IN THIS EDITION

Society news & updates
Air mechanic Frank Rawlinson: Ground ops, part 5
‘Red Falcon’ relics · Abner Gilchrist Dalzell
5 minutes with Michael Molkentin
Book reviews · Side slips

Cover: Hand-coloured print from the collection of Charles Daniel Pratt, State Library of Victoria.
In this edition, we reach the end of Frank Rawlinson’s manuscript and embark unexpectedly down a Richthofen rabbit hole.

I was curious as to the relics that Rawlinson souvenired, and was able to photograph his correspondence with the Australian War Memorial at their Covid-safe research centre in October. About the same time, I came across Aaron Pegram’s excellent article and podcast on the AWM’s ‘Red Falcon’ relics.

To complete the Rawlinson picture, I asked permission from the Families and Friends of the First AIF to reprint a biography of Sergeant Dalzell, mentioned several times in Frank Rawlinson’s manuscript.

The whole shebang is rounded out by a tribute to air mechanics that I stumbled upon when browsing the Australian Aero Club journal, and a couple of Bertangles photos from Des Sheehan.

If that’s not enough 3 Sqn AFC action, news followed of the AWM digitising Lt William Palstra’s diary, plus extracts from another diary, that of Lt ‘Bill’ Heslop, recently commemorated at the School of Army Aviation in Queensland.

Members are invited to share news, recommendations and photos for the May 2021 newsletter. Deadline is Friday 23 April. Email the newsletter editor, Bernard de Broglio, at aswwlah.newsletter@gmail.com.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to Neil Eddy (Vic), John Gilder (UK), Jim Grundy (UK), Tom Iredale (Germany), Stephen Moore (UK) and Kathryn Shapland (WA).

PASSWORD

Financial members for 2021 have been emailed the new website password. Let me know if you haven’t received yours.

Not renewed for 2021? The Society shop ww1aero.org.au/shop is taking orders 24/7. And while you’re doing that, consider gifting a second membership to a friend or family member.
The AGM for 2020, originally scheduled for November, was postponed due to health regulations. Given the difficulty of meeting in person, and the opportunity to involve members from outside Sydney, the committee chose to hold the AGM online. The time was chosen because it allowed all our current office bearers to be present. Online presentations with speakers in 2021 will be at a much more reasonable hour for our members in the UK, Europe, USA and Canada.

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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

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**Date:** Saturday 20 February 2021

2 pm  Australian Eastern Daylight Saving Time
4 pm  New Zealand Standard Time
7 pm  US Pacific Standard Time
8 pm  US Mountain Standard Time
9 pm  US Central Standard Time
10 pm  US Eastern Standard Time
10 pm  Canada Eastern Standard Time
3 am Coordinated Universal Time (UTC UK)
4 am Central European Standard Time

**Venue:** Online via Zoom on Society's Zoom Pro Account (host Des Sheehan)

**Chairman:** Gareth Morgan

1. **Minutes:** The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 17 November 2019 are to be confirmed (attached with this Agenda).

2. **Reports by committee members:**
   a. **President:** Gareth Morgan
   b. **Vice President:** Michael Garside
   c. **Journal Editor:** Peter Chapman
   d. **Newsletter Editor:** Bernard de Broglio
   e. **Webmaster:** Andrew Smith
   f. **Western Front Association Liaison:** Paul Simadas
   g. **Aviation Historical Society (NSW) Liaison:** Paul Ewoldt
   h. **Librarian:** Gordon Lasslett
   i. **Acting Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Secretary:** Des Sheehan
   j. **Speakers/activities for 2021:** Gareth Morgan, Michael Garside and Paul Simadas
   k. **Presentation of 2020 Pat Moy Shield:** by Gareth Morgan
   l. **Presentation of Mark Lax Award for 2020, for excellence in Journal articles in the past year:** by Gareth Morgan

3. **General Business:** Matters of interest from members present.

4. **Election of Office Bearers for 2021:**

**Chair/returning officer for election of office bearers:** Christine Ewoldt

The following members nominated for the following positions on the Executive Committee in 2021.

- **President:** Gareth Morgan
- **Vice President:** Michael Garside
- **Journal Editor:** Peter Chapman
- **Newsletter Editor:** Bernard de Broglio
- **Webmaster:** Andrew Smith
- **Librarian:** Gordon Lasslett
- **Treasurer and Membership Secretary:** Des Sheehan
- **Liaison Co-ordinator:** Greg Mullens

**Financial Statement for year 2019/2020 to be provided to members via email with final reminder of AGM seven days prior to AGM, and addressed with report by the acting treasurer at AGM.**

- **Liaison with WFA:**
  - Paul Simadas, President WFA
- **Liaison with AHSA (NSW):**
  - Paul Ewoldt, President AHSA (NSW)

Nominations for positions on the executive committee may be submitted by email by any financial member for 2020 and 2021, to the president via the president’s email below at any time prior to 13th February 2021 (that is, 7 days prior to AGM).

president@ww1aero.org.au

If you have received this email you are a financial member for the 2020 and/or 2021 years.

Nominations may also be made at the AGM by any financial member for 2020 and 2021, at any time prior to the election of office bearers.

**Declaration of election of office bearers by returning officer:** Christine Ewoldt

President-elect then chairs meeting and formal close of AGM.
An Unknown Australian Airmen

Gareth Morgan writes:

This photo has been the subject of some discussion and speculation on the Great War Forum: an anonymous Lieutenant pilot in AFC uniform.

The photo was taken in Collingwood, but the date is unknown. I note that he has an AFC shoulder flash, but no medal ribbons, which might suggest it was taken before the Victory and War Medals were awarded. My guess, and no more than a guess, is that he might be returned from Europe or Palestine to be stationed in Melbourne, perhaps early in 1919.

I’ve shown the photo to David Perkins and Mark Lax, but they couldn’t identify the man.

I realise that it’s probably a forlorn hope (to borrow a term from 17th/18th Century military terminology), but I thought that I’d circulate the image just in case someone has seen it before, or can recognise the man concerned. It’d be good to give him a name.

Michael also shared fragments of film that Sir Ross Smith and crew shot on the flight.

Although the live audience was small (24 in number) they were quite distinguished! Among them were Air Cmdr Terry van Haren, Col Mark Francis and Trevor Henshaw dialing in from the UK.

Worthy of note is that three sons of WW1 pilots were on board: John Love, Neil Smith and Des Sheehan.

If you couldn’t make the talk, or would like to watch it again, log in to the members area of the website, and look for the recording in the video library.
**RAAF CENTENARY COIN**

The first coin struck in 2021 celebrated the centenary of the Royal Australian Air Force. The design features an S.E.5a alongside an Orion and F-35.

The RAAF YouTube channel has a short video with Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Mel Hupfeld, who did the honours.

Collectable proof coins are available from the Royal Australian Mint’s online shop. Unfortunately, they’re not circulating coins, so no chance of finding an S.E amongst your shrapnel.

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**AWM DIGITISATION PROGRAM FOR RAAF CENTENARY**

On 31 March 2021, the Royal Australian Air Force will mark 100 years of service to Australia. To mark the occasion the Australian War Memorial is publishing a selection of historic records related to RAAF service throughout the centenary.

The diaries of Lieutenant William Palstra MC (pictured left) are the first fruits of the Memorial’s digitisation program.

