week of the month although weather caused diversions to secondary targets or cancellation altogether. On 24 February John Knight led eight aircraft to bomb and strafe Ilahop. All bombs fell in the target area with a good coverage on the western end where seven huts were destroyed. Eight aircraft returned to this village later in the day with practically all the target area cratered and huts demolished. Then on 27 February, John Knight led seven aircraft to bomb and strafe a Japanese multiple 75mm gun position at But West. One aircraft went unserviceable at take off but the bombs of the remaining six were on or near the smoke indicators and the area thoroughly strafed. The enemy attempted a smoke indicator diversion but this was easily identified. Following the strike, the Army moved in to the area and captured 15 guns. It seems that about this time, Oscar Barton ordered that following each strike a drawing of a bomb would be painted below the cockpit of the aircraft involved. When it was pointed out that these strikes were more of a ‘milk run,’ this was changed to marking the aircraft with milk bottles.

Beaufort A9-356 ‘Salome’ with Pilot Flight Lieutenant Norm Raw and Navigator Flying Officer Ron Scanlon. Note the milk bottle markings.
Source: Tom Kelly.
Following the move of the squadron it soon became necessary to construct buildings for church services and as a centre for the Padre’s activities. Owing to the scarcity of native labour it seemed likely that some time would pass before a building was erected, so the call for volunteers was made to which 34 responded. Under the guidance of Padre Sherlock, the building was completed and measured 70 x 20-feet. It was appointed with a sanctuary, altar rails and other furnishings. At the rear of the chapel a hut 50 x 20-feet was erected providing space for the Padre's office, library, reading and writing rooms. The chapel was opened and dedicated as Saint Michael and All Angels Church, Tadji on Sunday 18 February with the building packed to capacity. Singing was led by the 2/7th Battalion Band. Between 200 and 300 people attended the simple services held on Sunday nights. Padre Sherlock also convened discussion groups each Tuesday night that were well attended. Papers and magazines from the squadron messes were collected and dropped to the front line AIF troops. Sherlock also experienced a narrow escape at Aitape. His tent was quite near the little bakery—essentially a bush oven—in which the bread was cooked and stored for the squadron. One night a group of Japanese, who became aware of its location, decided to raid the bread store. Some guards apparently disturbed them, shots were fired and a bullet had gone through the Padre's tent, fortunately while he was lying down in his bunk.

In January the shortage of fuel caused a restriction of operations for three weeks until a ship carrying fuel arrived. Northern Command warned on 2 February that anti-submarine patrols and support for the 6th Australian Division would have to cease on 8 February because of lack of fuel, but the arrival of further supplies prevented this from occurring. Enemy resistance to the 6th Australian Division at Malin and Balif was increasing and it was expected that there would be a greater call from the Army for bombing effort. Frequent talks by AIF officers from the front line also boosted the morale of the aircrews considerably when they realised that the damage inflicted due from their bombing was much greater than was observed from the aircraft. At the end of February, there were 16 out of a total of 19 aircraft on strength, 39 officers out of 59 and 296 airmen out of 302. Squadron operations were affected from there being insufficient vehicles available to transport personnel to the airstrip. One improvement at the airstrip was the establishment of flight offices with improved facilities for both air and ground crew. This greatly assisted in increasing general efficiency around the tarmac area, however, there were still 18 vehicles belonging to the squadron at Jacky Jacky that were needed at Tadji and advice was received that it was unlikely that shipping space would be made available before the end of May.
In bases located away from populated areas, servicemen generally had to make their own recreation. From the time the RAAF landed at Aitape, cricket was popular. The Tadji Cricket Association was formed in November with 14 teams from both RAAF and Army units, including two from 7 Squadron.

On 2 March 1945, Norm Raw remembered flying A9-327 on an anti-submarine patrol escorting the transport USS Hal George that was carrying the 9th Australian Division. When relieved, Raw did the customary beat up of the ship, to the delight of the troops on board, and set course for Tadji. Ahead of the ship he suddenly saw a feathery wake, the typical sign of a periscope of a submerged submarine. With bomb doors open he started a low run across the wake of the submarine and was about to release a stick of depth charges when a huge tail reared up from the water. He was surprised to encounter a whale only about 2 degrees below the Equator. With the steady advance from the coast inland, targets became more difficult to attack as in the mountain country the cloud base was often too low for safe bombing. It was found unprofitable to attempt strikes in this area except early in the day as by mid-morning the cloud had usually built up over the mountains to such an extent that obtaining safety height for bombing was almost impossible. Aircraft serviceability also hampered operations, which was due to two main factors: the first was that the squadron was now required to carry out 240 hourly inspections rather than them being
undertaken by a repair and servicing unit. This was straining the resources of the squadron due to the lack of equipment, spare parts, replacement aircraft and experienced personnel. The second was the age of the majority of aircraft held by the squadron, which increased minor unserviceability. Strikes against enemy occupied villages, ridges and other features continued. John Knight led a number of strikes in early March usually consisting of six aircraft. Huts were destroyed, the surrounding areas heavily strafed and leaflets dropped on villages in the Maprik area.

Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding between the squadron and Army ground units, casualties were inflicted on 6th Division forward troops, one being killed and six wounded, during close support operations in the Annum River area of But West on 6 March. Also a number of targets were proving difficult to find. When returning from a strike on 8 March, Flight Lieutenant Dick Ottaway in A9-637 landed on the airstrip with the wheels retracted. There were no injuries to the crew but the aircraft was so damaged that it had to be converted to components.

During the middle of March there were two unfortunate incidents that affected the operations of all three squadrons at Tadji. Both involved aircraft from 100 Squadron. On two different days, A9-650 and then A9-625 exploded in mid air while releasing bombs over the target. Following the second explosion a conference was held with all squadron Commanding Officers and witnesses in an endeavour to ascertain the cause. In the meantime, all bombing by aircraft in the area with suspect bombs was suspended till further notice pending an investigation. Four officer specialists from RAAF Headquarters arrived a week later to carry out an investigation into these premature explosions. The specialists accompanied 100 Squadron personnel on flight tests carrying bombs and components; ground tests were also conducted. Their investigation concluded that the bomb tail unit was constructively weak and did not correctly perform the operation of arming the tail pistol. Instructions were issued that until further notice all bombs were to be nose fused only. No 100 Squadron recommenced operations straight away, the other squadrons having already done so. As it was, bomb stocks in area were sufficient for only eight days of operations and an urgent demand for new stocks had been submitted.

On 14 March, John Knight led four aircraft to attack an enemy hill feature. Two other aircraft did not make the target with one returning to base with engine trouble and another unserviceable at take off. At least three huts were destroyed and others damaged. Again the enemy tried to fire diversionary smoke markers but these were easily discernable from those of the Army. Ilaheta was bombed and strafed two days later with limited success as nine bombs failed to explode
and four hung up and were later jettisoned. Enemy troops or installations were strafed at Yambon, Lahinga and Brugnowi and two aircraft dropped ammunition to Allied troops and then carried out a reconnaissance in the Sepik River area on 20 March. After a periscope was sighted on 21 March, Flying Officer Len Morley in A9-607 carried out an anti-submarine search of the area but no contact was made. The following day A9-323 crashed on take off from Jackson’s Strip near Port Moresby. During the take off run, the aircraft would not become airborne and Perc Smith closed the throttles and braked but ran off the end of the strip into scrub. Smith suffered lacerations and mild concussion, Warrant Officer Bob Moon, a lacerated hand and broken shoulder and Flying Officer Don Sutherland, Flight Sergeant Francis Gannon and Sergeant Lloyd Lewis, passenger, all received minor abrasions. Enemy concentrations were bombed and strafed for the remainder of March although low cloud again restricted some operations. It was about this time that tactical reconnaissance sorties were introduced along the coast and in the Maprik and Sepik River areas where aircraft in ones or twos sought out targets of opportunity.

No 7 Squadron personnel enthusiastically embraced their involvement in surf life saving teams that patrolled the beach area while swimming was in progress. These patrols were proving to be a valuable asset. As an example, on 30 March six personnel were assisted to shore by these teams and saved from probable drowning. To maintain keenness and to foster inter-team rivalry it was proposed to conduct regular surf carnivals, the first of which was conducted on 1 April, at which all RAAF units were represented. Aircraftman Sam Chani, an instrument repairer, recalled a strong undertow in the Aitape beach area. He taught prospective life-savers the principles of anatomy and physiology, having been a medical student pre-war, and a knowledge of those subjects was a requirement for the Bronze Medallion in lifesaving and for becoming a member of the lifesaving team. To his stunned surprise, one day early in 1945 he was called before Oscar Barton where he discovered that he was to be naturalised. Born in Poland, Chani had applied for Australian citizenship before the war and at that time was told that after the usual five years residency requirement it would be granted, so he didn’t think much more about it. He always considered it a credit to the bureaucracy that some five years later while serving in New Guinea, Barton was delegated to perform the naturalisation ceremony while on active service. Professional and amateur parade concerts commenced at Aitape during March, and these proved to be an outstanding success and contributed to maintaining morale. All personnel in the area continued to suffer from the lack of fresh fruit and this was attributed to the shortage of refrigerator barges and, as with most operational supplies, transport generally. Finally the squadron
was advised that the remaining elements of its equipment, other than motor transport, had departed for Aitape by sea on 19 March.

Beaufort A9-397 (KT-U) being readied for another strike, sometime in the first quarter of 1945.

Source: Tom Kelly.

The first week of April did not begin all that well for the squadron. Few of its aircraft were serviceable and crews were restless from having so little flying to do. This was not helped when a high percentage of aircraft went unserviceable as they were taxying out for take off on one of the few sorties tasked to the squadron, or returned with some problem on the way to the target area. On a single day, three aircraft out of eight went unserviceable at take off. During the first 10 days of the month there were only seven strikes ordered, all of six aircraft or less. On one of these strikes on 6 April, Leo Plumridge led four aircraft to bomb and strafe Walandum and its surrounding area and then strafe the track from Walandum to an unnamed village. While en route to the target area, crews noticed a very sudden swirl in the sea that could have been caused by a submarine suddenly submerging, but the muddy water prevented any further observation. The squadron continued to support the ground offensive by
bombing and strafing enemy positions including Mikau and adjacent villages, and Tambaran. At Katoma on 14 April, Flight Lieutenant Peter Fisher led eight aircraft with excellent coverage of target area. At least 10 huts were destroyed and others damaged. There was one explosion with an initial flash of flame up to 100 feet and black smoke rising to 1000 feet into the sky.

From 10 April preparations commenced for Operation ‘Deluge’, the Australian combined land, air and amphibious operation to take the Wewak Peninsula and the Wewak airfield from the Japanese. This involved troops of the 6th Australian Division advancing along the New Guinea coast to pin down the Japanese defenders while an amphibious landing at Dove Bay cut-off the Japanese from the south. No 71 Wing, including 7 Squadron, would be required to provide substantial support. A conference was held with Commanding Officers to discuss issues. For 7 Squadron, three additional aircraft—A9-466, A9-646 and A9-648—were delivered to the unit, but this still only raised the squadron strength to 15. Additional personnel were requested to complete establishment, specifically 12 fitters, one electrical fitter, one instrument maker, 16 aircraft hands and three complete aircrews.

A few days later, on 16 April 1945 while photographing a defended area on Boram Point from a height of 20 feet, Norm Raw’s aircraft A9-648 was hit by machine gun fire from the ground. A main fuel line was holed causing one engine to lose most of its power, but with the other engine at maximum, Raw managed to return to Tadji. On 21 April Leo Plumridge led five aircraft to bomb and strafe an unnamed village with three huts destroyed and other bombs dropped on the southern and western slopes. The area was well strafed with one other hut fired and possible ammunition store destroyed. This then resulted in one of the most successful strikes by the squadron. The target village ended up being totally destroyed by the explosion of an ammunition dump and then a nearby unnamed village was strafed and one hut was fired. Aided by a slight breeze, the fire spread and the whole village was burnt out. The following day the squadron contributed to the 34 aircraft of the Wing that carried out an intense bombing and strafing strike against Major General Sadahiko Miyake’s headquarters. For the remainder of the month the squadron mounted larger formations on strikes. Brugnowi, Ulebilium, Nungagu, Kumbungua and Waigakum were all targeted, with adverse weather causing diversions to some secondary targets. On 29 April, Flight Lieutenant Malcolm ‘Dick’ Humphrey led six aircraft to bomb a gun position on Kairiru Island. The bombs overshot the target and fell along a ridge destroying several huts but the gun appeared undamaged. One aircraft was holed through the mainplane from small arms fire.
The increase in the scale of effort during the latter part of April had a direct beneficial effect on general morale for all personnel. It reached a new high when on Sunday 29 April the squadron surf life saving team won the trophy in the RAAF Inter-units Surf Life Saving Carnival held in the Aitape area by a bare margin of four points. Having the surf and the beach so close was instrumental in keeping squadron personnel occupied and healthy in their off-duty hours. This was also helped by having a comfortable airmen’s recreation hut. New indoor games were provided as well as extra chairs and reading tables, and the Australian Comforts Fund had loaned a radio. Another cricket inter-unit competition was organised and matches commenced on 28 April. It was unfortunate but necessary for local arrangements to be made to obtain supplies of fresh fruit to supplement rations. Educational services were also much sought after, and full advantage was being taken of the courses that were available. During April a few of the squadron’s crews attained a high standard in tactical reconnaissance. These crews were employed almost solely on this task.
and in the opinion of the 6th Australian Division were equal to the specialist skills of the Boomerang squadrons. Frank Smyth, the Wings correspondent, recorded that the bulk of the Army’s intelligence on Japanese movements, defences and troop concentrations in northern New Guinea came from aerial tactical reconnaissance flown by Beauforts. The Army had made a specific request to the RAAF that tactical reconnaissance missions be flown only by certain Beaufort crews because the information they furnished had proved very reliable. A special tactical reconnaissance flight was formed with all the crews being from 7 Squadron. The commander of the flight was Flight Lieutenant Alan Tutt with the other crews being captained by Flight Lieutenant Nelson Hill, Leo Plumridge and Len Morley. Although still meagre, enemy opposition in the form of machine gun and small arms fire increased over the month with aircraft damaged by returned fire on three occasions. Strafing was hampered by the excessively large number of stoppages caused by the use of a defective batch of incendiary ammunition. It seems incredible that this was old ammunition of a class reported to have been previously rejected by gunnery schools in Australia. How it came to be sent to an operational area is unknown. Fresh stocks were received and the trouble ceased. At the end of the month the squadron was in a position to put 13 aircraft and crews into the air three times a day should it be required to do so.

For the forthcoming offensive operations, the squadrons of 71 Wing were given the task of softening up targets at each objective area and of achieving their maximum operational effort on D-Day (11 May 1945), in support of the amphibious operation at Dove Bay and the simultaneous advance of the troops moving along the coast to Wewak. To increase the striking power of the Wing, Beaufort detachments from both No 6 and No 15 Squadrons were drafted in.

No 7 Squadron was required to be capable of sustaining an absolute maximum number of operations for a period of four consecutive days from 7–10 May inclusive, with the possibility of a further two days of operations. D-Day was later confirmed as 11 May. The squadron revised its organisation to maximise the use of its resources for this type of activity. The system of bombing up was reorganised to achieve the automatic bombing up of aircraft as soon as they landed from the previous strike, as well as providing a more efficient setup for last minute changes to bomb loads. To enable this to occur as quickly as possible, 10 additional men were provided from various other sections. The time taken to rearm all aircraft was the limiting factor to the number of strikes possible per day; this time was cut to 2¼ hours for 15 aircraft. It was also decided that there was avoidable time wastage occurring in the transport of maintenance personnel to and from the dispersal area at the lunch hour. Consequently, a
messing tent was erected so that those who were required at the dispersal area would be continuously available. In addition, a control point tent was erected with a telephone switchboard and radio set, so that serviceability reports were received from aircraft when on return from strikes and the appropriate sections were notified before the aircraft arrived.

During the softening up operations against the Wewak area prior to D-Day, several attacks were made against area targets. The main targets during this period were a motor transport park and tank hideout, gun emplacements, an enemy pillbox and General Miyake’s headquarters area; all targets that required to be suppressed prior to the landing. Preparations for the offensive gave little time to celebrate the official end to the war in Europe, news of which was announced on the afternoon of 8 May. The air offensive commenced the following day with the Wing flying up to 57 Beauforts at a time. Peter Fisher led 10 aircraft to bomb enemy positions on a hill feature near Sauri. Later in the day Oscar Barton led 11 aircraft to bomb enemy positions located on a small cliff.
near Wewak. Three aircraft went unserviceable at take off and there was only a fair coverage with some bombs short and others on top of the cliff, up to 100 yards over. One aircraft was holed from return fire through the mainplane and another through the tail. The following day Oscar Barton led 10 aircraft to bomb gun pits, enemy equipment and 75mm guns with the area being well covered. Peter Fisher in A9-481 and Norm Raw in A9-608 were unexpectedly tasked with carrying out an anti-submarine patrol over a convoy up towards Biak Island. Altogether, the Wing carried out 90 strikes.

For D-Day, 71 Wing had prepared a force of more than 60 Beauforts and Boomerangs to assist with the Dove Bay landing, although the 13 aircraft from 7 Squadron were placed on air alert to be called on to carry out any tasks which became necessary during the operations. The remaining Beauforts carried out pre-arranged strikes on enemy positions and huts on a ridge 1000 feet high, commanding the landing beach area. However, the squadron was soon called upon with Alan Tutt in A9-646 providing air coordination and air observation over the Wewak area that resulted in good bombing by 7 and 100 Squadrons on retreating enemy troops and coastal positions. During this operation, Tutt was fired on by anti-aircraft guns of various calibres and deliberately flew low to draw their fire in order to locate the gun positions. Oscar Barton led six aircraft to bomb enemy positions and troops seen moving southwards with all bombs landing in the target area. Later, Dick Humphrey led another seven aircraft to attack defensive positions on a hill feature, however, the intensity of operations forecast did not eventuate and Army requests diminished. On 13 May Humphrey led 10 aircraft to bomb and strafe Nungagua. The southern end of the target was well covered but there was only fair coverage on the northern end. Nine aircraft bombed Japanese occupying slit trenches on Forok Track, near the village of the same name; two huts were destroyed and all bombs fell on either side of the track, causing the Army to send a signal of congratulations on the excellent bombing. Further strikes continued inland on Forok Village, Kreer Village, Numoikum Villages and Malabasakum. On 24 May John Knight led nine aircraft to bomb enemy positions on a hill feature and then strafe Sassoia Villages. The eastern slopes of the feature towards the crest were well covered but eight bombs failed to explode. The area was heavily strafed with 24 310 rounds fired. The following day Knight led nine aircraft to bomb enemy positions at Maprik West and then strafe Malabasakum Villages. Low cloud made bombing difficult but there was a good coverage of the area and Malabasakum Villages were heavily strafed with 20 900 rounds. Follow up strikes throughout the area inland from Wewak continued, and on 26 May, Group Captain Hancock, Commanding Officer of 71 Wing, led
nine aircraft to bomb enemy positions. Three aircraft bombed Paparum Village, three bombed Tangori and three Sassoia. All aircraft then strafed Passam.