Lt Palstra was awarded a Military Cross for action at the Battle of Messines in 1917 while serving with the 39th Battalion, AIF. After flying training in England, he joined No. 3 Squadron AFC in May 1918. Palstra was killed when British airship R101 crashed in 1930.

Excerpts of the diaries are given in a blog post on the AWM website, and you can access the complete record (24 pages) in their catalogue: 1DRL/0538.

Perhaps a member would like to transcribe the accounts for the newsletter, or write an article with additional context for the journal?
Colin Owers writes:

Bob Casari (29 August 1926—4 November 2020) was well known for his massive, authoritative work *American Military Aircraft 1908–1919* published by Aeronaut Press, as well as the many articles he published over the years on the American effort to manufacture aircraft in WWI.

I first came to know Bob when he published his small books on the American production program. These were detailed with information and photographs that had lain hidden for decades. I was lucky to visit him at his home and see how he had conducted his research. Before the days of digital access he took to photographing documents on 35 mm film and reading the results at home—with a magnifying glass as he could not afford a microfilm reader!

Bob was a great help in my research into USN aircraft as he could see the big picture and was able to keep me from getting too bogged down in pursuing side alleys.

He will be sorely missed.

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**VALE BOB CASARI**

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**WIND IN THE WIRES**

Are you subscribed? *Wind in the Wires*, produced by our friends at Cross & Cockade International, is the premier email newsletter for First World War aviation.

Written by David Marks and edited by Andy Kemp, it comes out quarterly—at a great price!

The latest articles on WW1 aviation are distilled into a handy digest to be enjoyed in the comfort of your home.

[Join the mailing list.](#) You can also find [back issues](#) online.
The seaplane hangar was built by the US Navy for its training station at the University of Washington. The hangar was later repurposed as the ASUW Shell House for Washington Rowing’s men’s crew that won gold in the 1936 and 1948 Olympics.

It is apparently one of the only two surviving wood hangars from WWI, and the only one to house seaplanes.

The University of Washington website has more.

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The February 2019 newsletter reported on the restoration of a late-WWI seaplane hangar in Seattle.

Now, Colin Owers forwards photographs and a 360° virtual tour of the interior. The imagery is from a company that works with real estate agents but the shed’s not for sale!

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Webmaster Andrew Smith writes:

As a member of the Society you have exclusive access to the Members Area, which some of you will notice, had a major facelift last November. It is password protected so members that have joined or renewed their membership for 2021 should have received the login details via email.

The Members Area houses nearly 1,000 photos across 28 collections, with hundreds more to be added. For the researcher we have 1,500 Combat in the Air Reports online, with over a 1,000 more to be added in the coming months. Our entire '14 -'18 Journal catalogue is available to download for free, as well as historical newsletters and general meeting minutes. In the 1960's Society members recorded interviews with surviving Great War aviators, and these are being digitised and will be added to the Members Area regularly, the first of these are now online.

Two more fantastic additions to the Members Area is the “In Their Words” section which contains essays, correspondence and unpublished biographies of eight airmen. The other addition contains RAF Technical Notes covering sixteen aircraft, from the Martinsyde G.100 “Elephant” and the G.102 to the Vickers F.B.9 “Gunbus.”

If you would like to share your collection via the Members Area, please contact a member of the committee.

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**WARBIRDS ON PARADE**

Peter Chapman shares these photos taken by Marcus Duvenhage at the Warbirds on Parade airshow, Sunday 6 December 2020 at Ardmore aerodrome in Auckland, New Zealand.
Kathryn Shapland writes:

I joined your society late last year. My husband, John, and I have a war and social history collection/museum on our farm on the south coast of Western Australia.

What started with two cabinets and a few signed aviation prints in our house has now expanded to 6 rooms and over 600 square metres of displays in what used to be John’s workshop. In the 10 years since we started collecting, the workshop has been getting progressively smaller and the museum correspondingly larger.

The current building project has seen the workshop disappear completely to be replaced by a research and storage room and another display area where we plan to put a theatrette and more library space.

To all of the men out there who are lamenting the loss of the workshop, never fear! John has built himself a new one in another location on the farm—the benefits of being a builder and having 200 acres to work with.

John has always been interested in military history. He grew up in Sussex and his Dad was a paratrooper in WWII. Warbirds have been his passion since he was a small child. When he returned to the UK with our elder daughter in 2009, his godfather took him to an airshow at Duxford which reignited this passion.

They were selling Corgi metal diecast planes and the limited edition signed aviation prints in marquees. He brought a couple of books home with the prints in and pointed at the ones he liked. In a case of bad timing, I’d just started on eBay so had the capacity to buy the things he pointed at. The rest is history (literally).

I have always been a collector. I have a science degree and so like to classify, order and research. Military history is not something I had a great interest in until relatively recently. Even now, it is not the retelling of battles and events that interests me. It is the stories of the people involved—from those who fought in the war to those who supported them in the field and on the home front.

The collection started with WWII aviation and gradually expanded to cover all of the military as well as auxiliary services. I have a special interest in women during wartime so we have a large collection of memorabilia relating to nursing (Red Cross, Voluntary Aid Detachment, St. John Ambulance and the military nursing units) and other home front jobs (working in factories, Women’s Land Army).

I am also interested in the rehabilitation of wounded, disabled
and blinded servicemen after the Great War in particular and the institutions set up and fundraising that was carried out to support them.

In terms of collecting, I like to buy items with names so that I can research the people behind them and tell their stories. My favourite things are groupings which include photographs or other items which give you a tangible link to the former owner.

I love photograph albums, scrap books, autograph books, letters and postcards, trench art, original art and posters, wartime games, dolls and souvenirs, uniforms, hats, medals, badges. I have a problem. John jokes that he builds the rooms and I fill them and that pretty much sums it up.

Now to my interest in WWI aviation and the impetus to join your society. One of my recent purchases was a collection belonging to an AFC mechanic, Herbert James Milner (pictured below). The grouping included a large archive of photographs—both negatives and loose prints and postcards—many of which were annotated. During the course of my research, I discovered the ASWW1AH website and the wonderfully comprehensive database of Airmen. I also saw that there was a photographic archive and hoped that I might be able to contribute to it.

I am currently in the process of scanning and enhancing the photographs and have already received great assistance from Gareth Morgan and the Society regarding the subjects of some of the images. I think it’s really important to share knowledge so that it’s widely available to anyone who has an interest.

Herbert’s grouping is very comprehensive. When the box arrived, it weighed over 9 kg! I have his medal pair, AFC metal shoulder titles, rising sun badges and other insignia; a No.1 Squadron gold sweetheart brooch; his flying and welding goggles; contemporary books and magazines; service documents; bibles and so much more.

I hope to share some of these items with you in coming newsletters. We also have groupings belonging to several other AFC and RFC personnel in the collection.

Thank you for allowing me to join your group. I hope over time that I can become a worthwhile contributor.

John and I extend a cordial invitation to you all to visit our collection if you are ever in our part of the world. We’d love to show you around. If that’s not possible, please have a look at our website to see what we’ve been up to.

recol lectionsof war.com.au
James Oglethorpe alerts us to the recent opening of the Lieutenant WSJP (William Snelling John Pryce) HESL0P Courtyard at the School of Army Aviation Officers’ Mess, Oakey, Queensland. Present at the ceremony was Lt Heslop’s son David and grandson Ed.

The following information is taken from a Facebook post by the Australian Army Aviation Training Centre.

‘Bill’ Heslop (1894–1983) attended No. 7 Course of Instruction in Aviation at Point Cook in early 1917. He was commissioned in the Australian Flying Corps on 1 May 1917, embarking for overseas service in June. After further training in England, he joined No. 3 Squadron AFC in France in 1918 where he was on Active Service from April to late October.

His Flying Log Book, duly certified by the Squadron’s Recording Officer, shows a total war service flying time in France of over 250 hours—a record exceeded in his Squadron in only two or three instances.

The Heslop family have donated a number of artefacts relating to Lt ‘Bill’ Heslop and his AFC service to the Army Aviation Flying Museum (AAFM) who will mount a comprehensive display.

At the official opening and unveiling of the plaque, Mr David Heslop read two entries from Lt Heslop’s diary, which sounds like a remarkable resource.

*Entry for 14 June 1918.*

“Yesterday evening, McKenna and I went up to do a Shoot. When “taking off”, our left wheel came off. As we were “taking off” directly into the setting sun, and had our full load of bombs on, it was not noticed by either of us. We circled round the aerodrome to test our Wireless as usual, but it so happened that our Wireless was weak, and we received the signal to come back. In the meantime, another machine was despatched forthwith, with a spare wheel to hold up to us and let us know that we had lost one. But before this machine could reach us, we were landing. Well, I reckon we can thank our lucky stars on the landing. It was a lovely landing—the machine ran on one wheel for a considerable distance, but when flying speed was lost, the left side, of course, dipped. Automatically, McKenna tried to level the machine as a bump due to a rut, for example, could cause one side to go down then. A few feet further on, the projecting axle and struts caught on the ground.
and, of course, immediately onto its nose went the machine—the tail suspended in air. It swayed for a second or so, and finally rested back on its nose and under-carriage. Fortunately for us, the speed was not sufficient to turn the machine over on its back or else there might have been serious consequences. The propeller, of course, was smashed to atoms—we did not even get a piece fit for a souvenir—pieces hit one wing which had to be replaced by a new wing. Had we known about it, we would of course gone over the Line and got rid of the bombs, but I doubt if a better landing could have been made. Neither of us were scratched. This makes now the third smash that I have been in without injury.”

Entry for 17 June 1918.

“McKenna and I have use of a new bus. Today took air at 1:35pm and carried out two successful shoots. On return home tried the new bus by doing some stalls and Immelmann turns, etc. Very pleased with bus.”

Entry for 27 June 1918.

“Had our first aerial combat today. At 6:50am, took to the air on patrol, and also had a shoot to do if at all possible as it was holding back our other work. Though the visibility was poor and we were under the disadvantage of having the sun towards Hunland and in our faces, we nevertheless decided to do the shoot. We had successfully completed the shoot and were going further into Hunland for the last time to examine our target and ascertain extent of damage when we were suddenly pounced on by 12 Huns—Alboscouts—who attacked when we were some 4,000 to 5,000 yards over Hunland and about 6,000 feet high. McKenna and I have frequently discussed method of flying to adopt etc. if attacked and immediately got our machine into the speed and position desired. They attacked—8 behind us and halfway through the scrap 4 more came in from the front of us. The machines behind came at us in 2 waves of 4 machines—each of the 4 machines spitting fire simultaneously at us from two guns each on their long dives.

“We both realised that we did not stand a ghost of a chance against such odds and owing to the enemies’ superior speed, the only thing to do was fight. To have attempted to escape by diving away would have offered them a perfectly “still” target which, with the enemies’ superior speed could not possibly have been anything but fatal to us. My pilot and I are, therefore, each brought down one of the Huns, so we did not have any material damage. Our luck has been simply wonderful today for in no less than about six distinct instances in the scrap, luck has been with us. We got hit about 30 times altogether. Besides the petrol tank, one of the centre section wooden struts (between the wings) was shot completely in two, and one of our elevator control wires nearly severed. The other bullets were spread over the wings, body and wing of the machine and did not do any material damage. 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Our luck has been simply wonderful today for in no less than about six distinct instances in the scrap, luck has been with us. The actual scrap lasted just on 5 minutes though really it seemed like hours. A one second event seemed a terrible long time—Black crosses on Hun very distinct.”

1 Gareth Morgan provides additional detail: Lt Heslop was flying in RE8 C2535 on Artillery Observation flight between Hamel and Cerisy when attacked by Jasta 49. Leutnant Alois, Freiherr von Brandenstein was credited with a victory over a ‘Bristol Fighter’; the third of his eventual 8; he was the equal most successful Jasta 49 pilot. C2535 was repaired and continued in service until 4 October 1918, when it crashed on No 3 Squadron’s aerodrome during a practice flight with Lt HE Richards at the controls. It was assessed as not worth repairing and was struck off at No 2 Aircraft Supply Depot on 12 November.
Back at our squadron, there was great activity, for many smaller battles were being fought, and the German advance was halted. Aircraft had taken a very big part in that, and were still continuing to do so. Every day in the week in Flanders and Picardy, machine guns were rattling away up in the sky, and ‘planes circled down to the ground in very slow turns, and they fell like the leaves of the forest over the Somme, or else dived swiftly down in the distance. A couple of Spads landed in a very fast and dashing manner, and I spotted their insignia on their fuselages, and the differently arranged colours on their roundels. The ‘flying stork’ insignia was enough to bring me running over to them, for that was the late Capitaine Guynemer’s own Escadrille de Cigognes, and one of the French boys seemed very pleased when I quoted that to him. He wore a silk stocking for a cap, and I admired his very fine Spad, which I guessed was the latest model. They were a beautiful looking ‘plane, in my own estimations, like their latest Nieuport too, but they landed very fast, and their undercarriage and tail skid did not appear to be very strong, and if I remember correctly, one had a tail skid broken then, in their landing on our ‘drome.

One evening there, a Camel limped in at dusk, and I was the only one to meet that youthful Canadian, and to put some petrol in his tank, and see him off in turn. He was just about out of fuel, and only had a few more miles to fly to his aerodrome. He would not take my advice and fly back home next day, when the gaping hole on his starboard lower wing could have been covered over. He had been badly shot about in a fight, and had thought that he was on fire, which he probably was, and he might have dived it out. He flew off again in the approaching darkness, and I hope he arrived alright.

Another S.E.5 that landed another time had a very sick motor too, and another man and I had a very hard time to start it. That pilot told me he had dived down from a very great height before it caught on, and brought him in for his landing. We had joined hands and pulled that little prop a lot before we got his engine firing. They had a very hard motor to pull over at any time, but the strain that that man must
have put on to his machine for the force of his diving speed to have started that motor, must have been terrific.

Our own 'planes were being fitted with a parachute under each bottom wing, attached to a box of 303 ammunition. It was a very clever improvisation of small half drums, which held the 'chutes, which were held in by a rubber band, and a rope from the 'chute joined the ammunition box on the bomb rack to it, and when a box was released, it pulled the 'chute from out of the drum and floated down to the troops.

The idea was suggested by that great general of our 4th Army, Sir H. S. Rawlinson. The Australian Corps in which we served, under Birdwood and Monash, formed part of his command. He was also my father's kinsman, and I had often thought of gate-crashing the Chateau of Bertangles to call on him, and I regret that I did not do so.