During May there had been a continued shortage of bombs in the area, as the sheltered anchorage at Aitape was very limited and untenable in bad weather. Furthermore all cargo had to be handled over the beach, as there were no wharf facilities. By the end of May the position had become acute. Not only did the shortage cause a curtailment of effort, but many bombs proved defective. Since the conclusion of the period of intensive effort, the shortage of bombs severely limited both the scope and extent of operations in support of the ground forces. Considerable trouble was experienced with captured Japanese 50 and 100 kilogram bombs, which it had been hoped could be used by the Australian airmen until further bombs stocks arrived. One load dropped was reported by Army patrols to have exploded half an hour after dropping. A number of complete loads had failed to explode at all. In a follow up to the land/air cooperation program earlier in the year, aircrews were attached to the 6th Australian Division in the Wewak area, to accompany patrols and observe the issues through the eyes of the patrol leader and to gain a better understanding of the problems faced by the ground troops. This program enabled the captain, navigator and one WAG to visit the forward positions of the Australian Army. They lived with the forward troops for a period of three or four days and obtained an excellent idea of their problems, general hardships and especially an appreciation of the terribly difficult terrain in which they were operating. Mutual problems were discussed to the benefit of their joint operations and resulted in greater cooperation between the Army and the RAAF and increased efficiency in the method of requesting and carrying out air operations. A number of troops were now being attached to the squadrons to fly on typical close support missions and thus see the weather conditions and the terrain from aloft. This enabled the Army officers to appreciate the need for the aircrew to select the most appropriate run in to avoid cloud and obtain a clear sight of the target. For the rest of May, 71 Wing flew a total of 1458 sorties and dropped 1236 tons of bombs with 7 Squadron alone firing over 210 000 rounds in strafing ground targets. Also the squadron strength had increased with 28 new personnel having arrived, making the squadron close to establishment with 45 officers, 302 other ranks and 18 aircraft. The new crews had by this time settled in well and the standard of bombing had improved accordingly.

In the Aitape camp, educational rehabilitation and correspondence courses continued to increase in popularity and the public address system was used to broadcast music and news bulletins. Living conditions were maintained at a good standard with all personnel taking a keen interest in improving the camp
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area generally. Supplies of fresh meat, vegetables and butter were now available for all personnel. A well documented story written by Frank Smyth of Kina, a native from the Kairiru Island Group off the coast from Wewak, is worth repeating. Kina had escaped from enforced Japanese labour and was assisting the Allied forces with intelligence on enemy installations throughout these islands. He had directed naval operations against the Japanese and was now invited to fly with 7 Squadron to point out targets from the air during a tactical reconnaissance sortie on 28 May. Kina flew with Oscar Barton in A9-647. Sitting in the navigator’s compartment, Kina identified gun emplacements, bivouac areas and launch hideouts not previously known. Once identified, Barton attacked these targets and Kina, who, unbeknown to Barton and his crew, had previously received rudimentary instruction in the operation of the nose guns from an armourer, soon joined in with these guns during the strafing runs.

The land offensive continued along the coast and inland from the Torricelli and Prince Alexander mountains. On 2 June Alan Tutt in A9-648 undertook a tactical reconnaissance of Maprik, a photo reconnaissance of Yamil and then led in the strike on Wewak West. This strike consisted of 12 aircraft with delayed action bombs of up to 144 hours dropped on a total of four villages. A total of 32,000 rounds were fired in strafing and 44 x 250-pound bombs dropped. Tactical reconnaissance missions attacking targets of opportunity and strikes continued on a daily basis with a significant increase in strafing. It was now common for the squadron to fire 20,000 rounds on each mission. On 7 June Alan Tutt led six aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions at Yamil and strafe Kiarevu, Karapia and Kuvari. Again there was a very good coverage of the target area with eight huts destroyed and the village of Yamil virtually wiped out. Oscar Barton led 11 aircraft to bomb positions on a ridge at Wewak West on 9 June. The majority of bombs landed on the target ridge but on return to Tadji, A9-182 piloted by Warrant Officer Cliff Reed crashed on the airstrip. After a normal landing the starboard tyre blew out causing the aircraft to ground loop and run off the strip. The port undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft was otherwise extensively damaged although no members of the crew were injured. John Knight then led two strikes on consecutive days: the first was to bomb enemy positions on a wooded ridge at Wewak West but approximately half of the Japanese bombs used failed to explode and the second comprised 10 aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions on a feature at Maprik West. Most bombs landed in the target area with at least seven huts destroyed and others damaged.
Map of Wewak villages

Direct support to Army units continued, with strikes on a hill feature and bunkers at Wewak West and enemy positions at Toroku, and on Kunai Ridge. There was increased cooperation with USAAF units in the area when Len Morley in A9-608 carried out a tactical reconnaissance east of Maprik and marked a village for B-25 Mitchells to bomb, and Flight Lieutenant Nelson Hill in A9-649 led in a further flight of B-25s to strike at Uenge, near Cape Moem. On 17 June Leo Plumridge in A9-481 carried out a tactical reconnaissance at Maprik West and led other aircraft to bomb Mipaiem. Five villages were strafed, although one aircraft was holed by return fire. Daily strikes of about nine aircraft continued around Wewak West and Maprik West with swirling winds in the mountainous areas and low cloud affecting bombing accuracy to some extent. Again, most targets were well strafed. Towards the end of June the Army requested significant support in its efforts to take Mount Shiborargau. Several days of continuous strikes against dug-in enemy positions on the slopes followed, with the bomb loads including depth charges (when fused to explode just above ground level, these caused extensive damage). On 29 June John Knight led 12 aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions with general purpose bombs and incendiary clusters. The target was a concentration of 60 Japanese on Kunai Ridge.
Ridge. The majority of bombs fell on the target area with the incendiaries starting fires in the kunai grass burning out the area. Later in the day, Knight in A9-481, Flight Lieutenant Arthur Ethell in A9-471, Warrant Officer Bob Bell in A9-646 and Warrant Officer Alan Fraser in A9-608 conducted a parallel track search for a missing B-25 Mitchell between Hollandia and Nadzab without result.

Beaufort A9-182 (KT-X) at Tadji.¹

Source: Lloyd Pike.

As with other squadrons in the Wing, the supply of bombs and ammunition, and to some extent aviation fuel, were the only factors limiting the scope and extent of 7 Squadron’s operations. A number of aircraft were holed by fragments from their own bombs although the latter had been dropped from well above the safety heights laid down. Cases of this occurred particularly with 500 pound general purpose bombs. The official safety height for this bomb with nose instantaneous fuse was 800 feet but numerous cases of fragment damage occurred with true heights of release from 1000 to 1200 feet. As a consequence, the safety height of 1500 feet above the target was instituted. Stocks of bombs fell very low towards the middle of the month and many strange combinations

¹ The aircraft was received by 7 Squadron on 6 September 1944 following service with 100 Squadron. On landing following a strike on 9 June 1945, the starboard tyre burst and the aircraft swung off the strip and ground looped, resulting in the port undercarriage collapsing and extensive damage to the aircraft, including a twisted centre section. The aircraft was converted to components on 7 February 1946
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had to be used to make loads. It had been hoped that an improved selection of Japanese 50 and 100 kilogram bombs would be the answer to the non-arrival of Allied bomb stocks but only about 60 per cent of these continued to be effective. Also at this time there were problems with the fuses for the American 250 pound bombs due to their deterioration in the tropical conditions and this resulted in a number not exploding. During the second half of the month a shortage of ammunition caused severe restrictions on strafing; by the last week stocks were practically exhausted and strafing was restricted to major targets on tactical reconnaissance missions only. In spite of this shortage, crews of the squadron fired 237,000 rounds at enemy troops and installations. Of the above total, 9,275 rounds were 0.5 inch—by far the greatest expenditure of this calibre ammunition to date. The 0.5 inch wing guns in those aircraft fitted with them had given consistently trouble free operation and proved valuable for attacks against enemy bunkers and other earthworks with the 50 calibre bullet easily penetrating defences that were a complete protection against .303 inch ammunition.

Aircrew of 7 Squadron taken at Tadji on 27 June 1945 alongside Beaufort A9-623 (KT-P).²

Source: Australian War Memorial (OG3013A).

² This aircraft served with the squadron from 26 November 1944 until it was stored at the end of 1945 and sold in August 1949
The RAAF Educational Services Scheme prompted considerable interest in correspondence courses. On 31 March there had been eight squadron members undertaking correspondence courses while on 30 June this figure had increased to 29. The squadron now had approximately double the enrolment of any other unit in the area. Details of the correspondence courses available were publicised throughout the camp and personnel were taking the opportunity to either continue their studies commenced before enlistment or to study new courses that would assist them in civil life.

The cessation of hostilities in Europe and the prospect of an early end to the Pacific war further impressed upon personnel that they would ultimately return to civilian occupation for which they would need to be well prepared. At the end of May, Flight Lieutenant Clarke reported on posting to take over squadron Chaplain duties from Padre Sherlock. Sherlock’s earlier initiative was continued by Padre Clarke, resulting in a church bell being rung for the first time at the 7 Squadron Chapel on 19 June. The bell had been bought by Jeep and barge from Tumleo Island where it had formerly hung outside a German mission destroyed by shell fire. The bell was rescued from among the debris of the mission by 348 Radar Unit and was mounted on a wooden framework built by the squadron’s carpenter near the main door of the Chapel.

July began with John Knight leading 10 aircraft to bomb the western end of Ulupu Village and strafe enemy positions at Ain Village. Alan Tutt in A9-646 carried out a tactical reconnaissance in the Maprik West to Kaboibus and Yibominu areas, destroying four huts. Peter Fisher then led eight aircraft to bomb a ridge at Maprik West and strafe Ilipem and Kaboibus Villages. Other villages attacked at this time included Slei 2, Karogo, Wereman and Ulunkoitu with enemy troop concentrations at Wewak West, Brandi River, Ulupu and a feature at Maprik West targeted. On 9 July, Nelson Hill led nine aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy positions on a feature at Maprik West. All bombs fell on the target covering the north and centre with incendiaries and firing three huts and the surrounding kunai grass. On 12 July, Dick Humphrey led 12 aircraft to bomb enemy positions on a feature at Maprik West. Only a few bombs were on target due to low cloud and heavy rain that made identification and observation difficult. Difficult weather conditions again curtailed some strikes and tactical reconnaissance missions. On 16 July, John Knight led nine aircraft to bomb and strafe enemy troops dug-in and in pillboxes and bunkers on a feature at Maprik West. Over 80 per cent of the bombs fell on or near the target.

From this date the squadron introduced another first whereby Flying Officer Max Osbiston delivered the first of a series of talks over the public address system informing those members of the squadron who were not
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directly engaged in active operations just how the campaign in these areas was progressing. On 19 July, 71 Wing advised squadrons that it intended to carry out a series of armed reconnaissance missions in the area south of the inland sector toward the Sepik River. The object of these missions was to harass and disburse enemy concentrations and report on movements. Three daily sorties were to be flown unless otherwise ordered, with each squadron undertaking all three sorties on a daily rotational basis. Specific sections and times were ordered each day and targets given on which to make an attack if no targets of opportunity were sighted. On occasions, three sorties could be ordered at the one time when information on a suitable target was obtained. These armed reconnaissance sorties provided some freedom for the crews in that the route to and from the area and the ultimate target choice was left to the individual pilot and were a welcomed change from the normal pattern of operations. Selected crews from the squadron were assigned to this task, the crew being briefed before the mission by the Army Liaison Officer attached to 71 Wing. The inland area where these flights operated was more conducive to low flying than the normal area of operations and the weather presented fewer problems.

Early in July, Oscar Barton decided to enlarge the Officers Mess and erect a new bar as the current one had proved inadequate. Officers spent their leisure hours carrying out the project and to commemorate its completion a ‘Squadron At Home’ was arranged. Official invitations were sent to members of the adjoining RAAF and Army units. The band of the 2/7th Battalion were present and played music during the evening. A buffet supper was provided by volunteer help from the combined messing staff.

On 21 July Dick Humphrey led nine aircraft to bomb and strafe defensive positions on a feature at Maprik West. Most bombs were on the target destroying four huts although strafing ceased due to heavy rain and two aircraft returned to base with engine and airframe trouble. Two days later Nelson Hill led 11 aircraft to bomb and strafe Taigeshi Village. Five aircraft bombed the target and five bombed Kwambikum in error, destroying six huts. One aircraft was tasked with marking the target with mortar bombs it was carrying but they hung up when dropped and then fell in several locations. The three armed reconnaissance sorties into the Sepik River area were flown on 23 July and nine aircraft led in by Nelson Hill also bombed and strafed defensive positions on a feature at Maprik West. A particularly successful strike on enemy positions in a village at Maprik West destroyed 21 huts, leaving only three badly damaged ones remaining. The surrounding area was heavily strafed with Japanese troops sighted retreating along Kaboibus Track coming in for special treatment. The Beauforts of 71 Wing were now becoming so adept at supporting the ground
forces that a number of strikes were now relayed to the crews as a map reference with a description of Japanese troops in dug-in positions to be targeted.

Members of the squadron’s Surf Life Saving Club were very active and the two bronze teams qualified for their medallions. A surf carnival was held on the 7 Squadron beach on Sunday, 10 July. Seven teams competed with 12 Repair and Servicing Unit defeating 7 Squadron by six points. The squadron’s rugby team played a match against the 2/7th Battalion and were defeated five to three. Aircraft serviceability increased steadily during July until at the end of the month almost all the squadron’s aircraft were serviceable. This was an exceptional achievement by the maintenance personnel, who worked under very difficult conditions with the lack of proper heavy maintenance equipment being the main drawback. The squadron’s rear echelon equipment had still not arrived at Tadji since its move nine months previously, forcing the squadron personnel to make much of their own heavy equipment. The maintenance personnel were becoming so efficient that they were able to reduce the time for a 240 hourly overhaul down to 14 days.

An unfortunate incident occurred on 22 July when Corporal Max Kotz, a fabric worker from the parachute section, was drenched by flaming petrol from an overturned petrol burner when boiling water. Kotz had more than half his body burnt with 1st and 2nd degree burns and inevitably died after three days of struggle in hospital. A keen sportsman and captain of the squadron softball team, Kotz’s popularity was evidenced by a large attendance at his funeral at Aitape War Cemetery in pouring rain, some 40 aircrew and 70 ground staff being present.

July was a very wet month and a number of missions were cancelled or postponed due to the weather. Nevertheless, 7 Squadron’s commitments in support of 6th Division increased considerably during July, with the result that the squadron had its busiest month since its arrival at Tadji. The hours flown and number of operational sorties and weight of bombs dropped all exceeded those of any previous month in New Guinea. The standard of bombing accuracy rose somewhat during the month, due in part to more constant practice by crews and in part to careful wind finding. The high level of activity resulted in bomb stocks again falling very low, with at one stage there being sufficient stocks for only three days of operations. The number of rounds fired in strafing by the squadron in July was, in spite of the increased number of strikes, lower than the previous month’s figure. This was due to two factors, namely a severe ammunition shortage during the early part of the month and an increase in the number of three squadron attacks in which only the last squadron over the target strafed. Owing to shortage of certain gunnery spares and consequent extra maintenance
Operations from Tadji, New Guinea

burden on armament section personnel, aircrew gunners were now assisting in the maintenance of guns and turrets to a greater extent than usual. This led to a much higher standard of stoppage clearing and emergency repairs in the air and therefore to better strafing results.

Bert Lakeman, Bob Bell, Cyril Legg and Jim Halbert at Tadji in 1945, in front of Beaufort A9-453 (KT-H).

Source: RAAF Museum.

With the improvement in aircraft serviceability, the squadron increased the number of aircraft available for operations. As an example, on 1 August Oscar Barton led 13 aircraft to bomb enemy positions comprised of 30 to 40 troops dug-in with overhead cover at Maprik West. The target was a ridge, and 15 per cent of the 68 bombs dropped fell on the ridge with the remainder impacting on nearby slopes. A short time later, Nelson Hill led 10 aircraft to bomb enemy defensive positions at an unnamed village at Maprik West. The following day, 12 aircraft were tasked with bombing and strafing further enemy defensive positions at Maprik West. Over the next week further strikes were undertaken on enemy positions and villages in the Maprik West area as the ground troops pushed through the main Japanese strong point. Meanwhile, the squadron
continued to provide three aircraft on every third day for armed reconnaissance in the Sepik River area. All of the sorties resulted in bombing and strafing of targets of opportunity. On 5 August an advance party of 20 airmen drawn from units of 71 Wing proceeded to Wewak by aircraft to assist Northern Command in preparing camp sites for a proposed move of the Wing, including 7 Squadron, to that area. Squadron personnel were eager to catch up on the latest war news and the reaction of the Japanese Government to the devastation caused by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August followed by the second bomb on 9 August. The following day came the first of a series of conferences of Commanding Officers to discuss issues relating to post war activities and a possible move down the coast to Boram.