That big battle was under way, and I was sent to a salvage job, and saw something of it. Our R.E.8s came in circling around a headquarters, and were busy blurting out their morse code messages on their very large Klaxon horns. No doubt they dropped their message bags too, which were pretty coloured fabric streamers that caught the eye when they were dropped, with the message enclosed in a little pocket on the broader end. The sight of the R.E.s soaring overhead and their deep Ur Ur blurting notes made you think of a particularly large masculine bird in great pain from indigestion, but they were doing a marvellous job, flying so low and well, and they had landed their ammunition to our advancing troops just where it was most required. That was a very great victory, and this new technique of putting tanks and 'planes in together like that, gave the Germans a very good thrashing. It was called the Battle of Hamel.

In all the war the Australians fought no more finished and successful fight than the attack at Hamel. The Corps Command gave much of the credit for that success to the airmen. It is not too much to say that Hamel first showed many soldiers a vision of the days to come, when battles might be directed chiefly from the skies.—The Official History (Vol. 8, page 274).

We had often watched the German scouts sneak in and pop off one of our observation balloons, that were strung right around our front. They usually carried a couple of R.F.C. observers, who would hop out and travel down in their harness attached

Postcard depicting the capture of Hamel village, 4 July 1918. One of the ammunition parachutes, hand-made by 3AFC and dropped by RAF 9 SQN on the day, is shown mid-right. Designed by 3AFC’s Lawrence Wackett, these were first used by the Allies at Hamel. (Frank Rawlinson papers, AWM)

1 Ur Ur—this was sound made by the klaxon, which was calling for flares from the infantry to mark their progress for the ‘Contact Patrol’ R.E.8s.
to their big parachutes, which pulled out of conical containers hanging from the basketwork nacelle. One German top man at balloon strafing got four of ours in a row here, and we anxiously counted all the chutes that floated down in turn. It was bad luck for him that one of our old R.E.8s chased him and shot him down inside the German line.\(^2\) The hydrogen balloons were huge affairs, and were set on fire quite easily by a round or two of tracer and incendiary ammunition. Our people, like the Germans, were using these mixtures of different ammunition, which ranged from a steel-cored armour piercing type, to tracer and ordinary bullets, and Buckingham incendiary to Pomeroy explosive types. (Pomeroy had a pie cart in Melbourne after the war.) The latter was introduced to knock the Zeppelins out when they flew high over London, and tossed their bombs out haphazardly to kill far more civilians, and hit more homes than military targets. Le Prieur rockets, up to ten to the ‘plane, were also used for that purpose. My brother and I had stayed a night at the Charing Cross Hotel when they drifted high over London and hit the residential part of one big store, and killed a lot of girls. On their last big raid, they lost about half a dozen Zepps, and I don’t think they used them again for night bombing, or terrorising civilians. Those balloon observers seemed to bear a very charmed life, and they were very stout and gallant fellows, and put up with a lot of shelling too at times, from yellow bursting stuff.

It was my good luck to put in a lot of my time to the end of the war on salvage and advanced landing ground work. There was one big battle coming off that might decide the fate of the war, and the German army. Back with the squadron, we heard that we were winning, and the weather had been fine as well. I had had a good look over one of the two-seater French Breguet tractor ‘planes of a very modern and fine design, and something that took my eye was one of our old 1½ Strutter Sopwith two-seaters which may or may not have been built under licence by the French, but had certainly been clad by them in a very heavy fabric, which was very well doped indeed, and gave it a very fine and modern look.

My Captain Francis ‘plane was in my care, and I had seen him off with the first rays of daylight, and back after the setting sun for a good while now, for he was a stout hearted fellow, who must have loved his flying, which he did consistently and well. He did not fly all day, but he liked the early morning and evening runs, and seemed to me to put more time in the air than many others did.

The Official History (Vol. 8, page 305) had this very interesting item concerning my Captain Francis’

\(^2\) This incident, which took place on 1 August 1918, is described in Cutlack’s official history (p307) and Alan Morris The Balloonatics (p158).
consistent flying, and his aeroplane. It was probably posted up on some notice board, and I had heard nothing of it before reading this account:

Francis’s machine, No. A4397, made a record in the British air forces on the Western Front by performing 440 hours 35 minutes’ service-flying, and making 147 trips across the line. The pilot and the squadron were specially congratulated by G.H.Q. The previous best record was 427½ hours’ service-flying.

The big battle was due, and he and I counted 400 of our machines passing over and flying in formation overhead, and heading for the lines. That was a heartening sight for him, and for me, and I waved him on his way. A terrific fog came up as the battle got under way, for our people were dropping big phosphorous bombs, to add to the morning mist. Very soon our machines were looking for a place to land on, and one of ours flew nearly to the coast, before he could get out of it. They were down in roads and on cottages, and one chap had spotted our Verey lights and made a marvellous landing. He was a Bristol Fighter pilot, who side slipped nearly to the ground, and spotted our tents and flattened out, and only rolled on ahead for a very few yards and stopped. That was the best landing I had seen under such dangerous conditions, and one of those old instructors in a Bristol Scout or Pup couldn’t have done any better.

Our intelligence hut on that day was a wonderful hive of activity, with dispatch riders on their motorcycles dashing about, and reports coming in from all parts of our line, ‘and from over the German side too.’ It was remarkable to me that these people with the green cap bands, knew the movements of German units, together with our own, and this battle must have ranked with Waterloo in many ways in being the decisive battle of the war, which was shortened...
by a year, and our Australian Corps alone was larger than Wellington’s British Army. This 8th of August battle according to Ludendorf, the German leader, was ‘the black day of the German Army.’ Everyone was pleased with the news that we were winning, and we heard that 202 tanks had gone in too, in that first great opening day. We had all types of these now, and our little Whippets, and armoured cars, had broken through and circled far to their rear, and great supplies of guns and stores and prisoners had been taken. The great Generalissimo Marshal Foch must have been overjoyed with this news, for only four months or so before that, it was ‘backs to the wall’ and it looked as if we might have, according to the pessimists, finished in the sea, for that was the time of that great March flood.

Three of us were off to salvage one of our machines which had force landed on some very rough land near Harbonniers, and we managed to get the engine started on six cylinders of the twelve, and with that much propeller power, we manoeuvred the ‘plane along and with one in the cockpit, and one on each wing, we managed to keep it moving. We raked up all the sigs. telephone wires with our tailskid, and finally got it back to a road, where we stopped for a spell and to watch an artillery battery throwing their loving messages to the Germans. Limbers were being galloped across the flat in front, and fired on by the Germans, so we gave the ‘bus’ full throttle, and headed for a line of poplars and one of our fat balloons, where we parked it for the night, and I called on old machine gun mates in Bayonvillers beyond the poplars. Germans could probably see our ‘plane from their own balloons, so we got our engine running early in the morning. One of the magnetos had a stuck make and break, which we lubricated with graphite scraped off the end of a pencil, and we had our revs up ready to go, when Captain Francis arrived. That was the best take off with an R.A.F. engined ‘Harry Tate’ that I had ever seen. We called our ‘planes ‘Harry Tates’, not because they were rather funny, but because it rhymed with R.E.8s. The skipper headed straight for the line of poplars, and took a terrific risk in just managing to scrape over the treetops, and just on the point of stalling. My friend, Sergeant Dalzell [see profile on page 31], had made sure that he would go with him, and he never missed a chance to fly, on engine tests with backfiring motors, or on force landing jobs, and he certainly had lots of confidence (or no introspection) in our old R.E.8s. We were together on several of those jobs, and he finally survived the war, and then went missing with another man, in a hazardous search trip over the sea, and I am sure he would have volunteered for that. I believe he was a 1914 man with an M.S.M. [Meritorious Service Medal].