Also on 9 August, Dick Humphrey led 13 aircraft to bomb and strafe defensive positions at Maprik West and following the return from this strike the first news of a possible Japanese capitulation was reported. The strikes continued, however, and on 11 August Oscar Barton led nine aircraft to bomb enemy concentrations dug-in at Kairivu Village. Meanwhile, the various headquarters were planning for a Japanese surrender. On 11 August, messages were received to the effect that in view of the possible cessation of hostilities and the likelihood of the indiscriminate use of firearms and explosives as a result, the provisions of standing orders in relation to their use was to be brought to the attention of all personnel to safeguard personnel and property. Further, all firearms and explosives other than those for essential guard defence and aircrew purposes were to be withdrawn and held in safe but accessible custody. Rigid control was to be exercised over all motor transport to prevent indiscriminate use likely to result in accidents and damage.

On 12 August, further communications were received, stating that in the event of sudden cessation of hostilities, Areas and Groups were to ensure that no flying in the nature of demonstration was to be carried out without proper authority. Authorisation for all flights was to be limited to necessary duties only. Offensive operations against enemy cities, land communications, and other land targets except in direct support of Allied ground forces in contact with the enemy was to cease until further orders. Reconnaissance and photo missions, anti-shipping strikes and fighter attacks against enemy airborne aeroplanes would continue. Forces charged with air defence were to be especially alert. Further, armed reconnaissance operations were not to be carried out. Owing to the considerably increased danger of canteens and messes being broken into, adequate precautions were to be put in place to prevent such occurrences.
Over the next three days the squadron provided 12, 16 and 15 aircraft respectively for strikes on enemy positions. In all cases, the bombing devastated the target areas with 86 bombs dropped during one strike and almost 37 000 rounds expended on strafing during another. These attacks were obvious overkills given the targets but must have impressed the Japanese commanders with the overwhelming firepower available to support the ground forces. By 14 August, rumours became more convincing that the end of the war would likely be announced shortly, and that the probability of undertaking any further missions was remote. However, by early morning on 14 August, a further message was received from RAAF Command stating that normal offensive operations were to resume. Later that day this message was cancelled and the status of limited operations was to continue. That evening all the squadrons at Tadji decided to celebrate what was expected to be the armistice with the consignment of beer and spirits that had fortuitously arrived that day. The party went on long into the night. By the morning of 15 August no announcement had been made and the mission that had previously been set down for that day
for all three squadrons to support the land forces was to proceed. This strike was to bomb a concentration of Japanese troops in Kiarivu Village in support of an assault by the ground forces. Early that morning Group Captain Hancock was given a message from higher command that a cease-fire would likely be announced sometime during the course of the mission. As there was nothing definite though, he allowed the mission to proceed. The crews were advised at the briefing that a cease-fire signal could be expected at any time, but they were to continue the mission as usual until further notice; 100 Squadron would be the first to bomb, followed by 8 Squadron and then 7 Squadron, with Oscar Barton leading 12 aircraft. While taxiing out to the airstrip just before 0900 hours, a WAG in a 100 Squadron aircraft tuned his radio into a civilian station and heard the announcement that the war was over. This was conveyed to the strike leader who replied that the mission must proceed as briefed until the message came through official channels.

Scattered low clouds made flying over the mountains to the target hazardous but all aircraft arrived in the target area due east of Maprik. The ridge, with new huts surrounded by a palisade, was readily identified through the scattered cloud. When wireless contact was established with the 2/7th Battalion ground force, the ground operator advised that the war was over. Again, as no confirmatory signal to abort the mission had been received through official RAAF channels, the strike leader asked for a smoke marker to be fired. Shortly afterwards, a mortar smoke bomb burst on the centre of the ridge to mark the target. With final directions to bomb 200 yards east of the mortar smoke, 100 and 8 Squadrons bombed. No 7 Squadron, unlike the other two, both bombed and strafed the target with 16 x 500-pound and 50 x 250-pound bombs and fired 950 rounds of 0.5-inch and 18 000 rounds of 0.303-inch ammunition. The strafing circle continued until just after 1100 hours when as the final strafing run was being completed, the senior controller reported over the radio:

The following signal has just been received from Command Headquarters in plain language: ‘Emergency immediate – cancel all operations against enemy forthwith including missions now airborne’.

It is widely accepted that Alan Fraser and crew in Beaufort A9-608 completed the final strafing run. The return from the strike was uneventful although it was reported that Flying Officer Bob Ockenden in A9-466 did a noisy, high speed and low level pass over the camp area to celebrate the occasion, for which he was subsequently awarded orderly officer duty for a fortnight.

That afternoon, a message was received from the Chief of Air Staff that was forwarded to all units and was required to be read out by Commanding
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Officers at parades specially convened for the purpose. This message included information on demobilisation, which would be done in an orderly manner and in accordance with a general plan approved by the Government. This was to ensure equity for all, and personnel were asked to be patient. Demobilisation was to be effected in accordance with a priority system carefully designed to do justice to all personnel and at the same time ensure that essential service commitments were met. Such commitments included occupation of enemy territory, air transportation of personnel, the return of prisoners of war, and the orderly handling of stores and equipment. A similar message of congratulations on a job well done was received from Air Vice-Marshal Bostock, Air Officer Commanding, RAAF Command. There was little celebration that the war was over, probably just relief. Without wasting any time, Flight Lieutenant Bob Filsell in A9-236 dropped surrender leaflets along the Sepik River during the afternoon and in order to celebrate in some small way Victory in the Pacific Day, members of the squadron gathered in the airmen’s recreation hut for a party.

Gracie Fields and party at Aitape for the performance that attracted personnel from all units on 22 August 1945.

Source: Roy Wing.
With the end of hostilities, the RAAF immediately reduced flying hours to the absolute minimum. After 15 August, an inactive period of 10 days followed. The squadron remaining at ‘available’, with ground activities diverted to educational and sporting pursuits. Squadron life started to become more routine but it was still necessary to remain alert as many Japanese were unaware of the surrender. Consequently, further leaflet dropping and tactical reconnaissance missions were carried out and on 17 August Peter Fisher in A9-481 did a tactical reconnaissance of Muschu and Kairiru Islands and adjacent inland areas. On 18 August at another conference of Commanding Officers, the types of activities to be employed by units following the Japanese surrender and the relaxation activities for personnel was discussed. It was decided that the latter should take the form of organised sport, fishing and shooting trips, educational classes, swimming and gardening. There was rivalry between units as cricket, softball, Australian Rules Football, chess and bridge were played. Fishing excursions were also popular. All amphibious vehicles and motor launches in the area were pooled for the purposes of making one of these available to each unit at least four days per week. This enabled all ranks to avail themselves of an excursion around the islands or for organised fishing expeditions. Classical music sessions, debates and additional educational lectures were conducted by Padre Clarke. Greater attention was also given to rehabilitation training. Correspondence courses continued to be made available and local instruction was arranged on several subjects. In rotation with 100 and 8 Squadrons, gangs of spare personnel assisted in excavating and carting coral for the construction of six tennis courts. Applications were also invited from all personnel to serve with the Occupation Forces destined for Japan. A morale booster for personnel at Aitape occurred on 22 August, when Gracie Fields and party arrived to entertain the forces that evening. Other performers included Monty Banks, Lou Compara, Eric Fox, Peggy Shea and Victor Morcom. The concert was very well received with a reported 3000 service personnel attending.

Armed reconnaissance flights were carried out along the Sepik River in rotation with 100 and 8 Squadrons to ascertain the whereabouts of the Japanese forces. On these, a large number of leaflets were dropped and Flying Officer Ralph Rankine in A9-604 and Flying Officer Francis Gay in A9-648 participated with drops on 23 August on coastal and inland areas. The RAAF administration was very quickly moving from a wartime footing back to that of a peace time force and instruction was provided on the formalities of authority, law and regulations that were quickly enforced. It only took nine days before orders were received for personnel to begin demobilisation and for aircraft to be returned to Australia for storage. On 24 August the first postings south for
discharge commenced and the first aircraft, A9-356, under service at 12 Repair and Servicing Unit, was flown to 5 Aircraft Depot at Wagga by Peter Fisher, who was returning to Australia on leave. On 27 August a daily courier service from Tadji to Wewak to Madang to Lae, returning the following day, was inaugurated by the squadron with the first flight flown by Leo Plumridge. The squadron’s commitment in this regard was one week in three. This day also saw a change in command with Oscar Barton, who had been in command of the squadron for 10 months, being posted south and command taken over by Dick Humphrey.


Source: Peter Jowett.
We Never Disappoint
Chapter 7
Wind Down and Disbandment

With the gradual wind down of activity a rest camp was opened at Goroka for RAAF personnel and four aircrews from No 7 Squadron were resting there each week. Goroka was at 5800 feet and 70 air miles from Madang. It was located in a valley of kunai flats that were made into a landing ground. The break for squadron personnel at Goroka was greatly appreciated. All the food there was freshly grown and plentiful, and there were large sporting grounds available. The climate was much cooler and the natives covered themselves in pig fat for warmth and all huts included areas for fires at night-time. Back at Aitape though, there was a marked decline in the quality of foodstuffs with almost a complete absence of fresh meat, butter and fruit, which continued until November. Despite this, sport continued to take a prominent part of life, with personnel partaking in cricket, tennis, football, rugby, table tennis, softball, basketball and sailing.

A large percentage of the squadron’s activity during the month was devoted to putting into effect orders for the packing and disposal of equipment in preparation for demobilisation. From time to time it was necessary for the squadron, along with other units in 71 Wing, to provide labouring parties for unloading ships, due to Army units leaving the area. Some difficulty was also experienced in obtaining aviation fuel supplies. The belated arrival of the squadron’s rear echelon equipment during September finally completed the squadron’s move from Jacky Jacky to Tadji, a period that spanned 11 months. Members of the squadron joined representatives from the several units of the Wing to attend the surrender ceremony at Cape Wom Airstrip. The RAAF detachment was included in a representative parade of all fighting services that had served in the theatre. It was here that Major General Horace Robertson, General Officer Commanding the 6th Australian Division, accepted the surrender of all Japanese forces in New Guinea from Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi. During the courier service to Lae on 22 September, Flight Sergeant Ern Follington in A9-440 lost all power in the starboard engine and feathered the propeller. He immediately made an approach to the Wewak Airstrip, which was still being repaired at the time. On final approach, on the port engine only, a grader attempted to cross the runway. Follington applied power to the port engine to pass over the grader, resulting in the aircraft having insufficient area.
to stop and overshooting into the kunai. Although there were no casualties, the aircraft was converted to components.

Crew of Beaufort A9-471 (KT-A), taken at Tadji soon after the cessation of hostilities in August or September 1945.¹

Source: Gogler Family.

During September the squadron continued to participate in tactical reconnaissance missions over the Wewak, Bogia and Sepik River areas. Between 5 and 23 September the squadron flew 15 of these sorties. On 25 September, Pilot Officer Bryan Jarrett in A9-600, Ralph Rankine in A9-604, Nelson Hill in A9-679 and Dick Humphrey in A9-681 flew between Tadji and Biak in search of a C-47 Dakota (A65-61, VH-CUT), which went missing on 18 September. The

¹ *Left to right*: Tom Perry, Dick Humphrey, Ian Ackroyd and Norm Hollingsworth. By this time personnel were starting to be posted home and all remaining aircrew were photographed in front of their aircraft. This aircraft was with 7 Squadron from 17 July 1944 until stored in October 1945 and sold on 8 August 1949.
following day Hill searched back to Tadji while the other three searched from Biak to Merauke. No sightings were made although searches continued over the next two days, but in reduced capacity; the Dakota was not located until 1968.

Beaufort A9-440 (KT-G), 22 September 1945.
Source: Lloyd Pike.

Following the official surrender of the Japanese forces in New Guinea, personnel in the squadron—like in all units in the services—were anxious to return home and commence civilian employment. Squadron personnel were credited with the manner in which they carried on patiently and efficiently during this time. By the end of September the squadron strength had reduced to 34 officers and 267 airmen. The Surf Club maintained standing patrols on the squadron beachfront when the surf was dangerous from heavy seas and cross currents and proved its worth by carrying out two rescues during October. A yachting regatta was held between the units based at Aitape on 7 October and personnel were engaged for weeks beforehand to prepare the 12 boats that participated. Postings home or to other units began to gather pace although there were still a number of commitments to fulfil, including providing work parties for the off-loading and handling of supplies and petrol. This also had the benefit of keeping all personnel fully occupied. Even so, it was necessary from 8 October to commence organised fishing trips to augment the ever
deteriorating standard of rations. Flight Lieutenant Max Tomlinson recalls that Flight Sergeant Bill Baines had been a professional fisherman at Maryborough before the war, and at Aitape he taught Max and Flight Lieutenant Bob Muller how to knit a fishing net out of cord from the squadron store. They made a net 70 to 80 yards long and a couple of yards deep. One morning they netted a huge saw fish that took the three of them to get into the Jeep. On arrival back at camp, the doctor made an acid test on the flesh and declared it safe to eat. Everyone in the squadron had a fish cake grilled steak as only the cooks could do it. Explosives were also used on fishing expeditions and on occasions large numbers of fish were collected. Pigs and ducks were also shot and cooked, all of which they found a pleasing change from the boring diet of tinned potatoes and egg powder. Another initiative was a length of timber with a razor blade inserted into one end which was used to cut down out-of-reach paw paws, although they had to be quick enough to catch them before they hit the ground.

Remaining aircrew personnel of ‘A’ flight at Tadji in about late September 1945.

Source: Barrie Follington.

Flying in October was mainly confined to travel, ferry and courier flights totalling some 122 hours. Tactical reconnaissance sorties were cancelled from the 16 October, and to that date 11 flights constituting 25 hours were flown. The daily photographic flight over the Sepik River area was taken over by another
squadron early in the month, while several crews were engaged in ferrying 12 Repair and Servicing Unit aircraft to 5 Aircraft Depot. Although there had been no official announcement as to the continued employment of the squadron, strength in personnel was reduced considerably by postings and in returning aircraft to the mainland or other units. For the sake of convenience and efficiency, the two flights were now combined into one. Six aircraft were flown to 5 Aircraft Depot: Dick Humphrey in A9-549, Bob Ockenden in A9-586 and Alan Fraser in A9-361 on 7 October, and Arthur Ethell in A9-647, Ralph Rankin in A9-623 and Nelson Hill in A9-648 on 18 October. The rear echelon equipment that had finally been shipped to Aitape by the SS *Wanaka* was unpacked and serviceable items forwarded direct to the relevant recovery depots. By the end of October there were now 26 officers and 204 airmen with 11 aircraft on strength. Early in November the Aitape/Tadji area was subject to very heavy rains and the resultant flood waters damaged several key bridges in the area, severely restricting vehicle movements between the airfield and the campsite. Considerable work became necessary to repair and replace buildings in the camp as these were now required to give longer service than originally anticipated. Native labour had become available for clearing and drainage works and for the repair of native type huts. As the need for tents decreased, dilapidated tents were pulled down and in many cases the available area was converted to vegetable gardens to further supplement rations. Squadron personnel were still working on correspondence courses although competitive sport had now almost ceased. Century Radio continued to operate and sponsored talks on rehabilitation issues but the Century Theatre was closed down after the withdrawal of the equipment.

It would appear from the available records that a plan to disband certain units in forward areas had been completed by RAAF Headquarters at the beginning of October and forwarded to Northern Command Headquarters. At the time, Northern Command Headquarters had not taken any action to effect the disbandment of 7 Squadron, which was listed in Stage 1 of the disbandment program, as it was awaiting specific instructions. It did not advise RAAF Headquarters of this until 7 November, and also sought authority to either disband the squadron at Tadji or fly it back to Australia for disbandment. Although squadron personnel must have been aware of unit disbandment plans, it was not until 15 November that the squadron was officially advised to cease functions from that date and to disband at its present location. Instructions for disbandment followed shortly thereafter. On 12 November, however, Dick Humphrey was posted back to Australia and Flight Lieutenant Eric Gogler was posted in from No 100 Squadron to take over command and the work of disbandment commenced soon after. Northern Command Headquarters was
provided on 16 November with a list of 10 officers and 76 airmen who were available for immediate posting as being surplus to present requirements.

Ern Follington in the cockpit of his Beaufort (A9-502) ‘Merle’ at Tadji in September 1945. This aircraft was named after Ern’s wife Merle Iris Follington, married just a couple of months previously.

Source: Barrie Follington.

Under normal circumstances the squadron would have been disbanded within a fortnight but the difficulty of transporting personnel on posting caused considerable delay. Those officers and airmen who were required to remain as the nucleus to finalise the disbandment were:

- Flight Lieutenant EA Gogler, Pilot – Commanding Officer
- Flight Lieutenant JS Grice, Radar Officer – Adjutant
- Flying Officer ID Easton, Equipment Officer
- Flight Lieutenant RW Fox, Navigator B – Barracks Officer
- Flight Sergeant AJ McNeil, Clerk General
- Sergeant WM Cox, Clerk Accounts
- Corporal E Fairhall, Equipment Assistant
- Leading Aircraftman P Bethune, Equipment Assistant
- Leading Aircraftman LH Clisby, Clerk Accounts
- Leading Aircraftman KJ Lindsay, Clerk Stores Assistant
When the notification was received that the squadron was to cease functioning, a welfare meeting was convened to arrange an airmen’s ‘get together’ night before any more personnel were posted away. The night was set down for 17 November. A good supply of liquor was obtained and donations were made by the Officers and Sergeants Messes in recognition and appreciation of the excellent services provided by the airmen. Liquor was distributed by means of ration tickets. To enable them to enjoy a free and uninterrupted night’s entertainment, all squadron duties including guards were taken over by the officers and sergeants and six members of the Sergeants Mess acted as Bar Stewards throughout the evening. A pianist from a neighbouring unit was invited to liven up the evening. Disbanding a squadron and making the necessary arrangements for the transfer of all personnel, aircraft, stores and armaments involved a considerable amount of work. In accordance with the disbandment directive, the squadron returned or otherwise disposed of all equipment and supplies, returned all secret and confidential publications, forwarded all correspondence files and records to the Secretary, Air Board and finalised all accounts.