Back at the squadron, they had built a hut on one of our aircraft axles and wheels. That was the first motor
caravan that I had ever seen. It had a door in the front, and windows on the sides, and coupled up behind the Crossley tender in a very business-like manner. My friend Johnnie [2/AM Albert John Walker] was being taken off in one of our motorcycle sidecar outfits to a C.C.S., and I said goodbye to him. I believe that he died a few hours after that, and previously had had a bullet through his chest on Gallipoli, when he was serving in a Light Horse regiment. He was one of the first victims of that terrible new pneumatic influenza epidemic that raged in France and decimated our armies, and he would not have stood a chance. Many of the biggest and strongest men fell victims to that black death, which eventually spread around the world. It is mentioned in *The Battle Below* that 40 men left 3 Squadron in October 1918 for hospital. I was on advanced landing grounds, and knew nothing of that.

One of our men was hurt in an aircraft take off, by failing to jump or release his hold on the rapidly moving ‘plane, and I believe he fell from a pretty good height. We met after the war, which was proof that he had survived that fall.

Several of us were booked for an advanced landing ground, where a big battle was being fought, and we travelled off with our caravan, which we called our intelligence hut, trailing on behind. We travelled on a winding path over what must have been a temporary bridge over the Somme, and I can remember the worried look on the chap’s face in the caravan doorway behind us. We were in territory now that had been recently held by the Germans, and finished upon a high piece of land at Mont St. Quentin, with a valley and road, and rising land behind us.

Bray and I were amazed by the great string of Germans coming over the hill towards us. About a battalion strong, they flowed on down, and then, on the tail coming over the hill, appeared one solitary 4th or 13th Light Horse man. We asked their leaders if they would win the war now, and they were confident that they would. Whether the German field guns were shelling us, or the road behind, didn’t worry us much, for they all passed over behind.

The infantry that spent the night in the valley, or on the slope behind, were picked up by their campfires or other lights, by a German bombing ‘plane, which flew along the valley and machine gunned them all the way. We could hear their lights out calls, and I thought that there’s no rest for the weary in war, but I don’t suppose the Germans worried them much, for they would be well scattered out in extended order.

We watched the German Gotha held by our searchlight beam over near Peronne, and the tracer bullets coming down the beam from the attacking Camel ‘plane. The Gotha burst into a brilliant fireworks display, and you could hear our A.I.F. cheering away for miles around. We stayed awake that night waiting for the rest to come and be shot down too, and we were not disappointed, and our Camels got the lot in turn. Five in one spot and in one night, was very remarkable hunting, and our boys must have been very hoarse by the following morning. Years after that, I heard a man telling his boys all about it, on a seaside beach on a nice sunny day, and many thousands more of our men must have witnessed that night-long fireworks display. Jim, who had gone into camp with me, was one of those cheering men, and we were discussing that show, and the other event, when we lost four of our observation balloons, on the telephone only a week ago.

German bomber attacked by five fighter aircraft. Perhaps this Gotha AWM H09430 with Mont St Quentin in background?
We moved from that lofty land to another advanced landing ground that had been recently taken by our tanks and troops, which was a particularly stinking place called Proyart Wood, but the best country that was available for that purpose.

The Germans had had heavy losses there, and a lot of our tanks had been knocked out too, and one of their Hotchkiss machine guns was salvaged by me for our own A.A. protection.

A very fine looking and well dressed man from the army medical corps had an unusual and novel idea for the eradication of any lice that might happen to be infesting a very nice deep dugout, which he had selected as a desirable residence. He wore a very dark and well trimmed large moustache. He had got hold of one of our red two gallon tins of petrol and splashed all the bunks and crevices with it, and came up for a well earned smoke. He struck a match to light his pipe at the top entrance to the dugout, which gave us all an unforgettable illustration of the explosive powers of petrol.

We hoped that he was not badly hurt, but I believe he lost that fine moustache. I can only remember seeing one of our men wearing a luxurious beard, and he must have had skin trouble and been given permission to grow one. Some accidents led to a charge for self inflicted wounds, and some men killing time, fiddled around with shells and bombs and killed themselves, and sometimes others too.

The squadron moved up then, and a pretty good ‘drome was made. Another D.H.9a long distance daylight bomber squadron must have moved in nearby too. We had seen the D.H.4s the year before, which flew at 139 m.p.h. at 20,000 feet, and they were fitted with Rolls Royce 375 h.p. Eagle engines. A D.H.9 had landed on our own ‘drome too. They were of a similar type, but were fitted with Siddeley Puma engines. This was a big water cooled six cylinder inline engine that had recently come into service, and was remarkable from my point of view in that it could be left idling, and just ticking over its prop. My friend Jim has just recalled that the pilot of that machine backed into it, and was killed. The radiator hinged down underneath the fuselage and was a very novel feature, but the total engine power was very much short of the Rolls. This new D.H.9a was fitted with the new Liberty engine, which was developed by the Americans and the British getting together, with several U.S. motor firms. It was rated at about 450 h.p. and was a water cooled V-12 cylinder type, with a big radiator mounted in front just like the D.H.4s. One flew in to land one day, with a 112-lb bomb still in its rack, and it dropped off near a tent that had just been evacuated, and the ‘plane was blown to bits.
A terrific storm blew up there, and I took shelter in a very fine well-equipped German dugout, which even ran to a kerosene lamp and a bunk. This was formerly a well equipped headquarters, and they always went for comfort and protection for their troops very much more than ours did. The lightning and thunder and rain went on all night long, and when morning light appeared, most of our tents and 'planes were wrecked. We had a busy time then on that water-sodden field, getting the soaked and battered 'planes all serviceable again. By the next morning, most of the 'planes were ready for service again, to help our guns and infantry along in their advance to another objective.

Our advanced landing party moved up again once more, through the old devastated area around Peronne, and on to a former German landing ground at Bouvincourt. Parts of some of their machines were still left lying about there, and some of the towns that they had held were burning. Montigny farm, our next advanced landing ground, was a bleak and windswept place, and was not made any brighter by the fact that the old French civilian cemetery there had had some of its graves and tombs and their coffins broken open and looted. This was the time when the story was circulating in our A.I.F. of the discovery of a Hun corpse factory where bodies were being boiled down for fats for making soap and other scarce items, and of train loads of bodies seen wired together, bound for Germany. It seemed hard to believe that these supposedly civilised people would stoop to such ghoulish practices as that.

We had a raid on this aerodrome, but it was not made by a Gotha, and I saw the machine quite clearly in the moonlit sky. It was one of the French Voisin 'planes, and flew over as if it had flown from the German's side. When it dropped a small light bomb which spattered around the tents, I opened fire on him, and we suffered no damage at all. Some troops who had camped in some old shedding near our place were reported as having had some casualties. That 'plane had probably been used by the Germans, to trick us into thinking that as it was one of our own allied machines, they could sneak in on us unexpectedly and get away with it. Both sides were flying the other's machines, but mostly for experimental work.