There was very limited flying during November with several courier flights to Boram and back again. All but three aircraft were flown to Wagga by the end of the month and by that time the personnel strength had been reduced to nine officers and 105 airmen. All mechanical transport had been allotted to other units. The disbandment process continued but with so many personnel still awaiting transport home or to new postings, Northern Command was requested on 1 December not to transfer one of the two remaining cooks as the squadron could not survive with just one. By 5 December though, a further 38 members of the squadron were posted to various units in New Guinea or Australia. The remaining three aircraft A9-453, A9-466 and A9-502 departed Tadji on 7 December for 7 Aircraft Depot, Tocumwal. However A9-466 made a forced landing at Cairns due to engine failure and the aircraft was allotted to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot.
By 7 December Northern Command Headquarters were advised that the nucleus party requirements had been reduced to 10, although a number of personnel were still on site awaiting transport, and that it was anticipated disbandment would be finalised by about 20 December. To assist with the movement of personnel, Eric Gogler borrowed A9-654 from 100 Squadron on 13 December and flew 21 personnel, seven at a time, from Tadji to Boram to expedite their postings. By now, the squadron Canteen and Messes had been closed and the squadron accounts had been reconciled. The remaining nine personnel continued to live in a small area of what remained of the squadron’s campsite with meals supplied by 7 Transport and Movement Office detachment. On 19 December Eric Gogler forwarded a signal to Northern Area Headquarters notifying that 7 Squadron was officially disbanded as of that date and a signal was received back the next day confirming the postings for members of the nucleus party. The squadron equipment had been completely disposed of, with some being provided to neighbouring units and some to the nearby 17 Stores Unit, while the items listed for salvage had been destroyed.

So it was that 7 General Reconnaissance/Bomber Squadron finished as an operational unit of the RAAF—it has not been reformed since that date. In the late 1990s, there was a proposal drawn up for the RAAF by former Sergeant Bruce Melrose, a WAG, for a 7 Squadron Badge for permanent recognition. The suggested badge and pocket conformed to the unit designs of the 1940s. The badge featured gold lettering of ‘Squadron’, ‘7’ and ‘Royal Australian Air Force’ on a blue background. Underneath was the motto ‘Eclipse the Sun’ in black lettering on a yellow scroll with a ‘King’s Crown’ surmounted. The design in the middle of the scroll was a bomb in black over the Naval Ensign of Japan. It does not appear that the RAAF pursued the proposal.

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One may well ask what the value was of 7 Squadron’s activities from its formation to disbandment. It is necessary to again look at the inter-war years and the first nine months of World War II. The eight squadrons of the Australian Flying Corps, the four front line squadrons (No 1, No 2, No 3 and No 4) and the four support or training squadrons, (No 5, No 6, No 7 and No 8) continued to be recognised in the RAAF Order of Battle in the period leading up to 1939. Squadrons 1 to 6 were designated to operate specific aircraft types, even though actual aircraft were not necessarily available, but the type designation for 7 Squadron was not determined until the outbreak of war. With an expanded Order of Battle, 7 Squadron was the only squadron designated as a long range
fighter squadron. This was probably unfortunate for its immediate deployment, as there were neither Beaufighter aircraft available nor the continued operational necessity for this type by mid 1940. The squadron’s subsequent change to a general reconnaissance/bomber squadron moved it in the priority list for aircraft allocation to after those already operating or awaiting allotment of the type. With no aircraft available, those personnel posted to 7 Squadron and immediately temporarily assigned to 2 Squadron for a period of some 15 months must have been frustrated with RAAF administration.

The year 1942 started with hope of the squadron becoming operational and moving north with their Hudson aircraft but this was dashed with its role changing to that of a training unit, albeit temporarily. However, due to operational necessity, training was interspersed with seaward patrols to cover shipping plying the waters around Victoria and southern New South Wales. To 7 Squadron goes the honour of carrying out the first RAAF air attack against a Japanese submarine in these waters. The squadron set a high standard in training and seaward patrols and was used to assess the flying ability of various personnel and report on the capability of the Australian made Beaufort, only then just coming into service. The squadron completed operational training requirements on HUDSons for eight courses of trainees while maintaining limited operational commitments—a demanding task. Again, squadron personnel must have been discouraged when after only four full months of activity it was again reduced to nucleus status, with all aircraft and most personnel being absorbed into No 1 Operational Training Unit. Training others, however, fulfilled an essential role of preparing aircrews for Hudson operations at a time of great national need. Concurrently, the squadron provided convoy escort and seaward reconnaissance patrols when Japanese submarines began to make their presence felt in south-east Australian waters.

It was not until September 1942 that there were finally sufficiently trained personnel and aircraft—this time the Beaufort—available for the squadron to prepare for operations directly against enemy forces. At last, a determination was made to designate the squadron in a specific operational role, that of general reconnaissance and torpedo work. The first crews began training in squadron work and in the torpedo role at Nowra. Training proceeded to the point of completion when for the third time, crews from the squadron were required to supplement other units. Once again, the squadron had to start over when new crews were posted in from 1 Operational Training Unit. Training recommenced, but the completion of the torpedo training was interrupted by the urgent need in late 1942 for operational squadrons in northern Australia. In the end training
was not completed, to the relief of most aircrew, and the squadron moved to Queensland to be deployed to a higher priority role than torpedo operations.

Operating in a dispersed fashion with a base at Townsville and detachments almost continually at three other bases was demanding on all squadron personnel. The logistics of rotating personnel throughout such a large area, together with aircraft servicing requirements, was handled with little disruption to operational activities. The squadron carried out an important role in providing protection from, and warning of, any Japanese incursion into the Arafura Sea or Torres Strait from southern Dutch New Guinea. Once the Japanese advance had stabilised, the squadron started to encounter Japanese aircraft and took the fight aggressively to them. After a relatively short period, this forced the Japanese to withdraw their floatplane aircraft from active operations in the area and replace them with larger and faster aircraft, which the Beaufort was unable to match in performance, although it did not stop their crews from trying. No 7 Squadron certainly achieved moral ascendancy over the Japanese through these operations. This continued when the squadron took the offensive with strikes at Japanese installations while still maintaining escort and patrol duties. Aircrew flew very high numbers of hours and ground crews worked even longer to keep the aircraft flying during these first 12 months of operations; this was a significant achievement that should be recognised. As George Odgers records:

Wedged between the main concentration of Allied squadrons in New Guinea and the squadrons in the Northern Territory, were two RAAF squadrons which carried out the threefold task of guarding Horn Island at the extreme tip of Cape York Peninsula; Merauke, a desolate marshy little port in Dutch New Guinea; and the waters of the Torres Strait area which connect the Coral Sea to the Arafura Sea. Torres Strait Force provided the garrison, and the RAAF provided air defence against both air and sea attack. No. 7 (Beaufort) Squadron, based on Horn Island, gave protection to shipping convoys and No. 84 (Boomerang) Squadron arrived in April 1943 to provide fighter protection.

Although the Merauke and Horn Island squadrons had relatively slight contact with the enemy in 1943 they fulfilled a very useful purpose in conjunction with the North-Western Area squadrons in securing the flank of MacArthur’s forces.2

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The squadron’s operations in 1943 were an amazing achievement for the number of hours flown, the operations conducted and the high serviceability achieved all without the loss of a single aircrew member. Perhaps this period of the squadron is best summed up by Keith Parsons who later thanked those who were at Ross River in 1942/43 for their support and the 100 per cent effort they all put in to make 7 Squadron the most proficient and happy squadron in the North Eastern Area. He considered this was because the squadron had a clear objective, to prevent any incursion into north-eastern Australia; there were no doubts at all as to why they were there and what they had to do. The squadron was efficient and carried out its duties with courage and responsibility and was at one stage the ace fighter squadron of all the North Eastern Area.

The consolidation of the squadron at Jacky Jacky must surely have made administration easier and allowed for a greater concentration of effort. Strikes against targets in Dutch New Guinea increased while maintaining the other required activities that included supplementary tasks such as aircraft escorts, searches and tactical reconnaissance. The proposal to convert the whole squadron to Venturas may have had some immediate operational merit but the proposal to convert one flight only was ill-conceived. It is interesting to contemplate what may have happened had the squadron been re-equipped with Venturas. It is likely that it would have remained based in Australia near to No 13 Squadron—probably until near the end of the war. A consequence of the decision for the squadron to revert to Beauforts, a month later it received a warning order to be prepared to move to New Guinea and to come under the command of 10 Operational Group. When the move to Tadji was delayed due to lack of priority shipping space, Oscar Barton took the initiative to propose moving by air. The squadron personnel responded and, through brilliant organisation and leadership, managed the move with innovation to complete what was a first for the RAAF—the planning and execution of moving an operational bomber squadron from one field location in Australia to another in a different country. This set a precedent for future air deployments and detailed information on how it was done was sought from RAAF Headquarters.

It was while operating from Tadji that the squadron demonstrated its ability to quickly adapt to its new environment and responsibilities. Operations quickly resumed after the move and the squadron settled into its new role with relish. Although anti-submarine patrols continued, the main activity was close support of the troops fighting to free northern New Guinea from the Japanese. For the first time, 7 Squadron was operating closely with other Beaufort squadrons as part of 71 Wing in coordinated missions. The skills of senior crews were developed to such an extent that 7 Squadron was preferred by the 6th Division
to undertake tactical reconnaissance and lead in operations. No 7 Squadron, like the two other Beaufort squadrons of 71 Wing, excelled at pinpoint bombing to support land operations to such an extent that these air operations to support the ground campaign are recognised as a model example of land/air cooperation.

The ability of 7 Squadron to operate so effectively was in no small way due to its esprit de corps. Attaining a true esprit de corps was actively pursued through a combination of ways. The differences, perceived and real, between aircrew and ground crew and officers and other ranks were minimised through sport and games and similar competition. At Horn Island having aircrew and ground crew participate together in the briefing for the following day’s sorties emphasised to ground crews the dangers the aircrews were facing thereby helping to improve maintenance of the aircraft. At Ross River, Jacky Jacky and Tadji, section leaders had to take full responsibility for their duties and activities and were left to get on with it. Another explanation could be that many ground crew members were together in the squadron for a significant time, represented by 7 Squadron having a total of 2400 personnel posted into the squadron whereas a contemporary, 100 Squadron, had 4000. Although the activities of the aircrews were well represented in the official records and communiqués, the achievements were a true team effort. For just over three years of operating under tropical conditions with the heat, humidity and discomfort, and despite the shortage of essential equipment and spares, the ground crews were able to maintain a high rate of serviceability. For this the ground crews and other support sections can be justifiably proud. Perhaps the respect held for ground crew is best summarised by Alf Humble when talking of his fitter and rigger; Bob Carlisle and Jack Jarrett, respectively. Their enthusiasm was typified by Alf’s memory of returning to Horn Island after a night patrol to see Carlisle and Jarrett running down the runway to be at the revetment to meet them with the invariable inquiry ‘How is she?’ referring to the aircraft. The squadron seemed to avoid the Beaufort tail trim problem that beset other units and Humble believed they had the best serviceability of all the squadrons. He also has always believed that 7 Squadron was very lucky to have had such a dedicated and skilful lot of blokes looking after them. It is also significant that no aircrew were lost in training or operations from September 1942 to January 1944 and even taking into account the squadron’s operational and training roles, only 34 members of the squadron were killed while on strength. This is also reflected in that 7 Squadron is the only RAAF unit association known to have had a reunion every year since 1946.

From February 1942 to September 1945 the available records indicate that 7 Squadron flew 3869 flights on operational sorties, 1500 flights on strikes, 1648
operational travel flights and there were a significant number of non-operational flights not recorded, such as for familiarisation and training. Included in the above totals are 1973 convoy escort flights, 527 ‘N’ patrol flights, 371 ‘P’ patrol flights, 48 combined ‘N’ and ‘P’ patrol flights and 107 anti-submarine patrols in areas off Tadji. The squadron provided protection for 1148 convoys or single vessels.

Over the five and a half years of the squadron’s existence, one squadron member best summed up its role with the words ‘Our Squadron was a Jack of All Trades’. No 7 Squadron’s unofficial motto, first coined during its time as No 7 (Training) Squadron, Australian Flying Corps was ‘We Never Disappoint’. This motto seems to have been adopted for a second time as evidenced by its use in the newspaper article of September 1943. No 7 Squadron had an on again, off again genesis, but once it settled into its role it performed magnificently. For those members of the squadron and for those in higher command who expected much, it certainly lived up to its motto.
We Never Disappoint
Appendix 1: Fatalities

No.7 Squadron lost 34 men as casualties during World War II. Their names are listed below. Lest we forget their sacrifice.

Sgt Alan William Amey, WAG.
15 April 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Christmas Hills, VIC.
Hudson A16-151

F/O Raymond Arnold, WAG.
13 June 1944
Aircraft crashed into the sea while on convoy escort duties off QLD.
Beaufort A9-220

P/O Richard George Banks, Pilot.
15 April 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Christmas Hills, VIC.
Hudson A16-151

W/C Nigel William Barker, Pilot.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG
Beaufort A9-660

F/O Alfred Vincent Bate, WAG.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG
Beaufort A9-660

F/O John William Bracken, Pilot.
2 July 1944
Aircraft crashed after take off from Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Beaufort A9-377

F/O Colin Laidler Chisholm, WAG.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG
Beaufort A9-660

F/O Maxwell John Cobley, Navigator.
10 February 1943
Accidentally drowned at Lower Portland, NSW.

F/O Allan Dalglish, Navigator.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG
Beaufort A9-660

F/O Frederick Cobden Davies, Navigator.
13 June 1944
Aircraft crashed into the sea while on convoy escort duties off QLD.
Beaufort A9-220

F/O Thomas Albert Daymond, WAG.
2 July 1944
Aircraft crashed after take off from Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Beaufort A9-377

LAC William Arthur Dyer, Fitter 11A.
2 April 1942
Vehicle accident on Princes Highway, Werribee, VIC.
F/Sgt Andrew Frank, Navigator.
2 July 1944
Aircraft crashed after take off from Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Beaufort A9-377

Sgt Murdoch John Gawith, Navigator.
9 June 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Long Point, VIC.
Hudson A16-39

LAC Leslie Howard Greenaway, Motor Transport Driver.
7 November 1943
Vehicle fire, Townsville, QLD.

LAC Keith William Higgle, Aircraftman.
15 April 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Christmas Hills, VIC.
Hudson A16-151

F/O Herman Patrick Hoppe, Navigator.
15 January 1944
Went down with aircraft after forced landing in sea off Cairns, QLD.
Beaufort A9-458

F/Sgt Owen Gilbert Keats, Pilot.
13 June 1944
Aircraft crashed into the sea while on convoy escort duties off QLD.
Beaufort A9-220

Cpl Max Kotz, Fabric Worker.
25 July 1945
Died from burns, Tadji, PNG

S/L James William McGilvray, Pilot.
9 June 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Long Point, VIC.
Hudson A16-39

LAC John McWaters
Mess Steward.
3 April 1943
Taken off train from Sydney and died of illness at Albury, NSW.

P/O Ronald Loris Nall, Navigator.
15 April 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Christmas Hills, VIC.
Hudson A16-151

F/L Raymond Herbert O’Farrell, Pilot.
11 February 1945
Aircraft missing to sea between Wewak and Tadji, PNG.
Beaufort A9-599

P/O Lionel Ernest Parkes, WAG.
2 July 1944
Aircraft crashed after take off from Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Beaufort A9-377

F/Sgt William Henry Pratt, WAG.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG
Beaufort A9-660

F/O Kenneth Maxwell Shepley, WAG.
15 January 1944
Went down with aircraft after forced landing in sea off Cairns, QLD.
Beaufort A9-458

P/O James Starling, WAG.
11 February 1945
Aircraft missing to sea between Wewak and Tadji, PNG.
Beaufort A9-599

Sgt Norman Leslie Thomas, WAG.
15 April 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Christmas Hills, VIC.
Hudson A16-151

F/L Ronald James Thomas, Navigator.
11 February 1945
Aircraft missing to sea between Wewak and Tadji, PNG.
Beaufort A9-599

LAC Cyril Henry Tucker, Carpenter.
20 February 1944
Appendix 1: Fatalities

Died of illness, Townsville, QLD.

**Sgt Frank Rupert Walton, WAG.**
9 June 1942
Aircraft crashed on night training flight, Long Point, VIC.
Hudson A16-39

P/O Clyde Samuel Warbrook, WAG.
11 February 1945
Aircraft missing to sea between Wewak and Tadji, PNG.
Beaufort A9-599

**Non 7 Squadron Personnel killed in 7 Squadron Aircraft**

**Sgt Reginald Thomas Barter, Service Police, Port Moresby – Passenger.**
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG.
Beaufort A9-660

**Lt Col Austin George Fenton, Military History Unit – Passenger.**
28 January 1945

Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG.
Beaufort A9-660

**F/Sgt Trevor Neil Hay,**
76 Squadron – Passenger.
28 January 1945
Aircraft missing between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG.
Beaufort A9-660

**Fatalities sometimes recorded to 7 Squadron**

**F/L David Burton Bradley, Pilot.**
17 January 1942
Aircraft crashed on take off from Ceduna, SA. Actually posted to 14 Squadron - effective that day.
Hudson A16-144

**Sgt Robert George Brindell, Equipment Assistant.**
6 December 1945
Vehicle accident, Oakey, QLD.
Actually on strength with 7 Stores Depot.

**F/Sgt Francis Mervyn Howship, Pilot**
4 October 1943
Aircraft crashed near Gypsy Point, VIC.
Actually on strength with 67 Squadron.
Anson W2039
We Never Disappoint
**Appendix 2: Nominal Roll**

The information in this appendix was taken from the Squadron's Personnel Occurrence Reports under the headings of posted to or attached to 7 Squadron. Some of the information in the Personnel Occurrence Reports has proved to be incorrect in one way or another and where this has been identified corrections have been made, particularly where mistakes in spelling or service number were noticed. However, not all mistakes have been recognised. Some service numbers also changed, particularly those who were in the Citizens Air Force or on the Reserve prior to the 3 September 1939 or in the permanent Air Force post-war. In some cases the numbers below have remained as the original appearing in the Personnel Occurrence Reports and others have been updated.

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We Never Disappoint
Appendix 2: Nominal Roll

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Dare RW (150626)    Dickson R (41431)    Dunn JF (137727)
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Darwin D (40420)    Dihm JD (410466)    Dunstan E (124442)
Davenport C (418092) Dingfelder EG (431093) Durbin RF (406715)
Davern TJ (178701)  Dingwall R (411261)  Dures JF (290794)
Davey CW (5696)     Dixon JP (4621)      Duthie SH (128251)
Davidson H (134688) Dixon RG (400918)    Dwyer TR (31750)
Davies AG (421252)  Dobinson JV (161130)  Dyer WAC (18489)
Davies FC (424386)  Dobson AF (406615)  Dyer WE (68578)
Davies FM (410043)  Docker EA (76559)    Eager FT (117651)
Davies J (12961)    Dodds MD (36108)    Eagling RW (9427)
Davies JH (411875)  Doolce KE (27525)    Eakins RO (13006)
Davies KA (406435)  Doig GC (408673)    Easton ID (14263)
Davies TF (161557)  Dombkins FL (6804)   Easton LG (65524)
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Davis DE (115872)   Donald GL (40360)    Eddy JM (416249)
Davis DH (50755)    Donnelly EJ (42191)   Edelman J (71711)
Davis JC (432766)   Donoghue AE (431667)  Edelsten FH (52071)
Davis NT (52962)    Donscombe EW (13827)  Edwards CH (5770)
Davis RD (126659)   Dooley KV (126410)   Edwards CH (2062)
David VA (60817)    Dore LM (67047)     Edwards F (138335)
Dawson AT (41598)   Douglas F (406642)    Edwards GC (25224)
Dawson J (138746)   Dowth RE (426430)   Edwards H (2117)
Dawson ST (47163)   Dow LS (51864)     Edwards HG (20815)
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Dean AB (400583)    Drury GK (411299)   Elliott BM (408039)
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We Never Disappoint

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We Never Disappoint
Appendix 2: Nominal Roll

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Hughes FV (53690)  Jacobsen VJ (405912)  Jones RM (4735)
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Hume RE (50262)  James L (26596)  Kavanagh RG (122713)
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Humrich SR (404211)  James RR (408811)  Kearney AF (416271)
Hunt AP (45214)  James WE (24006)  Kearney TE (408683)
Hunt EH (75233)  James WJ (411496)  Keating JW (15288)
Hunt J (16443)  Jamieson PA (416121)  Keats OG (410899)
Hunter BB (416259)  Jamieson RK (405739)  Keith EA (400808)
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Hunter GH (50636)  Jarrett BD (407824)  Kelly GE (150125)
Hunter GR (64502)  Jarrett J (75449)  Kelly TE (127303)
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Hursthousse JW (416215)  Jay AB (407061)  Kemp GW (32061)
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Hutcherson K (421732)  Jeffrey RS (401796)  Kemp TM (50530)
Hutchinson AW (29690)  Jeffries KM (49637)  Kemp WC (50663)
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Ingham CA (409835)  Johnson SJ (33491)  Kennedy AG (76435)
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We Never Disappoint

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Kerin KV (442348)
Kernan P (120769)
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We Never Disappoint

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Appendix 2: Nominal Roll

Templer KC (416107)
Tennant J (420301)
Terry SJ (58713)
Thacker EC (418892)
Thame GJ (403609)
Thetford FH (425486)
Thomas AE (19677)
Thomas G (12376)
Thomas NL (416109)
Thomas R (83436)
Thomas RJ (404683)
Thomas VE (18502)
Thompson AG (69470)
Thompson BK (4392)
Thompson EM (44957)
Thompson HJ (13369)
Thompson HS (88903)
Thompson JK (133178)
Thompson JS (62681)
Thompson LW (408601)
Thomson CR (19178)
Thomson DT (1408601)
Thomson L (45277)
Thorneycroft JH (156653)
Thornton GA (69475)
Thornton KD (428113)
Thurman WH (144967)
Tilden AH (405509)
Tilse AH (23413)
Todd G (420788)
Todd GR (49244)
Tom CEH (64674)
Tomlinson MD (413286)
Townsend AS (403290)
Townsend VM (43313)
Tracey JW (13907)
Trebilco LJ (416373)
Tregoning RD (401839)
Treloar HC (424895)
Treloar V (416171)
Trenwick K (2584)
Trewheela BN (54730)
Trewella L (37371)
Trigg RT (467)
Triggs RA (417605)
Trimble JW (63683)
Tripony TG (25453)
Tripney T (450632)
Troeby HJ (46632)
Trott CF (26871)
Trotter DW (63684)
Tuck CE (11573)
Tucker AW (3025)
Tucker CH (126819)
Tucker HGG (27328)
Turnbull RN (4191)
Turner AE (54838)
Turner AR (408538)
Turner G (30735)
Turner HJ (68116)
Turner MC (28605)
Unkenstein OG (6256)
Unkles G (408714)
Upton CR (20305)
Veal CL (119318)
Veitch T (42076)
Venn JH (406063)
Venning JH (427838)
Vercoee CA (407883)
Verdon TB (10278)
Vickers HR (11574)
Vennet EE (5425)
Waddell WV (256661)
Waite JF (281914)
Wake D (52353)
Wake EC (54127)
Wake RC (408893)
Waldock CD (16934)
Walker JC (1469)
Walker JR (20675)
Walker JW (121850)
Wall HG (11759)
Wallace NW (63870)
Waller RA (68305)
Walmsley MRH (405286)
Walsh CS (406085)
Walsh TJ (117617)
Walters BG (416052)
Walton FR (401290)
Warbrook CSJ (413293)
Warburton W (115741)
Ward AW (5225)
Ward G (76116)
Warde JC (26241)
Ware RF (419494)
Warne GRG (409864)
Warnock R (11760)
Warren FA (11496)
Washington AL (63868)
Watkins EJ (3499)
Watkins JS (29750)
Watkins LJ (13154)
Watkins RF (45529)
Watson AE (67074)
Watson EC (53879)
Watson IE (55196)
Watson IR (401340)
Watson L (422067)
Watson MA (62672)
Watson PM (407921)
Watts JW (23186)
Watts WH (126298)
Watts-Phillips G (18823)
Weaver RJ (68894)
Weaving JF (69979)
Webb AA (644)
Webb H (17158)
Webb LH (409354)
Webster FV (256273)
Webster FV (416470)
Weismantel NA (20623)
Wellings AW (63179)
Wells AW (31966)
Wells CH (40155)
Wells RD (47603)
Welsh AD (5487)
Wenker RM (1964)
Westerman W (43097)
We Never Disappoint
APPENDIX 3: COMMANDING OFFICERS

27 June 1940 - S/L Ernest Dallas Scott (250101)
Appointed first Commanding Officer of the Squadron formed at Laverton. As W/C ED Scott, AFC attached to RAAF Station Darwin, he was killed while a prisoner of war at Ambon on 6 February 1942.

1 November 1940 - Adjutant F/O William Douglas Baird (261807)
Temporarily appointed Commanding Officer. F/L Baird was discharged on 10 October 1945 following service with other units including 455 Squadron.

2 December 1940 - 7 Squadron attached to 2 Squadron.

30 December 1940 - W/C Frederick William Thomas (250097)
Commanding Officer of 2 Squadron appointed temporary Commanding Officer of 7 Squadron while attached. Group Captain Thomas was discharged on 5 May 1945 following service with RAAF Headquarters.

15 April 1941 - W/C Frank Headlam (331)
Appointed to command 2 Squadron and by default assumed temporary command of 7 Squadron while attached. Air Vice Marshal Headlam CB, CBE retired from the RAAF on 3 August 1971.

7 January 1942 - 7 Squadron re-formed at Laverton as a separate unit.

12 January 1942 - S/L Peter Avison Parker (153)
Temporarily commanded the Squadron until the appointment of a permanent Commanding Officer. Group Captain Parker DFC, AFC retired from the RAAF on 2 July 1968.

19 January 1942 - W/C John Raeburn (Sam) Balmer (68)
Permanently appointed Commanding Officer. As Group Captain Balmer OBE, DFC he was commanding RAF Station, Waddington when he was killed in action on 11 May 1944.

18 March 1942 - S/L Peter Avison Parker (153)
Again temporarily commanded the Squadron until the appointment of a new permanent Commanding Officer.

22 April 1942 - W/C Sturt de Burgh Griffith (260096)
Appointed to command and oversaw the Squadron's move from Laverton to Bairnsdale. Group Captain Griffith AFC was discharged on 2 October 1945 after commanding 1 Aircraft Depot.

12 June 1942 - S/L James Andrew Hepburn (247)
Temporarily commanded the Squadron prior to the permanent Commanding Officer arriving. W/C Hepburn DFC, AFC was discharged on 31 October 1945 as Chief Flying Instructor at 1 OTU.
22 June 1942 - S/L Andrew Dill (Pete) Henderson (217)
Became Commanding Officer and organised the Squadron’s move to Nowra. Group
Captain Henderson OBE, MID retired from the RAAF on 5 January 1968.

17 August 1942 - W/C John Margrave Lerew (73)
Appointed to command on the Squadron’s move to Nowra. Group Captain Lerew DFC
was discharged on 8 November 1946.

16 December 1942 - W/C Keith Raymond John Parsons (109)
Appointed to command shortly after the Squadron moved to Townsville, with
permanent detachments at Horn Island and Port Moresby and temporary detachments
at other north Queensland airfields. Air Commodore Parsons CBE, DSO, DFC, AFC
retired from the RAAF on 28 June 1969.

1 February 1944 - W/C Eric William Cooper (260093)
Commanded the Squadron and oversaw the consolidation of the unit at Jacky Jacky.
W/C Cooper AFC was discharged on 23 October 1945.

2 October 1944 - S/L John·Oswald Frank Barton (266)
Appointed to temporary command. He instigated the airlift to Tadji and was promoted
to W/C and permanent Commanding Officer on 1 January 1945. W/C Barton DFC was
discharged on 12 April 1946.

26 August 1945 - F/L Malcolm Sydenham Humphrey (400473)
Temporary Commanding Officer. W/C Humphrey DFC retired from the RAAF on
9 December 1966.

12 November 1945 - F/L Eric Antony Gogler (416851)
Appointed to temporary command and oversaw the disbandment of the Squadron in the
field. F/L Gogler was discharged on 27 June 1946.

19 December 1945 - 7 Squadron disbanded in the field at Tadji, Papua New Guinea.
Appendix 4: Honours and Awards

The following information on Honours and Awards for personnel of 7 Squadron RAAF was obtained from the Unit History Sheets and the Honours and Awards database of the Australian War Memorial.

Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE)

F/L Norman Albert Hodges (1082)

Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC)

W/C John Oswald Frank Barton (266)

W/C Keith Raymond John Parsons (109)

F/L Peter McCallum Paull (270815)

F/L Alan Frederick Tutt (400108)

F/O Peter Philip Adrian Hopton (416024)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 21 October 1943, page 2312, position 33.

F/O John Bruce Lemcke (412154)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 22 June 1944, page 1251, position 5.

F/O Alan Alexander MacKay (412638)

Mention in Despatches (MID)

F/L Norman Edward Raw (418464)

F/L James Daniel Rimes (411523)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 22 June 1944, page 1251, position 17.

Chaplain of the Forces Charles Henry Sherlock

F/O Frank Percival Bell (433353)
F/O Karl Devereux Clively (415401)

F/O Robert James Harper (408651)

F/O James Lyall Legge (408854)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 21 October 1943, page 2312, position 54.

P/O Alan Alexander Mackay (412638)
Commonwealth of Australia Gazette of 21 October 1943, page 2312, position 58.

W/O Athol Clifford Gibson (427315)

Sgt Arthur Edmond Thomas (19677)

Cpl Ernest Samuel McIntyre (13158)
Appendix 5: Aircraft Known to be on Strength With 7 Squadron

30 Lockheed Hudson Aircraft – Source: A16 Status Cards

A16-12
Received on 12 August 1940 and delivered to 2 Squadron on 21 August 1940.

A16-13
On loan from 24 Squadron from 16 September 1940 to 24 October 1940.

A16-16
On loan from 24 Squadron from 16 September 1940 to 24 October 1940.

A16-18
Received on 12 August 1940 and delivered to 2 Squadron on 21 August 1940.

A16-26
Received on 13 April 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 18 June 1942.

A16-39
Received on 16 September 1940 and delivered to 24 Squadron on 18 September 1940.

A16-45
Received on 6 April 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 27 June 1942.

A16-89
Received on 24 March 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 29 June 1942.

A16-91
On loan from 24 Squadron from 29 September 1940 to 24 October 1940.

A16-98
Received on 12 May 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 27 June 1942.

A16-109
Received on 2 February 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 18 March 1942.

A16-114
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 27 June 1942.

A16-118
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 18 March 1942.

A16-120
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 4 May 1942.

A16-133
Temporary Attachment – received on 1 February 1942 and then delivered to 2 Squadron that day.

A16-137
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 18 March 1942.

A16-138
Received on 1 February 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 23 March 1942.

A16-139
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 14 April 1942.
A16-141
Temporary Attachment – received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 2 Aircraft Depot on 26 January 1942 for fitting turret.

A16-142
Temporary Attachment – received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 2 Aircraft Depot on 26 January 1942 for fitting turret.

A16-149
Temporary Attachment – received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 2 Aircraft Depot on 26 January 1942 for fitting turret.

A16-150
Received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 15 May 1942.

A16-151
Received on 23 March 1942 and converted to components on 4 May 1942 following a land accident.

A16-152
Received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 1 Aircraft Depot on 2 April 1942.

A16-164
Received on 1 February 1942 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 14 April 1942 following a forced landing.

A16-165
Temporary Attachment – received on 25 January 1942 and delivered to 2 Aircraft Depot on 26 January 1942 for fitting turret.

A16-166
Temporary Attachment – received on 1 February 1942 and delivered to 2 Aircraft Depot on 2 February 1942.

A16-168
Received on 9 February 1942 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 13 April 1942 following ground collision.

A16-171
Received on 1 February 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 27 June 1942.

A16-222
Received on 10 May 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 27 June 1942.

**107 DAP Beaufort Aircraft**

Source: A9 Status Cards with Squadron codes determined from official records (although there is some uncertainty surrounding those marked with an asterisk). Note: squadron and individual aircraft codes were introduced about January 1943.

T9545 (later A9-6)
On loan from 100 Squadron from 18 February 1942 for pilot flying ability and aircraft assessment until 6 March 1942.

T9551 (later A9-12)
On loan from 100 Squadron from 18 February 1942 for pilot flying ability and aircraft assessment until 18 March 1942.

T9558 (later A9-19)
Temporary issue from 1 Aircraft Depot on 19 February for pilot flying ability and aircraft assessment until about 12 March 1942.

A9-91
Received on 19 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.
Appendix 5: Aircraft Known to be on Strength With 7 Squadron

A9-93
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-95
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-99
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-101
Received on 25 September 1942 and then delivered to 5 Air Depot on 23 October 1942 for repairs following accident.

A9-103
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-105
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-106
Received on 2 October 1942 and then delivered to 10 OTU on 21 August 1943.

A9-107
Received on 18 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-108
Code not determined. Received 21 October 1942 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Repair Depot on 7 April 1943 following extensive damaged caused when hit by taxying aircraft.

A9-109
Received on 18 September 1942 and crashed into sea off Nowra on 24 September 1942 during torpedo practice and written off.

A9-110
Received on 1 October 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-111
Received on 30 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-112
Coded KT-T. Received on 2 October 1942 and then delivered to 1 OTU on 21 August 1943.

A9-114
Coded KT-V. Received on 10 November 1942 and then delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 19 August 1943.

A9-115
Received on 1 October 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-116
No known code allocated. Received on 10 November 1942 and crashed on landing at Horn Island on 2 January 1943 and issued to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit.

A9-117
Received on 30 September 1942 and then delivered to RAAF Station Nowra on 26 October 1942.

A9-118
Coded KT-R. Received on 2 October 1942 and then delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 6 October 1943.

A9-119
Records indicate code KT-V allotted but may not have been applied. Received on 22 October 1942 but forced landed in the sea on 19 December 1942 and written off.
A9-120
Coded KT-J. Received on 26 January 1943 and then delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 22 August 1943.

A9-122
Coded KT-S. Received on 19 November 1942 and issued to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 30 June 1943.

A9-123
Coded KT-Q. Received on 26 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 8 July 1943.

A9-124
Coded KT-L. Received on 10 November 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 5 August 1943.

A9-126
Received on 2 October 1942 and delivered to 5 OTU on 2 November 1942.

A9-127
Code not determined. Received on 28 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 28 January 1943.

A9-128
Coded KT-N. Received on 21 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 27 June 1943.

A9-129
Code not determined. Received on 21 February 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 3 May 1943.

A9-131
Coded KT-F*. Received on 26 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 22 June 1943. Was fitted with dual controls.

A9-132
Coded KT-D. Received on 22 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 5 July 1943. Reportedly fitted with dual controls.

A9-133
No known code allocated. Received on 26 October 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 1 December 1942.

A9-134
Coded KT-Q. Received on 22 October 1942 and forced landed in the sea on 24 January 1943 and written off.

A9-135
Coded KT-P. Received on 2 February 1943 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 31 August 1943.

A9-136
Code not determined. Received on 19 December 1942 and delivered to 3 Aircraft Depot on 10 April 1943.

A9-138
Coded KT-Y. When received is not recorded but crash on landing at Merauke on 2 July 1943 and converted to components.

A9-140
Coded KT-A and was fitted with dual controls. Received on 19 December 1942 and delivered to 1 OTU on 11 August 1943.

A9-141
Coded KT-W. Received on 2 February 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 29 July 1943.

A9-142
Received on 10 November 1942 and delivered to 15 Repair and Salvage Unit on 5 January 1943.

A9-143
Coded KT-F. Received on 8 February 1943 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 4 October 1943.

A9-144
Code not determined. Received on 10 November 1942 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 1 March 1943.
Appendix 5: Aircraft Known to be on Strength With 7 Squadron

A9-145
Coded KT-Z. Received on 4 January 1943 and ground looped on delivery to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 23 July 1943.

A9-157
Code not determined. Received on 27 January 1943 and forced landed on beach on 28 February 1943 and retrieved by 12 Repair and Salvage Unit.

A9-161
No known code allocated. Received on 7 December 1942 and crashed into the sea on 12 December 1942 and written off.