We moved on again for one of the last great battles, and our tent hangars were spaced well out in two big orderly rows. We had one very bad windy day, and were relaxed and not expecting any machines on either side to be doing any flying that day. One of my boyhood friends, Freddie, from the artillery, had called on me, and as we had not seen each other since I had called to see him at his unit's camp at Neuve Eglise in the Ypres salient, about a year before, we were all ready for a good long talk. One of our captains entered the tent hangar, and ordered a new man to prepare to take off with him at once.
explained that he was married, and so he may have had a family too, and he certainly had no intention of flying on a day like that. He was probably acting within his rights, as I had never seen him near the planes. The captain ordered me, then, to fly with him, and I said goodbye to Fred, who wished lots of luck, and I grabbed my gear, and we got our ‘plane away. Getting up height was our main concern to cross that horrible devastated area in the big black storm that was tossing our ‘plane about. Landing would be a very sticky problem too. Luckily for us, they had a good crew where we landed, and they caught our wing tips as we bounced in, and we had survived one of the worst ‘dud flying days’ in France. Travelling back to our squadron was an opportunity to see some more of the countryside, on the following day.

One of the most remarkable feats of quick judgement, and good flying, was performed by a man who was landing straight towards us. He may have had his wheels on the ground in the finish, but he flew straight in to the open tent hangar which pulled him up as neatly as could be, and we rushed in to find out why. The pilot was just back from the line, and his observer, Lieut. [Roland Frank Charles] Machin, was collapsed on the floor of the gunners compartment, and had probably jammed the controls from working properly too. Sergeant Dalzell and I got him onto a stretcher and into a tender, and rushed him off to the nearest dressing station, but it was obvious that he was dead, and had been shot from the ground below. We carried him in to the tent and my friend gave his name to the padre, and he was laid out with the rest of the many men who had died that day. He was a newcomer to me, but had done very good work in the short time that he had been with us. His pilot, Lieut. [David Frederick] Dimsey, who had shown such fine judgement, was awarded a decoration.

Our A.I.F. infantry fought their last action at Montbrehain on the 5th October when Lieut. Ingram won the V.C. for leading his men to capture 9 guns and kill 42 Germans. They went on to kill six more, to capture a machine gun and 52 more prisoners. Many of our old pilots who had survived, had
had their transfers to be instructors, and some had returned again, but most were new hands now, and there seemed to be plenty of them too. Some of these new pilots were very careless on that engine starting procedure, and very often those propellers started off before you were ready, and you had a job to back away from them.

My friend, Sergeant Dalzell, who would ‘fly in anything anywhere’, and I went out to a forced landing in a distant valley. The machine was down on the lowest land, where American soldiers were advancing, for all of our A.I.F. infantry were now out resting. They soon left the ‘plane’s vicinity, when we told them that it was still bombed up. We got the engine started between us, and my friend hopped in with that new pilot who had stayed on with his machine, to guard it until we arrived. Many other pilots would have dumped that 112-lb bomb or two before they would have force landed a ‘Harry Tate’ in the bottom of a valley, and they would not have fancied taking off with bombs, from such an uncertain place.

We established our last advanced landing ground at the end of the little town of Premont where the 27th and 30th American infantry divisions were fighting with our Australian Corps. We camped with some of their men from a Chicago infantry unit. We were camped beneath a tarpaulin stretched over a ridge pole, when our only squadron machine that could not make it home barely cleared our tent roof as he flew in, and crashed alongside a fence beside us. He gave us the dickens of a fright, because we had not heard him coming, and we were probably asleep at the time. Our American friends, who shared in this, thought it was a routine stunt. The pilot and his observer were able to walk away from the wrecked machine, and as they had probably flown in to crash with a switched

‘On the line Vaux-Andigny—Le Cateau 14th October 1918. Photo by 3 Sqn AFC for the coming attack by 27 and 30 American divisions, with British Fourth Army […] The country was dotted with MG and anti-tank rifle holes. Whippets fell to them.’ (Frank Rawlinson papers, AWM)
off motor, they had not caught fire, and that was something that had often happened before. We gave our American friends the souvenirs that they asked for, and I remember that those message bags were very popular. One of their officers gave me a drink of whisky, and the best of Scotch at that, and I offered him the rest of the 'plane for the rest of the Scotch in the bottle. They put on a jolly good feed of steak for us too, and their general organisation for rations and comforts was miles better than our own. We had a burst of shelling too, from a heavy battery, gas and H.E. too, and they may have been able to spot that 'plane from one of their balloons. My mate, Bray, and I had a shell or two burst beside us as we ran, but we were pretty fit and we beat them to it, for we were very keen to see that war through to its final finish.

The outstanding single-seater fight of the war took place on our 4th Army front near Landrecies on the 27th October. The Canadian pilot, Major Barker, flying a Sopwith Snipe destroyed a German two-seater flying high over the Mormal forest at 21,000 feet. He was pounced on by a pack of 15 or more Fokker, who launched four attacks on him; and although he was wounded three times in the course of that fight, he shot five of the Fokkers down. He landed his plane, recovered from his wounds, and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallant fight against almost incredible odds, in the course of which he had destroyed six German aircraft in one fight over the line.

We made one final trip, through Le Cateau to a place in unspoiled country that had been a German 'drome near Catillon. It was very interesting watching an attack by a Sopwith Dolphin on a Halberstadt two-seater, which was streaking back over our territory for information. Viewed through very high powered glasses, the Dolphin was steadily climbing up to him from underneath and behind, and the enemy observer had his long parabellum gun stuck over the side, following our pilot's movements, and it was recorded that 68 German machines were shot down on that 30th October day by the R.A.F.

We watched the last air fight of the war in our area, when one of our A.W. two-seaters was attacked by a flight of fast German scouts near Le Cateau, and they fought back with continuous fire until they hit the ground. A flight of our latest, very fast Sopwith Snipes nearby could have saved them, but they were flying in another direction. We were sorry for those gallant boys who failed to see the war through by only a short day or two.

We got the news that fighting would cease on the eleventh hour, of this eleventh day, and that night some of the old German dumps must have been fired by our people in some sort of half hearted celebration. Our squadron had brought down many more (51 in all) enemy machines than the eleven totally destroyed we had lost ourselves, and that spoke very well for the offensive spirit of our pilots and observers, for our machines had been designed for reconnaissance work, and their own defence and most certainly not for all-in fighting. We never had a spell like other units or the A.I.F. 2,953 German 'planes were totally destroyed by the British forces in 1918, and 1,178 more were driven down out of control. We had had some very fine gunsmiths and armourers with us too, and our speeded up Lewis guns were not troubled much by stoppages, that curse of all machine guns. Their parts were honed and lapped, so that they fired like clockwork. They had invented their own devices for testing, all cartridges for size, so that no thick rims and bulged cases were passed through into drums, or the metal links that were joined up by cartridges, to form a belt for the Vickers. Many of our men who overhauled our engines in the
workshop, and repaired air frames, and developed our hundreds of thousands of ‘photos, and ran our efficient wireless service with the squadron and the guns, were the best picked men of that time, and although many had wished to fly, they could not be spared for that. 88 pilots and 78 observers served with 3 Squadron, 11 pilots and 13 observers lost their lives, and 12 pilots and 12 observers were wounded. The average period of a pilot or observer’s service with the squadron was five months.

The squadron had moved up to Premont now, and we had a Bristol Fighter or two fitted with Sunbeam Arab engines, which still had a few teething troubles to get over.