A9-182
Coded KT-X. Received on 4 September 1944 and crashed on landing at Tadji on 9 June 1945 and converted to components.

A9-196
Records indicate coded KT-X and then later KT-R. Received on 26 February 1943 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 8 March 1945.

A9-205
Coded KT-U. Received on 16 February 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 22 June 1944.

A9-212
Coded KT-L. Received on 26 April 1944 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 18 August 1944.

A9-220
Records indicate coded KT-M but by 25 April 1944 it was coded KT-A. Received on 25 February 1943 and crashed into the sea on 13 June 1944 and written off.

A9-222
Records indicate coded KT-B and then later KT-T. Received on 1 March 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 27 October 1944.

A9-223
Coded KT-L. Received on 25 February 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 19 August 1944.

A9-236
No known code allocated. Received on 15 August 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-241
Records indicate coded KT-H and then KT-B. Received on 12 April 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 20 November 1944.

A9-254
Records indicate coded KT-O and then later KT-X. Received on 11 April 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 30 November 1943.

A9-255
Records indicate coded KT-K and later KT-P. Received on 6 April 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 26 July 1944.

A9-277
Coded KT-F. Received on 11 October 1943 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 2 June 1944.

A9-294
Records indicate coded KT-R and then later KT-J. Received on 11 April 1943 and delivered to 1 Repair and Salvage Unit on 14 June 1944.

A9-296
Records indicate coded KT-G and then later KT-O. Received on 11 April 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 18 August 1944.

A9-323
Code KT-N. Received on 21 July 1943 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 13 April 1945.
A9-327
Records indicate coded KT-B and then KT-L. Received on 16 July 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 26 March 1945.

A9-328
Unable to determine if code allocated as aircraft with Squadron from 28 May to 7 June 1944 and only made one sortie.

A9-329
Records indicate coded KT-D and then KT-F. Received on 16 July 1943 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 8 February 1945.

A9-336
Coded KT-T. Received on 24 April 1944 and delivered to 1 Repair and Salvaging Unit on 5 May 1944.

A9-341
Coded KT-V. Received on 20 August 1943 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 6 June 1944.

A9-345
Coded KT-W. Received on 8 October 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 25 August 1944.

A9-356
Coded KT-O. Received on 20 July 1944 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 23 June 1945.

A9-364
Records indicate coded KT-V and then later KT-H. Received on 10 July 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 19 January 1945.

A9-368
Coded KT-A. Received on 17 July 1943 and delivered to 1 Repair and Salvage Unit on 1 March 1944.

A9-370
Records indicate coded KT-K and then later KT-F. Received on 19 July 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 4 August 1944.

A9-377
Coded KT-A. Received on 7 August 1943 and delivered to 1 Repair and Salvage Unit on 6 July 1944.

A9-381
Coded KT-S. Received on 19 August 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 1 March 1945.

A9-383
No known code allocated as aircraft ground looped on landing at delivery to Squadron on 16 August 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 19 August 1943.

A9-389
Coded KT-Q. Received on 17 August 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 1 August 1944.

A9-395
Records indicate coded KT-N* and then later KT-H. Received on 6 October 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 8 January 1945.

A9-397
Records indicate coded KT-M and then later KT-U. Received on 3 October 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 26 May 1945.

A9-412
Coded KT-D. Received on 14 October 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 6 June 1945.

A9-431
Coded KT-K. Received on 6 December 1944 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 7 April 1945.
Appendix 5: Aircraft Known to be on Strength With 7 Squadron

A9-440
Coded KT-G. Received on 12 August 1944 and crashed on landing at Wewak on 24 September 1945 and converted to components.

A9-446
Coded KT-U. Received on 18 October 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 21 January 1944.

A9-447
Coded KT-O. Received on 16 November 1943 and forced landed in sea as a result of enemy action on 22 February 1944.

A9-448
Coded KT-J. Received on 26 November 1943 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 4 February 1945.

A9-452
Coded KT-L. Received on 5 November 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 31 January 1944.

A9-453
Coded KT-H. Received on 23 May 1945 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 5 December 1945.

A9-458
Coded KT-K. Received on 7 November 1943 and crashed into sea on 16 January 1944 and was written off.

A9-461
Records indicate coded KT-V and then by July 1944 KT-Y. Received on 7 December 1943 and delivered to 12 Repair and Salvage Unit on 15 November 1944 following crash landing at Tadji.

A9-465
Coded KT-G. Received on 16 November 1943 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 9 August 1944.

A9-466
Coded KT-W. Received on 10 April 1945 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 14 December 1945.

A9-471
Coded KT-A. Received on 17 July 1944 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-481
Coded KT-B. Received on 30 April 1945 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 30 November 1945.

A9-502
Coded KT-C. Received on 27 April 1945 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 5 December 1945.

A9-554
Coded KT-E. Received on 20 July 1945 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-595
Coded KT-T. Received on 29 July 1944 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-599
Coded KT-Q. Received on 2 August 1944 and crashed into the sea on 11 February 1945.

A9-600
Coded KT-L. Received on 20 April 1945 and delivered to 7 Aircraft Depot on 10 November 1945.

A9-604
Coded KT-J. Received on 18 June 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-607
Coded KT-W. Received on 6 August 1944 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 18 April 1945.
A9-608
Coded KT-V. Received on 6 May 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 25 November 1945.

A9-623
Coded KT-P. Received on 26 November 1944 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 24 October 1945.

A9-637
Coded KT-B. Received on 6 December 1944 and delivered to 12 Repair and Servicing Unit on 12 March 1945 after wheels up landing.

A9-646
Coded KT-K. Received on 11 April 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 6 September 1945.

A9-647
Coded KT-M. Received on 6 April 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 24 October 1945.

A9-648
Coded KT-Q. Received on 10 April 1945 and delivered to 5 Aircraft Depot on 24 October 1945.

A9-649
Coded KT-F. Received on 16 February 1945 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 18 October 1945.

A9-660
No known code allocated as aircraft crashed on delivery flight to Squadron on 11 February 1945.

A9-679
Coded KT-R. Received on 26 May 1945 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 22 October 1945.

A9-681
Coded KT-N. Received on 17 May 1945 and delivered to 15 Aircraft Repair Depot on 18 October 1945.

3 Lockheed Ventura Aircraft – Source: A59 Status Cards

A59-68
No known code allocated as aircraft received on 2 June 1944 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 3 July 1944.

A59-70
No known code allocated as aircraft received on 3 June 1944 and delivered to 13 Aircraft Repair Depot on 26 June 1944.

A59-75
Issued to Squadron on 26 May 1944 but apparently damaged en route and retained at 13 Aircraft Repair Depot for repairs on 1 June and allotment cancelled on 26 June 1944.
## Appendix 6: Aircraft Accidents

### Hudson Aircraft

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>17 September 1940</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial No</td>
<td>A16-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Laverton Aerodrome, VIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>P/O GI Gibson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Name of 2nd pilot not recorded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft bounced several times on landing, with the last bounce being so severe that the starboard undercarriage collapsed. The undercarriage, wing and both airscrews were damaged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>26 March 1942</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial No</td>
<td>A16-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Kilsyth, near Croydon, VIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>F/O AE Adams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>P/O BL Hancock (Injured), Sgt BR Bright, Sgt BK Chandler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft forced landed in conditions of heavy rain and low visibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>26 March 1942</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial No</td>
<td>A16-168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Laverton Aerodrome, VIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Not recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Not recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>Not recorded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft was seriously damaged and converted to components when landing in bad weather and skidding across the airfield into two Wirraways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>1 April 1942</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial No</td>
<td>A16-164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Laverton Aerodrome, VIC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>F/L VW Morgan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Sgt MD Smith, Sgt WS English, Sgt TR Griffen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>P/O RW Shore, LAC1 R Parkinson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft was taking off in the evening when engine failure caused the pilot to immediately land. The undercarriage was still raised resulting in damage to the engines, undercarriage and lower fuselage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Date: 15 April 1942
Serial No: A16-151
Location: Christmas Hills, near Yarra Glen, VIC.
Pilot: P/O RG Banks (Killed).
Crew: P/O RL Nall (Killed), Sgt NL Thomas (Killed), Sgt AW Amey (Killed).
Passengers: LAC KW Higgie (Killed).
Details: The aircraft crashed during a night time cross-country navigation flight from unknown causes.

Date: 10 May 1942
Serial No: A16-150
Location: Laverton Aerodrome, VIC.
Pilot: None.
Crew: None.
Passengers: None.
Details: A 250lb general purpose bomb was accidentally dropped, holing the mainplane in two places and puncturing the port front fuel tank.

Date: 9 June 1942
Serial No: A16-39
Location: Long Point via Sale, VIC.
Pilot: S/L JW McGilvray (Killed).
Crew: Sgt MJ Gawith (Killed), Sgt FR Walton (Killed), Sgt ED Bayley (Killed).
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft was involved in an operation to seaward from Bairnsdale in company with two other squadron aircraft, but owing to deteriorating weather, all aircraft were recalled. The other aircraft landed safely but the crew of this aircraft indicated that they were lost. Despite receiving bearings the aircraft stalled and crashed about 30 miles south west from Bairnsdale, near the coast, following the failure of the starboard engine.
Appendix 6: Aircraft Accidents

Beaufort Aircraft

Date: 25 September 1942
Serial No: A9-109
Location: In the sea, 4 miles south of Jervis Bay, NSW, in the local low flying area.
Pilot: F/L PM Paull (Injured).
Crew: P/O OA Murray, Sgt DH Morrison.
Passengers: None.
Details: The pilot under estimated the height and the propeller blades touched the water. The blades broke from the hub and the pilot was unable to recover and landed in the water, severely damaging the aircraft.

Date: 3 October 1942
Serial No: A9-106
Location: Nowra Airstrip, NSW.
Pilot: Sgt P Harrison.
Crew: Sgt RP Condey, Sgt AJ Barr, Sgt JJ Newsome.
Passengers: None.
Details: The pilot landed downwind and could not brake before running through the boundary fence and ground looping, with the aircraft then sliding backwards along the ground extensively damaging the rear section.

Date: 9 October 1942
Serial No: A9-112
Location: Nowra Airstrip, NSW.
Pilot: Sgt P Harrison.
Crew: Sgt RP Condey, Sgt AJ Barr, Sgt JJ Newsome.
Passengers: None.
Details: The starboard propeller blades hit a large wave during low level flying practice. The aircraft then bounced off the following wave and with the port engine at full power returned to Nowra.

Date: 28 October 1942
Serial No: A9-105
Location: Nowra Airstrip, NSW.
Pilot: P/O AY Swanson (Injured).
Crew: Sgt JM Scott, Sgt DK Leitzel.
Passengers: AC1 Broderick.
Details: The port airscrew shaft fractured while over the sea. The aircraft just made the airstrip and on lowering the undercarriage, the aircraft swung and crash landed and was burnt out.

Date: 30 October 1942
Serial No: A9-127
Location: Nowra Airstrip, NSW.
Pilot: Sgt RC Wake.
Crew: Sgt LH McCarthy, Sgt DH Oakley, Sgt BM Nelson.
Passengers: None.
Details: While waiting to take off a fire broke out around the starboard fuel tank and caused damage to the starboard mainplane and the self sealing material around the tank.

Date: 13 November 1942
Serial No: A9-144
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: F/O JD Rimes.
Passengers: None.
Details: Aircraft was returning from a convoy escort and landed heavily, tearing the tail strut off the aircraft and damaging the tail section.

Date: 4 December 1942
Serial No: A9-142
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: S/L JOF Barton.
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft was taking off and upon reaching 100 feet, the starboard engine failed. The pilot throttled back and landed, applied the brakes but there was insufficient runway left to stop. The aircraft veered off and hit a ditch and the starboard undercarriage was torn off; the tail strut and starboard outboard mainplane were damaged as was the starboard engine nacelle and airscrew.

Date: 9 December 1942
Serial No: A9-119
Location: In the sea near Wednesday Island
Pilot: F/L HR Croker.
Crew: Sgt RR Planner, Sgt RJ Higgins, Sgt JG Forrester.
Passengers: P/O VE Radford, Sgt RT Langlands, AC1 MP Quinn, AC1 CA Loughlin.
Details: The aircraft was on a travel-flight bound for Ross River. The port engine caught fire, resulting in a forced landing on the reef near Wednesday Island.

Date: 10 December 1942
Serial No: A9-161
Location: In the sea, 15 miles east of Palm Island, QLD.
Pilot: P/O P Willoughby (Injured).
Crew: Sgt AG Holtham (Injured), Sgt HW Hudson (Injured), Sgt LG Benjamin (Injured).
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft forced landed in the sea following engine failure in adverse weather.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>2 January 1943</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serial No</td>
<td>A9-116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Horn Island airfield, QLD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Sgt RJ Harper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Sgt JC Sadd (Injured), Sgt HH Moran, Sgt RA Huth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>AC1 FR Manning (Injured), LAC LS Hand, AC1 AK Sauer, LAC JS Uompoen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Following a travel flight from Ross River to Horn Island, the pilot made a hurried landing due to inclement weather but landed downwind. The aircraft ran off the runway into the scrub, tearing off the undercarriage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Date: 21 January 1943*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>A9-140</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Horn Island, QLD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>F/O JB Lemcke.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Sgt EH Hughes, Sgt IS MacDonald and F/Sgt HL Carter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Taxying accident where the aircraft ran off the runway and the starboard wheel sank into mud to the nacelle doors, damaging the airscrew.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Date: 24 January 1943*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>A9-134</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>In the sea, 20 miles north of Booby Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>F/L PM Paull (Injured).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>F/O AW Murray (Injured), F/O GA Esslemont (Injured), F/O DA Morrison (Injured).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft suffered partial, then complete engine failure and the aircraft alighted on the sea. The crash launch was sent out from Horn Island and picked up the crew who had spent 2½ hours in the dinghy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Date: 22 February 1943*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No</th>
<th>A9-157</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>On the beach near Mapoon Mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot</td>
<td>Sgt AR Turner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew</td>
<td>Sgt E Delaney, Sgt HV Melrose, Sgt CJ Hughes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details</td>
<td>The aircraft was forced landed on the beach owing to bad weather conditions when the pilot had failed to locate the landing strip. The aircraft stood in the water for 36 hours, belly deep at high tide. The stern frame skin was buckled, the mainplane damaged and the rudder smashed. It was converted to components on 20 May 1943.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Date: 6 March 1943
Serial No: A9-196
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: F/L JA Furze.
Crew: F/O THB Kennedy, Sgt WR Corbett, Sgt GJ Crisp
Passengers: None.
Details: On taking off from Wards Strip, smoke was seen coming from the wing and the pilot immediately turned 180 degrees and returned to land. The engines and fuel were turned off and a successful landing was made but the aircraft ran off the end of the runway and into a ditch.

Date: 5 April 1943
Serial No: A9-108
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: None.
Crew: None.
Passengers: None.
Details: Extensive damage was caused to the nose structure and fuselage from a taxying Boston aircraft. The wing tip of the Boston went through the perspex nose and buckled the structure, which was patched and carefully flown to 2 Aircraft Depot for repairs.

Date: 10 April 1943
Serial No: A9-122
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: None.
Crew: None.
Passengers: None.
Details: A fitter was running up the engines and the aircraft jumped the chocks and ran into a tree. The port wing and oil cooler were damaged. Damage was not great, repaired by the following day and returned to service.

Date: 2 July 1943
Serial No: A9-138
Location: Merauke, PNG.
Pilot: W/O LC Kitchen.
Crew: Sgt RE Anderson (Injured), Sgt JR Wylie (Injured), Sgt MR Hunter.
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft was providing protection to a convoy 20 miles from Merauke when the starboard engine failed. The pilot managed to make it to Merauke airfield for an emergency landing but the presence of vehicles on the airstrip forced him to land on only the final 500yds. The aircraft crashed into debris at the end of the strip and the undercarriage collapsed.
Appendix 6: Aircraft Accidents

Date: 23 July 1943
Serial No: A9-145
Location: Ross River, QLD.
Pilot: F/O AY Swanson
Crew: None.
Passengers: Sgt RJ Caskey.
Details: The aircraft was being ferried for servicing to Macrossan and on take off the aircraft lost power. The pilot cut power and applied brakes but the aircraft ground looped at the end of the runway and the port undercarriage collapsed.

Date: 16 August 1943
Serial No: A9-383
Location: Ross River, QLD.
Pilot: F/L B West.
Crew: F/O RT Cooper, Sgt JR Matthews.
Passengers: None.
Details: Aircraft was being delivered to 7 Squadron from 1 Aircraft Depot and was landing at Ross River. Soon after touch down, the aircraft developed an uncontrollable swing to port and the starboard tyre burst with the aircraft hitting a fence and considerably damaging the starboard engine and mainplane. The Duty Pilot reported that the tail wheel appeared to lock at right angles to the fore and aft direction of the aircraft and when inspected the locking device was found to be sheared.

Date: 20 August 1943
Serial No: A9-118
Location: Wards Strip, Port Moresby, PNG.
Pilot: Sgt TW Campbell.
Crew: Sgt AJ Trobe, Sgt EW Clarke, Sgt JD Milner.
Passengers: None.
Details: When taxiing from dispersal before dawn along the taxiway, which was under reconstruction, the starboard wheel fell into a newly dug and unmarked drainage ditch. The undercarriage collapsed with damage to the mainplane and airscrew.

Date: 30 September 1943
Serial No: A9-255
Location: Cooktown, QLD.
Pilot: F/O AF McWilliam.
Crew: F/O EW Lawrence, Sgt EW Harding.
Details: Landing in a cross wind caused a swing to port and was corrected but the starboard undercarriage leg hit a three foot high pile of gravel on the edge of the runway resulting in the starboard undercarriage collapsing and the aircraft ground looped.
We Never Disappoint

Date: 26 November 1943
Serial No: A9-254
Location: Horn Island, QLD.
Pilot: F/Sgt KD Clively.
Crew: None.
Passengers: None.
Details: While taxying A9-397 along a dispersal road, the pilot failed to allow sufficient room to pass A9-254. The starboard wing tip collided with the nose of A9-254 breaking the perspex and twisting the nose end of the fuselage.

Date: 15 January 1944
Serial No: A9-458
Location: In the sea off Cairns, QLD.
Pilot: F/L JE Dures (Injured).
Crew: F/O AJ Prentice (Injured), F/O HP Hoppe (Killed), F/O KM Shepley (Killed).
Passengers: None.
Details: Whilst on anti-submarine patrol duties in very poor weather the aircraft crash landed in the sea about 60 miles east of Cairns. F/O Shepley and F/O Hoppe were not able to exit the aircraft before it sank and were presumed killed. The aircraft only floated for 30 seconds before sinking.

Date: 2 February 1944
Serial No: A9-345
Location: Horn Island, QLD.
Pilot: F/O MR Heysen.
Crew: F/Sgt CK Harvey, F/Sgt JD Payens, F/Sgt EC Reid.
Passengers: F/L JL Greighton, P/O Heathcote.
Details: The aircraft landed in heavy rain and poor visibility. The water on the strip rendered the brakes ineffective and the aircraft ran off the end of the strip. The pilot ground looped the aircraft to prevent it going into a swamp but the port undercarriage struck a ditch and collapsed.

Date: 22 February 1944
Serial No: A9-368
Location: In the sea, 5 miles south east of Merauke, PNG.
Pilot: F/Sgt JW Bracken (Injured).
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft forced landed in the sea after the starboard engine failed with a full load of fuel and bombs.
Appendix 6: Aircraft Accidents

Date: 22 February 1944
Serial No: A9-447
Location: On the coast about 200 miles north west of Merauke, PNG.
Pilot: F/Sgt KD Clively (Injured).
Crew: F/Sgt KL Templer, F/S EC Pearce, F/Sgt RJ Smith (Injured).
Passengers: F/L JD Furze.
Details: During a strike on Timoeka in Dutch New Guinea the aircraft was hit in several places including the starboard air cooler finally causing the failure of the starboard engine. The aircraft lost height rapidly and was finally ditched. The pilot was hit by a piece of shrapnel and the crew were picked up 25 hours later by Catalina and taken to Merauke.

Date: 2 March 1944
Serial No: A9-329
Location: Horn Island, QLD.
Pilot: F/Sgt TW Campbell.
Crew: F/Sgt AJ Trobe, F/Sgt EW Clarke, F/Sgt JD Milner.
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft became bogged off the dispersal taxiway leading to No 2 strip on Horn Island. The aircraft was towed out backwards but this damaged the rear tail strut and resulted in the complete replacement of the stern frame.

Date: 1 May 1944
Serial No: A9-336
Location: Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Pilot: F/Sgt RE Southee.
Passengers: None.
Details: After receiving the green light to taxi down the runway to take off, about halfway down the strip three Vultee Vengeance aircraft came into land. The pilot moved far over to allow these aircraft to pass but the second Vengeance (A27-85) veered towards the Beaufort and the starboard wings of each collided at about 20mph.

Date: 6 May 1944
Serial No: A9-220
Location: Over Keaukwa Village, PNG.
Pilot: F/Sgt JW Bracken.
Passengers: None.
Details: During a strike on Keaukwa Village and surrounds, the starboard wing and mainplane were holed from the explosions of the bombs dropped from another aircraft (A9-364).
Date: 10 June 1944  
Serial No: A9-294  
Location: Jacky Jacky, QLD.  
Pilot: F/O GM Smylie (Injured).  
Crew: F/L JF Waite, F/Sgt JJ Debnam, F/Sgt AT Carey.  
Passengers: None.  
Details: The aircraft landed with full loads of fuel and depth charges when the undercarriage collapsed and the aircraft came to rest on its belly.

Date: 13 June 1944  
Serial No: A9-220  
Location: In the sea, 200 miles due west of Jacky Jacky, QLD.  
Pilot: F/Sgt OG Keats (Killed).  
Crew: F/O FC Davies (Killed), P/O R Arnold (Killed), P/O WR Blain (Killed).  
Passengers: None.  
Details: The aircraft was carrying out a convoy escort when it was heard to crash into the sea. HMAS Inverell located the crash site and found wreckage but no survivors.

Date: 2 July 1944  
Serial No: A9-377  
Location: Two miles east of Jacky Jacky, QLD.  
Pilot: F/Sgt JW Bracken (Killed).  
Crew: P/O TAC Daymond (Killed), F/Sgt A Frank (Killed), F/Sgt LE Parkes (Killed).  
Passengers: None.  
Details: The aircraft dived into the ground at a sharp angle from about 300ft following take off. The cause of the accident was considered to be failure of the starboard engine following a break in the fuel line.

Date: 7 July 1944  
Serial No: A9-196  
Location: Jacky Jacky, QLD.  
Pilot: F/L JM Matthews.  
Passengers: None.  
Details: While taxying from dispersal, the pilot went too far to the left where the taxiway veered and the port wheel fell into a culvert.

Date: 8 July 1944  
Serial No: A9-222  
Location: Jacky Jacky, QLD.  
Pilot: F/Sgt P C Bradley.  
Passengers: None.  
Details: The aircraft was at dispersal and about one minute after both engines had been started, a fire was noticed in the starboard mainplane.
Appendix 6: Aircraft Accidents

Date: 19 October 1944
Serial No: A9-322
Location: Jacky Jacky, QLD.
Pilot: F/O OF Morgan.
Passengers: None.
Details: While taxying, the pilot raised the undercarriage lever instead of the flaps.

Date: 12 November 1944
Serial No: A9-461
Location: Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: F/O GM Smylie.
Crew: F/L JF Waite, F/Sgt JJ Debnam, F/Sgt AT Carey.
Passengers: None.
Details: While on an anti-submarine patrol north of Tadji, the port magnetos started to malfunction and the patrol was aborted. Upon landing, the aircraft hit a pothole under the steel matting and when power was applied to the engines the port engine did not respond, resulting in the aircraft careering towards the dispersal hut. Smylie managed to get the aircraft back on the strip but the aircraft overshot the runway at speed, resulting in the destruction of the undercarriage and extensive damage to the aircraft.

Date: 25 November 1944
Serial No: A9-471
Location: Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: F/O LA Plumridge.
Crew: F/O JH Smith, F/Sgt KF Hall.
Passengers: None.
Details: The pilot was taxying into position on the tarmac following a strike and did not wait until there was a person available to guide him into the aircraft parking space, not seeing a metal pole at the side of the dispersal. The starboard wing hit the pole, considerably damaging the wing.

Date: 16 January 1945
Serial No: A9-364
Location: Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: F/O NE Raw.
Crew: F/O RF Scanlan, F/Sgt EA Gammon, Sgt KV Kerin.
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft was landing after an anti-submarine patrol when the starboard tyre burst resulting in a swing to starboard off the strip and into a ditch with the undercarriage collapsing.
Date: 28 January 1945
Serial No: A9-660
Location: Between Port Moresby and Lae, PNG.
Pilot: W/C NW Barker (Killed).
Crew: F/O A Dalglish (Killed), F/O AV Bate (Killed), F/O CH Chisholm (Killed).
Passengers: F/Sgt WH Pratt (Killed), F/Sgt TN Hay (Killed), Sgt RT Barter (Killed), Lt Col AG Fenton (Killed).
Details: The aircraft left Wards Strip in company with Kittyhawk A29-649 for Lae but both aircraft failed to arrive and no trace of aircraft or crew were found until 15 years later. It was discovered that both aircraft flew into high ground near Myola.

Date: 11 February 1945
Serial No: A9-599
Location: In the sea north of Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: F/L RH O’Farrell (Killed).
Crew: F/L RJ Thomas (Killed), W/O J Starling (Killed), W/O CS Warbrook (Killed).
Passengers: None.
Details: The aircraft took off in the early hours of the morning to conduct an anti-submarine patrol. Radar plotted the aircraft on course for the period it was in range. When the aircraft failed to report in at the allotted time and no answer was received, a search was conducted for two days without any sign of the aircraft or its crew being sighted.

Date: 7 March 1945
Serial No: A9-637
Location: Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: F/L RK Ottaway.
Passengers: F/O F Bell.
Details: When returning from a strike, the pilot opened the bomb doors instead of lowering the undercarriage. He failed to observe the warnings from the control tower and the aircraft belly landed.

Date: 22 March 1945
Serial No: A9-323
Location: Tadji, PNG.
Pilot: W/O PE Smith (Injured).
Passengers: Sgt LG Lewis.
Details: On take off, aircraft would not become airborne and pilot closed throttles and braked but the aircraft ran off the end of the strip into scrub.
<p>| Date       | 24 May 1945               | Serial No: | A9-681              | Location: | Tadji, PNG.  | Pilot:     | F/O LG Morley.     | Crew:          | W/O L Orr, W/O DL Gill, W/O RC Johnston. | Passengers: None. Details: The aircraft was hit by shrapnel from its own 40lb fragmentation bombs, which were released from 100ft instead of the safe height of 500ft. The fuel tanks and fuselage were ruptured from shrapnel. |
|------------|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| Date       | 12 June 1945             | Serial No: | A9-182              | Location: | Tadji, PNG.  | Pilot:     | W/O CH Reed.       | Crew:          | Sgt JB Morris, Sgt NL Delaney, Sgt AD Murray. | Passengers: None. Details: On landing following a strike, the starboard tyre burst and the aircraft swung off the strip and ground looped, resulting in port undercarriage collapsing and extensive damage to the aircraft. |
| Date       | 12 July 1945             | Serial No: | A9-595              | Location: | Tadji, PNG.  | Pilot:     | W/O CH Reed.       | Crew:          | F/Sgt JQ Morris, F/Sgt AD Murray, F/Sgt HL Delaney. | Passengers: None. Details: Failure of starboard brake from a defective relay valve caused the aircraft to swing to port as the brakes were applied. The aircraft swung into a three foot ditch. |
| Date       | 13 July 1945             | Serial No: | A9-502              | Location: | Tadji, PNG.  | Pilot:     | F/L LA Plumridge.  | Crew:          | W/O KF Ball, W/O AJ Barr, F/L JH Smith.         | Passengers: None. Details: While taxiing to the flight dispersal area after a tactical reconnaissance operation, the aircraft commenced turning to park alongside another aircraft, A9-453. In the dispersal area the brakes failed, and with the aircraft being on a downward slope, rolled and struck A9-453. The wing tip of A9-502 struck the wing tip of A9-453 causing minor damage to both aircraft. Subsequent examination of the braking system revealed that the cable leading from the brake handle lever had parted. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Pilot:</td>
<td>F/Sgt E G Follington.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crew:</td>
<td>F/Sgt R W Campbell, Sgt B M Prest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passengers:</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details:</td>
<td>On a flight from Madang to Wewak, the starboard engine caught fire but was extinguished. The aircraft made an emergency landing at Wewak but a grader crossed the runway as it was about to land. The pilot applied power on the remaining engine and cleared the grader but by this time was well down the strip; the aircraft ran off the end of the strip and sank into soft soil.</td>
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<table>
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<td>Pilot:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crew:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passengers:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Details:</td>
<td>The port engine failed 15 miles from Cairns due to a blown oil line and the aircraft was forced to return and make a safe single engine landing.</td>
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Appendix 7: Known Aircrews

This list of aircrews was compiled from Personnel Occurrence Reports and Unit History Sheets and is representative of aircrews at a particular time. For various reasons aircrews changed over time. Some aircrew returned to the Squadron on a second posting and are therefore represented twice, but in different crews.

**Hudson Crews:**

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<td>LH McKeand</td>
<td>CD Fisher</td>
<td>RI Sutherland</td>
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<td>WH Cowan</td>
<td>HA Copeland</td>
<td>FJ Hammond</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS Graham</td>
<td>FA Martin</td>
<td>F McKenzie</td>
<td>MR Buzzard</td>
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<tr>
<td>JW McGilvray</td>
<td>MJ Gawith</td>
<td>FR Walton</td>
<td>ED Bayley</td>
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<td>OB Gray</td>
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<td>DM Stevenson</td>
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We Never Disappoint

Beaufort Crews:

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<td>EED Hallam</td>
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### Appendix 7: Known Aircrews

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## Appendix 8: Squadron Establishment

### General War Establishment of 7 (General Reconnaissance) Squadron reforming in January 1942

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<tr>
<td>General Duties, Flying</td>
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</table>

**Total** 427

**Aircraft:**
18 Hudsons (two dual control) with 36 Twin Wasp engines.

**Mechanical Transport:**
Two four wheel drive tractors (any further mechanical transport to be provided by the relevant station headquarters).
**Provisional Detailed War Establishment of 7 (General Reconnaissance/Bomber) Squadron, May 1944**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mustering</th>
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<th>Mustering</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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**Aircraft:**
19 Beauforts (one dual control for training purposes) with 38 Twin Wasp engines.
### Appendix 8: Squadron Establishment

**Mechanical Transport:**

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<td>Two-wheel Drive Tractors</td>
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<td>Motor Cycles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor Cycle (with Side Car)</td>
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We Never Disappoint
Appendix 9: Details of 7 Squadron Airlift to Tadji

The airlift of 7 Squadron from Jacky Jacky in north Queensland to Tadji in New Guinea was a remarkable achievement of organisation, teamwork and administration. The Squadron was first notified of its move to New Guinea in late July 1944 and early in September an advance party moved to Tadji to prepare for the Squadron’s arrival. By the end of September there was still no shipping space available and at the end of the first week of October Squadron Leader Oscar Barton, now temporarily Commanding Officer following the appointment of Wing Commander Eric Cooper to 71 Wing, approached higher authority to ascertain if the Squadron could be moved by aircraft. At this stage there was nothing definite about the air move but all officers were asked to give the matter consideration and to decide on the equipment required to be transported by air if approval was given. On 18 October notification was received that the Squadron would be moved by air and C-47 Dakota aircraft would arrive on 20 October. The decision to move the Squadron by air came as a surprise as did the fact that there was only 36 hours before the first six loaded aircraft were to depart. A highly organised and efficient system of the loading was obviously necessary and this was worked out and put into operation. Squadron personnel who had been loading the SS Mernee for the Army stopped that work at 2000 hours one night and commenced loading their Squadron’s equipment at 0700 hours the following morning.

Each section had a certain amount of equipment, most of it crated in heavy hardwood for a move by sea. The sea tonnage of each of the crates was known but not the weight in pounds of the items themselves. Each C-47 Dakota could carry a total disposed load of 5,800 pounds. The total number of single loaded trips that would be provided by the C-47 Dakotas was not known so all equipment and personnel had to be graded on a priority basis. In this fashion the utmost use would be made of whatever number of lifts was provided. Section commanders carefully determined the necessity first for initial operations and then for continued operations of each single item and forwarded lists to the equipment officer of all the equipment that could conceivably be carried by air, describing each item in detail. However the weight of most of the items was unknown so the following system was devised. Initially a vehicle was allotted to each section commander to remove his own crated items to section dumps on a cleared area behind the parade ground. Two sets of scales were obtained and set-up on the ends of two flat top trucks. As each load of section equipment arrived at the dump area the scale units backed up to the truck and each item was unloaded into the dump via the scales. The lists of all items brought from sections and the weight of each was recorded to the nearest pound. The respective section commanders were each handed one copy of the lists. The other copy was passed to the Equipment Officer whose job it was to compose lists of 5,800 pounds as exactly as possible covering both the personnel and equipment for each aircraft trip. The Equipment Officer was the arbiter of who and what travelled in each successive trip. To accomplish this he had continuously
fed to him exact information of the weight of each single item, its whereabouts and the
dergee of priority attached to it.

Each night after loading had been completed for the day the Equipment Officer made
up his lifts for the following morning. The officers, NCOs and airmen of the Squadron
were formed into parties of approximately 10. After the first day’s loading it was found
necessary to specialise on particular aspects of the system, hence they were renamed
Weighing Parties, Lift Assemblers and Loading Parties. There were also Passenger
Supervisors and Expeditors. The former organised the assembly, waking, breakfasting
and transportation to aircraft of each group of passengers making a lift. The latter
toured continuously between centres of activity and helped to overcome any difficulties.
As compilation of each lift list was completed one copy was passed to the Air Transport
Control Officer, one copy to the first available lift assembly party for action and one
copy to the Adjutant for recording and subsequent action by Passenger Supervisors.
The Air Transport Control Officer was kept continuously advised by the C-47 Dakota
detachment commanders of the aircraft which would be available each day, their times
of departure and a time which loading of each could be commenced. He then allotted
each alphabetical lift to an aircraft. Manifests were then made up ready to hand to the
Dakota captains.

As these details were completed he passed them to the Adjutant who recorded
them in files and on a giant indicator board displayed out in the open for all to see. The
chief supervisor of outside working parties kept in touch with this board and as fresh
aircraft were allotted lists and became available for loading, he assigned the loading
parties to the job. As loading of each aircraft was completed, the indicator board was
annotated to that effect. The Adjutant then handed lists of the personnel comprising
each lift and their aircraft allocation to his passenger supervisors, whose responsibility
it then became to get the right passengers to the right aircraft the following morning.
In this way nothing was left to chance and each man learned to do his own special task
efficiently. So well did the system operate that not one aircraft was delayed and no single
item of equipment was overlooked or damaged in loading or unloading throughout the
whole period of six days over which the transport aircraft operated. Only two items
were not actually weighed on scales to the nearest pound – Jeeps with the weight already
accurately known and the Clarkson Tructractor. The latter had its weight in pounds
stamped on the dashboard and was loaded and carried on that basis but this was later
found to be incorrect. With the exception of this tractor the greatest load carried by any
aircraft was 5,884 pounds and the least 5,757 pounds.

On 21 October commencing at approximately 0500 hours the following C-47
Dakotas took off from Jacky Jacky for Tadji:

A65-32 VH-CUD – Mess equipment;
A65-34 VH-CUF – signals equipment, one officer and four other ranks;
A65-14 VH-CTM – flights and medical equipment and tents;
A65-23 VH-CTB – orderly room equipment and personnel;
A65-1 VH-CTA – W/O Moon and armament personnel and equipment;
A65-9 VH-CTI – two Jeeps complete; and
A65-41 VH-CK – two Jeeps.
Appendix 9: Details of 7 Squadron Airlift to Tadji

The aircraft commenced arriving at Tadji from 0700 hours and by 0900 hours the last aircraft had been unloaded and refuelled. All aircraft returned direct to Jacky Jacky and were reloaded and ready for take off again the following day. Meanwhile packing and loading operations at Jacky Jacky had proceeded continuously during daylight hours and even after sunset on every day until the move was completed.