The C.O., Major D.V.T. Blake, and his staff and our intelligence branch, must have been very good, for the C.O. was officially congratulated for his leadership of the best army cooperation squadron in France.

One of our R.E.8s caught fire in its tent and burned, some said that one of those heating lamps had over-turned and caused the fire. Fire and R.E.8s had so often been associated that that’s the way I will always think of them.

We knew that we must have had an enormous air force by this time, for whole squadrons of ‘planes had been passing over at night for bombing raids. The

R.F.C. had had more than 7,000 machines delivered in France for replacement purposes in 1918. The total deliveries had increased from over 6,000 in 1916 to over 30,000 in 1918. When the war finished, the R.A.F., to which 3 A.F.C. was now attached, had 22,647 ‘planes and 103 airships left. So wood and wire and fabric combined formed a wonderfully flexible medium for the rapid production of new ideas in design.

The war was over now, although the peace or Victory Day had not arrived, and we were left with a deep feeling of anti-climax in this cold and quiet and
empty land, that had rumbled with incessant gunfire since August 1914.

British army men who had been prisoners of the Germans were drifting back to us now, together with French civilians. One of these, a little man wearing big Hun jack boots, introduced us to his pregnant wife, who kept patting her stomach and muttering ‘little Fritz inside’ and those were shocking words for our conjecture.

My time had come to leave them now, and I travelled back over that rolling country, still littered with the unburied German dead and broken tanks, and guns and horses. Delayed German mines were still blowing up, under roads and churches and houses, and then we were through that great devastated area, where whole armies had marched and fought and died, and that looked like Dante’s Inferno. We could not imagine how that land could ever be levelled out, and reclaimed again.

The channel crossing was uneventful, like the short trip by train to Ferry Road and London, where we had our bath and changed our chatty clothes, and found that comfortable hotel by Covent Garden, where we slept. Ferry Road, headquarters of the A.I.F. in London, was a marvellous place, much maligned and the butt of a ribald marching song, but every unit had some little jealousy for the other, and could only function successfully along with the rest of the team. No Parkinson’s Law prevailed in those far off days. That efficient highly skilled staff, many of whom were broken in health through wounds and overwork, controlled hundreds of civilians who cut through red tape and worked their miracles in minutes, and they received but little praise for their good work.

Through some trick of chance, a train was missed and my journey to my brother’s aerodrome delayed just long enough for me to greet him, not alive, but dead. It was not comforting to know that telegrams were sent—to where?—that he was asking for me, and I may have saved his life. Still 1918, and after that 30th of November day, a firing party and the Last Post again, a letter home to our parents, and months to pass before they would have that news, and read that his wife’s unborn child would never see his father. He too would live to fly in another war and carry on the name. (My brother was another victim of that terrible influenza, and in his state of health did not stand a chance.)

Aviation was still my hobby until it reached that stage where it became too complex and scientific to hold my interest. The time had long since gone when it was possible for one man alone to top overhaul an engine on the ‘drome, and fit a prop and tune carburettors and time magnetos, and run their gears and guns, and be thoroughly familiar with every item of their construction. The Sopwith Aviation Company, in accepting an idea of mine in 1918 for a variable
angle of incidence, and patenting it for their use, had encouraged me to work on a few other ideas of my own, which may have possibly contributed, in some small way, something to the progress of aviation.

Ours was a fascinating era though, like that of the clipper ships, and it was great fun to have played some little part in it. Adults and children alike still make those scale models of our machines, and read all about those 'aces' that flew them too. Major McCudden was the only one of those that I had seen, surrounded by many of his admiring companions in 1917 in Bailleul, and bedecked with his many ribbons.

Just before I left England for Australia, I attended a very interesting lecture. It had something to do with the successful splitting of an atom, and it was all well above my head. The untidy chappie giving the lecture had more than likely participated in that first successful experiment. His enthusiasm and imagination did not extend to his telling us of any possible future uses to be made of that, such as making a large sized bang, although he had been a soldier, but possibly he was sick of bangs in any form. If he had lived that long, he was probably surprised to learn that one modern megaton bomb more than equalled all the Mills, trench mortar, or aircraft bombs, hurled, bowled, fired, or dropped in that war, but I very much doubt whether they could have equalled that terrible devastation of the Western Front.

330,000 men and nurses went overseas with the A.I.F. Thousands more went direct to the British Army. We had lost 61,521 men that equalled our original total of sixty infantry battalions, and there were 226,073 casualties. They won 62 V.C.s. Our 5 divisions of the A.I.F. were less than 10% of the 53 British divisions in France. They captured 23% of all the prisoners, and over 23% of all the guns and 12.5% of the territory.

One of my old flight commanders, who stayed on in our A.F.C. and R.A.A.F., and who finished up as a very high ranking officer, and had written The Battle Below, the history of our 3rd Squadron A.F.C., A.I.F., agreed with me that that sort of thing was most annoying, and not much help for posterity. He has very kindly encouraged my efforts, and checked my papers and manuscript over for me.

American writers and historians at this late time are showing increasing interest in 3rd Squadron A.F.C. A.I.F., possibly more for its prowess against great odds in air fighting than for that vital upper cover provided for the 27th and 30th American divisions with us from 21 September to 19 October 1918.

Figures quoted are from the British War in the Air, a masterpiece of research and accuracy, and from The Battle Below, The History of 3rd Squadron A.F.C. A.I.F. by Air Vice Marshal H. N. Wrigley, C.B.E. D.F.C. A.F.C., which is also in that category, and which I regret I have not long come by.

So concludes our transcript of Frank Rawlinson’s memoir Wood and Wire, or, Two for The Old Flying Corps. Copies of the manuscript are held at the Australian War Memorial and RAAF museum, along with several photographs and 36 pencil sketches. The text was prepared by Bernard de Broglio, with the help of James Ogletorpe and Des Sheehan.
MANUSCRIPT FOR A MUSEUM

Mr Frank Rawlinson, 64, of Clayton, Melbourne, has donated a manuscript of his life in the Australian Flying Corps and numerous pictures of the AFC era to the RAAF.

Mr Rawlinson offered the collection in a recent letter to the Minister for Air, Mr Fairbairn.

Wg Cdr C. Wilson, Commanding Officer of Headquarters Support Command United officially received the material on behalf of the Minister.

Mr Rawlinson joined the AIF in 1916 and went to England, but transferred to the AFC in April, 1917, as an aircraft mechanic. He was posted to No 3 Squadron in France and remained with the squadron, until the war’s end.

The manuscript, which contains more than 100 pages of typewritten notes, took five years to complete. It is likely that the manuscript and photographs will be preserved in the RAAF Museum.
Rawlinson’s Richthofen relics

In part 4 of his memoir (see newsletter, November 2020) Frank Rawlinson described how he came face to face with the Red Baron.

Richthofen’s ‘plane and his body was brought to our ‘drome by the salvage party from our squadron, as we were the salvage squadron for that area. He looked very insignificant lying there in his plain stained overalls...

Rawlinson was present at the initial medical examination and later examined the Fokker triplane, remarking favourably on the tubular steel fuselage, and describing its fabric as the colour of dry blood.

There was little left of his wrecked machine, when I removed the step, some fabric, a piece of machine gun belt and a cartridge.

Rawlinson donated these and other relics to the Australian War Memorial, and I had a look at the correspondence last year (AWM315 749/084/005).