On 22 October 10 Dakota aircraft took off from Jacky Jacky commencing at 0500 hours and arriving at Tadji from 0700 hours. The details of these flights were:

A65-30 VH-CUB – bomb trolleys;
A65-40 VH-CUM – armament equipment, welfare goods and personnel;
A65-32 VH-CUD – service party equipment;
A65-23 VH-CTB – operations crew and specialist equipment;
A65-41 VH-CUK – service party equipment and personnel;
A65-34 VH-CUF – service party equipment and personnel;
A65-14 VH-CTM – flights, messing and barracks equipment and personnel;
A65-1 VH-CTA – service party equipment and personnel;
A65-9 VH-CTI – service party equipment and personnel; and
A65-10 VH-CTK – two Jeeps.

All aircraft were unloaded by 0900 hours but owing to difficulties in refuelling, two aircraft did not leave Tadji until 1100 hours and a third A65-10, VH-CTK, eventually made a trip to Hollandia for 7 Transport and Movement Office returning to Jacky Jacky next morning. Nine aircraft were reloaded at Jacky Jacky by dark ready for take off early on Monday morning.

On 23 October, commencing at 0445 hours, nine Dakotas left Jacky Jacky for Tadji with the following loads:

A65-23 VH-CTB – equipment stores and one radar officer and personnel;
A65-1 VH-CTA – equipment section and personnel;
A65-14 VH-CTM – barracks equipment and personnel;
A65-34 VH-CUF – service party equipment store and personnel;
A65-41 VH-CUK – medical equipment and personnel;
A65-30 VH-CUB – equipment store and personnel;
A65-40 VH-CUM – photographic equipment, welfare equipment and personnel;
A65-32 VH-CUD – radar and wireless equipment and personnel; and
A65-9 VH-CTI – medical equipment and personnel.

All aircraft were quickly unloaded at Tadji and returned direct to Jacky Jacky except for A65-40 VH-CUM that was delayed due to engine trouble and returned next morning. Nine aircraft were again loaded at Jacky Jacky ready for take off next morning.

On 24 October the following aircraft took off from Jacky Jacky for Tadji, again from 0445 hours:
We Never Disappoint

A65-41 VH-CUK – cipher, medical and radar equipment, tents and personnel;
A65-14 VH-CTM – water trailer, Jeep trailer, tents and personnel;
A65-9 VH-CTI – three motorcycles, tents, ‘A’ flight equipment and personnel;
A65-1 VH-CTA – three ton truck parts;
A65-32 VH-CUD – three ton truck parts;
A65-23 VH-CTB – two Jeeps, Army liaison officer equipment and personnel;
A65-34 VH-CUF – Tructractor;
A65-40 VH-CUM – armament equipment; and
A65-10 VH-CTK – one weapons carrier and personnel.

Again, nine Dakotas were loaded up for an early take off next morning. On 25 October a further nine loads were transported from Jacky Jacky to Tadji as follows:

A65-40 VH-CUM – equipment section;
A65-30 VH-CUB – flight, medical, wireless, radar and welfare equipment and personnel;
A65-41 VH-CUK – three ton truck parts;
A65-9 VH-CTI – equipment sections and personnel;
A65-10 VH-CTK – tanker parts and barracks equipment;
A65-23 VH-CTB – three ton truck parts and tents;
A65-14 VH-CTM – one weapons carrier and personnel;
A65-34 VH-CUF – tanker parts and Barracks equipment; and
A65-32 VH-CUD – photographic operations and welfare equipment.

All aircraft had departed from Tadji for Jacky Jacky direct by 1030 hours. The personnel at Tadji had commenced setting up the camp area. Most of the essential equipment and some amenities also had been transported to Tadji but with a sudden withdrawal of all C-47 Dakotas to Townsville it was found that several important items would have to be left for shipment at some later date. However Squadron Leader Baker commanding the 34 Squadron detachment, after consultation with higher authority, undertook to transport another three loads the next morning. Accordingly three aircraft were reloaded that night.

On 26 October the last three Dakota loads left Jacky Jacky at dawn comprising:

A65-41 VH-CUK – three ton truck parts and service party equipment;
A65-9 VH-CTI – three ton truck parts and bomb tail units; and
A65-10 VH-CTK – equipment section items.

Following a request from both RAAF Headquarters and Northern Command, a report had been required on how the Squadron’s motor vehicles were transported by air. This was obviously to be used as a guide should other units need to move motor vehicles in this way. Three of the three ton Ford 4x4 trucks, one International refuelling tanker of 800 gallons capacity, two Dodge 4x4 weapons carriers, one water carrier, four Indian motor cycles, one Clark tructractor and two 5KVA generating sets were removed from their chassis and transported. The three ton trucks were the only vehicles
Appendix 9: Details of 7 Squadron Airlift to Tadji

it was necessary to modify for air transport. The modification was carried out at the Squadron and the other vehicles were disassembled where necessary. The body of the three ton vehicles was divided by acetylene cutter through the centre from fore to aft. It was reassembled by welding the floor and reinforcing the cross channels by plating. The chassis was cut at an angle of 45 degrees at a position midway below the body. A template was fitted before cutting to facilitate realignment. The reassembly was carried out by reinforcing with 6in by 3in angle iron along the sides and bottom, and with a top plate along the chassis. It was bolted and electric spot welded on to position. All the transport vehicles were reassembled and gave satisfactory and trouble free service.

The following is a summary of personnel and equipment transported by air:

1. **Main Party Echelon 21 to 26 October**
   The number of Dakota loads provided were fortuitously far in excess of the number anticipated. A total of approximately 235,000 pounds of equipment was transported in 47 loads, without loss or damage of any kind. This included three 3 ton trucks (dismantled), two weapon’s carriers, one tractor, one water trailer, four motor cycles, eight jeeps and two jeep trailers, two KVA generating sets and several items of service party equipment. The success of the move was attributed to the excellent cooperation of the officers commanding the Dakota detachments, similar cooperation of Air Transport and Movement Office personnel, the perfect organisation and balancing of loads by the Squadron’s Equipment Officer, Flying Officer Maurie Hocking and the untiring efforts of Squadron personnel. Besides equipment, 144 Squadron personnel and their personal belongings were transported by the Dakota aircraft.

2. **Second Echelon 29 October**
   The second echelon comprised 12 Beaufort aircraft commanded by Squadron Leader Barton as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Aircraft</th>
<th>Pilot</th>
<th>Crew</th>
<th>Passengers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A9-323</td>
<td>S/L Barton</td>
<td>F/O Wells, W/O Stanton</td>
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<td>A9-412</td>
<td>F/L Matthews</td>
<td>F/O Amott, F/O Green, F/O Fisher</td>
<td>Three NCOs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-381</td>
<td>F/O Smylie</td>
<td>F/L Waite, F/Sgt Carey</td>
<td>Two NCOs</td>
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<td>Two Orderlies</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-196</td>
<td>F/O Morgan</td>
<td>F/Sgt Duncan, W/O Gibson</td>
<td>Four LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-607</td>
<td>P/O Cooper</td>
<td>F/S Carlton, F/O Gregory</td>
<td>Five LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-182</td>
<td>W/O Smith</td>
<td>F/O Sutherland, Sgt Gannon</td>
<td>Four LACs</td>
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<td>A9-599</td>
<td>F/O Dawson</td>
<td>F/L Bassett, F/O Goldsworthy, F/Sgt Matheson</td>
<td>Two Cpl</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-364</td>
<td>F/O Hinge</td>
<td>F/O Parmentier, F/S Bant, F/S Berry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Three LACs</td>
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3. **Third Echelon 1 November**

The third echelon comprised six Beaufort aircraft commanded by Flying Officer O’Farrell as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Crew</th>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>A9-327</td>
<td>F/O O’Farrell</td>
<td>F/L Thomas, W/O Warbrook</td>
<td>One Sgt Three LACs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A9-329</td>
<td>F/S Gibson</td>
<td>F/O Burdon F/O Hallam W/O Oldman</td>
<td>One Sgt Two LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-471</td>
<td>F/O Hinge</td>
<td>F/O Cocking, F/O Zimbulis</td>
<td>One Sgt Three LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-595</td>
<td>F/O Morgan</td>
<td>F/S Duncan, F/Sgt Barnes</td>
<td>One Cpl Four LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-395</td>
<td>P/O Cooper</td>
<td>F/Sgt Carlton, F/Sgt Kearney</td>
<td>One Cpl Three LACs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A9-461</td>
<td>F/O Smylie</td>
<td>F/L Waite, F/Sgt Debnam</td>
<td>One Cpl Three LACs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Some of the above crews returned to Jacky Jacky to ferry the remaining aircraft to Tadji.

4. **Rear Echelon 2 November**

F/O Norm Raw with two other crew arrived from Jacky Jacky in A9-323 with almost 2,500 pounds of equipment. W/O Perc Smith and crew arrived from Port Moresby in A9-397 with four other ranks and 800 pounds of equipment.
# Appendix 10: Personnel Providing Air Cover to the Dove Bay Landing at Wewak

## Aircrew

| W/C J.O.F. Barton, Pilot, Scone, NSW  
| (Commanding Officer) |
| F/O G.C.G. Parmentier, Navigator, Mosman, NSW |
| F/O E.E.D. Hallam, WAG, East Sydney, NSW |
| W/O G. J. Hay, WAG, Sandgate, QLD |
| F/L A.E. Tutt, Pilot, Hawthorn, VIC |
| W/O A.L. Preece, Navigator, Lakemba, NSW |
| F/Sgt F.J. Lewis, WAG, Goodwood, SA |
| F/Sgt D.B. Roberts, WAG, Mount Bute, VIC |
| F/L J.R. Knight, Pilot, Mount Barker, WA |
| F/O J.E. Gannon, Navigator, Victoria Park, WA |
| F/O C.H. Porter, WAG, Newport, VIC |
| F/O A.W. Clarkson, WAG, Auburn, NSW |
| F/O J. MacFarlane, Pilot, Brisbane, QLD |
| W/O J.M. Arnold, Navigator, Mitcham, SA |
| W/O J.B. Lenihan, WAG, Largs Bay, SA |
| W/O A.M.C. Robertson, WAG, Warrendyte, VIC |
| F/O L.A. Plumridge, Pilot, Ballarat, VIC |
| W/O K.F. Ball, Navigator, Mosman, NSW |
| F/L J.H. Smith, WAG, Culcairn, NSW |
| W/O A.J. Barr, WAG, Camberwell, VIC |
| F/L A.B. Dean, Pilot, Balmain, NSW |
| F/Sgt K. McDowell, Navigator, Glebe Point, NSW |
| F/L F. Chadwick, WAG, Hollywood, WA |
| F/O K.A. Davies, WAG, North Perth, WA |
| F/L P.G. Fisher, Pilot, York, WA |
| W/O R.E. Ware, Navigator, Forest Hill, VIC |
| W/O F.T. Gedye, WAG, Doncaster, VIC |
| W/O R.P. Jowett, WAG, Bendigo, VIC |
| W/O R.S. Bell, Pilot, Bexley South, NSW |
| W/O F.R.H. Fogarty, Navigator, Mosman, NSW |
| F/Sgt J.W. Halbert, WAG, Kew, VIC |
| F/Sgt A.J. Lakeman, WAG, 436554 |
| F/O R.H. Ockenden, Pilot, Rosslyn Park, SA |
| W/O J.D. Raymond, Navigator, Subiaco, WA |
| W/O J.S. Bromley, WAG, Oakleys, VIC |
| W/O J.T. Carr, WAG, East Malvern, VIC |
| F/L M.S. Humphreys, Pilot, East Brighton, VIC |
| F/L N.J. Hollingsworth, Navigator, Cottesloe, WA |
| F/L I Ackroyd, WAG, Launceston, TAS |
| F/O F.G. Perry, WAG, Angaston, SA |
| F/O N.E. Raw, Pilot, Caulfield, VIC |
| F/O F.P. Bell, Navigator, Waverley, NSW |
| F/Sgt E.A. Gammon, WAG, Nagambie, VIC |
| F/Sgt K.V. Kerin, WAG, Adelaide, SA |
| F/O L.G. Morley, Pilot, Mount Lawley, WA |
| W/O L. Orr, Navigator, Mount Lawley, WA |
| W/O D.L. Gill, WAG, Canberra, ACT |
| W/O R.C. Johnston, WAG, Inverell, NSW |
| W/O B.D. Jarrett, Pilot, Renmark, SA |
| W/O B.N. Cawthorne, Navigator, Manly, NSW |
| F/O, A.L. Barnett, WAG, Broken Hill, NSW |
| F/Sgt L.P. McInerney, WAG, Willoughby, NSW |
| W/O P.E.H. Smith, Pilot, Newcastle, NSW |
| F/O D.N. Sutherland, Navigator, Sydney, NSW |
| F/Sgt F.P. Gannon, WAG, Warrnambool, VIC |
| W/O R.B. Clifton, WAG, South Gippsland, VIC |
| W/O H.S. Lodge, Pilot, Mount Lawley, WA |
| W/O W. Bethune, Navigator, Rose Park, SA |
| F/Sgt L.S. Malone, WAG, Surrey Hills, VIC |
| F/Sgt S.A.C. Eisman, WAG, Glen Iris, VIC |
| F/L C.N. Hill, Pilot, South Belmont, WA |
Prinicipal Support Services

**Squadron Engineering Officer:**
F/O G.R. Brown, South Perth, WA

**Operations Officers:**
F/L A.H. Hatfield, Ballarat, VIC
F/O A.W. Roseler, Kew, VIC

**NCOs in Charge of Aircraft Maintenance:**
F/Sgt A.E. Burgess, Granville, NSW
Sgt J.E. Boyle, Altona, VIC
Sgt H.R. Vickers, Melbourne, VIC
Sgt W.R. McKissock, Ivanhoe, VIC

**Intelligence Officer:**
F/O L.H. Smith, Mullumbimby, NSW

**Armament NCO:**
Sgt G.M. Fourro, Bundaberg, QLD

**Squadron Adjutant:**
F/L K. McCullough, Kirribilli, NSW

**NCO in Charge of Orderly Room:**
F/Sgt A.J. McNeill, Brisbane, QLD

**NCO in Charge of Transport:**
Sgt R.G. Ingram, Kogarah, NSW
Appendix 11: No 7 Squadron Beaufort Songs

This first song was the more popular one and was compiled by Flying Officer Bob Cooper in early 1943 to the tune of ‘Dinky-di, it’s great to be a soldier’ (by Louis L. Howarde Sydney c1940). This tune was based on the World War I song ‘Horseferry Road.’ Verse 14 was added in about July 1943 following the shooting down of the first Jake, but Cooper had been posted from the Squadron by this time. The name of the person who penned the additional verse is unknown.

1. With conversions and courses to kill us they tried
   But by some lucky mischance we’ve all just survived
   On Beau bloody bombers we’ve all just survived
   And we’re off to the war in the DAP’s pride.

2. In this wallowing pig we are off to the war,
   Plus all torpedoes and tit bits galore.
   The Jesus Box Company has closed down its store,
   Even Air Board admits they don’t know what we’re for.

3. As fighters they say we are too bloody slow,
   The target for bombing is too far to go,
   As transports there’s no place the damn stuff to stow,
   There purpose they say they don’t bloody well know.

4. Then along came a bloke, a beaut Air Board madonna,
   He must have been riddled with dengue and gonna,
   He thought up a use for the Beau bloody bomber,
   We’re erecting a huge pile of muck in his honour.

5. Now we stooge around in circles on submarine sweeps,
   There are more bloody convoys than the Yanks have got jeeps.
   The sight of a ship only gives us the creeps
   If we only had George we could all go to sleep.

6. The first bloody hour we spend searching the sea,
   The convoy ain’t where it should bloody well be,
   It’s miles from the spot on the daily G.G.
   So we find it by D.R., or by faith in J.C.

7. The next hour is easy, once the convoy is found,
   Our minutes with all sorts of pleasures abound,
   We look for Jap subs. which we know aren’t round,
   And we do all the things on which Air Board has frowned.
8. The third hour finds us beginning to freeze,
As with fodder our hunger we try to appease,
On our unvaried diet of biscuits and cheese,
And jam with more seeds than a dog has got fleas.

9. The fourth hour’s the one where we start to relax,
With all sorts of terrible pains in our backs.
We don’t give a hoot for positions or tracks,
When we think that for this we pay damned income tax.

10. The fifth hour sees us a really grim sight,
The pilot has had it, the WAG flies the kite,
The poor flying O’s keep watching the height,
The rear gunner sleeps dreaming dreams of delight.

11. The last hour’s the best as for home we set course,
We’ve seen quite enough of the bloody ‘H’ force,
We’re as tired as a dog and could eat a dead horse,
We’ve heard nothing all day except engines and morse.

12. And when we’ve landed to Ops Room we file,
To tell them Nil sightings and Vis is one mile,
We answer all questions with slap happy guile,
then off to the Mess to get drunk in style.

13. The beaut Boston pilots they treat us with scorn,
The Beaufighters say that we give them the corn,
And that is the reason we look so forlorn,
So back to our convoys and take offs at dawn.

14. The rakes of Ross River once treated with scorn,
And now the martyrs of Moresby and heroes of Horn,
With Jakes to our credit we’re well on the way,
To being the ace fighter squadron of all NEA.

15. On Armistice Day there’ll be a bloody big parade,
The Navy, the Army, the Air Force Brigade,
And bringing up the rear well back in the shades
Will be the crews of the Beauforts the DAP made.
The other, less sung single verse was titled ‘7 Squadron is Our Name’ and was sung to the tune of ‘Along the Road to Gundagai’

When put us to the test  
We always come out best  
For 7 Squadron was our name  
We always stuck together  
Thru fair or stormy weather  
And won our share of fame  
You can keep the other units  
And deeds that they have done  
There’s only been one Squadron  
And 7 is the one  
So to end our little song  
Let’s sing it loud and long  
That 7 Squadron is our name.
We Never Disappoint
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