On 28 April 1960, Rawlinson wrote to JJ ‘Jim’ McGrath, director of the memorial.

In April 1918, I was serving with 3 Sqn AFC at Bertangles, when Richthofen and the wrecked triplane were brought in. I removed the step from the machine with a short length of longeron attached, also a piece of red fabric. Later I was present when Sgt Dalzell and Corporal Ted McCarty the squadron doctor cut open his overall flying suit, and I have the top buckle strap and piece of overall [indistinct, and?] belt.

The late Sgt Dalzell (lost in Bass Strait after the war) had emptied Richthofen’s pockets of valuables and a strange British officer entering the tent took these from Dalzell.

I have never heard or read of that incident, nor anything of the parachute and harness. I saw the bullet hole near left nipple of Richthofen’s heart. It was generally understood that he was shot from the ground by AIF MG fire.

I can deliver the above items to your Melbourne branch if instructed, but would not like any publicity in the matter at all.

McGrath accepted the donation, describing it as a welcome addition to our collection of 1914–18 war relics.

On 16 June 1960, McGrath informed Rawlinson that the relics had been received in Canberra, and he expressed the memorial’s appreciation.

The table below lists the items donated by Rawlinson. Some I couldn’t find when searching the AWM website catalogue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIGINAL ITEM NUMBER</th>
<th>ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ITEM NUMBER AND LINK ON AWM WEBSITE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15896</td>
<td>Turkish shell-case containing earth from Gallipoli. Brother of Rawlinson brought it away from Gallipoli at the evacuation. The case is stopped with a spent nose-cap.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15897</td>
<td>Step from Richthofen’s Fokker plane.</td>
<td>RELAWM15897 [on display in Anzac Hall]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15898</td>
<td>Belt and bullet from Richthofen’s Fokker plane.</td>
<td>REL/00927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15899</td>
<td>Fabric from and picture of Richthofen’s plane.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15900</td>
<td>Buckle and straps from Richthofen’s overalls.</td>
<td>RELAWM15900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15901</td>
<td>Cloth from Richthofen’s overalls.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16350</td>
<td>Parts of crashed aircraft, a steel dart (flechette), German shoulder patches, a small bell from a house in Villers-Bretonneux, and other oddments. [A later donation]</td>
<td>RELAWM16350 [shoulder patches, flechette]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The stories behind the AWM’s ‘Red Falcon’ relics

Issue 6 of Iron Cross magazine features an illustrated 9 page story by Dr Aaron Pegram about the Richthofen items in the collection of the Australian War Memorial. Two well-known photographs of 3 Squadron men, colourised by RJM, are a notable addition. Iron Cross covers German military history from 1914 to 1945 and is published quarterly. Visit militaria-history.co.uk for details. Buy digital editions from pocketmags.com.

You can also hear Aaron Pegram discuss the Richthofen relics with Mat McLachlan on the Living History podcast. Search your podcast app, or go to livinghistorytv.com. The podcast is also on YouTube: youtu.be/n8GnzcFxJvc

Rawlinson’s relics: REL/00927 section of German MG08 machine gun ammunition belt with bullet (AWM); RELAWM15897 step from triplane, on display in Anzac Hall (author); RELAWM15900 buckle and strap from Richthofen’s overalls (AWM).
To the Editor,

Dear Sir,—I was very interested to read in your last issue an article on Major Blake, of “Round the World Infame.” I too had been rather more interested in how long he would take to crash than how long he would take to complete the flight.

I think the sooner the world realises that ordinary skill and complete organisation will go further in aviation than exceptional ability as a pilot and incomplete ground organisation, then the better for aviation.

In my own mind there is no doubt that the excellent mechanics with which the Australian Flying Corps was blessed were, in the main, responsible for the superiority of the A.F.C. over the R.A.F. In fact, I am inclined to think that good pilots can be trained, whilst good mechanics are born—instead of vice versa, as is generally considered.

With best wishes for your excellent journal.

I am, yours sincerely,

CLAUDE D. GIBB (ex A.F.C.).

The University of Adelaide, S.A.,
September 13, 1922.

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1 Aircraft, journal of the Australian Aero Club, 30 September 1922, p181.
2 Major Wilfred T Blake’s ill-prepared attempt to fly around the world failed in 1922 in the Bay of Bengal.
Abner Gilchrist Dalzell

RAN ANMEF RANBT AFC AIS AAC

by Greg Swinden

Reprinted with permission from Digger, Magazine of the Families and Friends of the First AIF, No. 53, December 2015

Abner Gilchrist Dalzell was born at Latrobe, Tasmania, on or about 10 June 1887, the only child of George Gilchrist Dalzell (mining battery manager) and Minnie Dalzell (nee Montieth), who were married on 3 August 1886. George Dalzell later moved to the Ballarat area and was remarried to Mary Jane Odgers in 1892.

Abner worked as a miner, although he later claimed he had service in the Royal Navy but no service record can be located under his name. It is possible he did serve in the Royal Navy or Australasian Naval Forces but under an assumed name.

He enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) on 20 November 1911, at Williamstown Naval Depot, Victoria, for a seven year period of service, as an ordinary seaman (service number 1311). Abner was described on enlistment as 5'7½" tall with dark brown hair, grey eyes, a fresh complexion and with tattoos on his left forearm. His next of kin was listed as his father, then working at the mining town of Scotchmans Lead (also known as Yarrowee) near Ballarat. Abner served at Williamstown until late June 1912, before joining the destroyer HMAS Parramatta on 1 July 1912. He was not a perfect sailor and was sentenced to seven days in the cells at Williamstown (21–27 March 1912) for ill-discipline.

Parramatta had just completed a refit at Williamstown and was soon dispatched on a three month cruise (July–October 1912) to South Australian and Victorian ports to ‘show the flag’ of the newly created RAN. Abner was promoted to able seaman on 9 November 1912. The destroyer undertook a similar cruise in May–August 1913 to Brisbane, Thursday Island, Cooktown, Cairns, Townsville and Gladstone before returning to Williamstown on 16 August. The next day Abner was posted ashore to the Williamstown Depot (now named HMAS Cerberus).

Abner Gilchrist had married Mary Bradley Robertson, at Fitzroy, on 29 January 1913, and on 21 November 1913, he purchased his discharge from the RAN at the cost of five pounds.

When war broke out in August 1914, Abner quickly offered his services again to the navy and was enlisted in the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (ANMEF) as an able seaman (service number 48). Dalzell was one of 500 men who enlisted in the naval component of the force in mid-August, and was soon on his way north to German New Guinea in the auxiliary cruiser/troopship HMAS Berrima.

The ANMEF landed at Herbertshohe and Kabakaul, near Rabaul, on 11 September 1914, and after a day of hard fighting captured the German wireless station at Bita-paka late in the evening.

Six members of the landing force
were killed in action (including five naval personnel) and several wounded. It is not known what role Able Seaman Dalzell played in the landing but he then became part of the occupation force at Rabaul until he returned to Australia in mid-February 1915 and was discharged in early March.

Abner and Mary’s first child, a boy who they named Gilchrist, was born at Carlton on 16 February 1916. Soon after, Abner decided to re-enlist and joined the RAN Bridging Train, at Port Melbourne on 1 June, 1916, as an able seaman driver. He was then sent to the Bridging Train reinforcement camp at Seymour in northern Victoria for training.

Despite his naval background, he chose to transfer to the newly created No. 2 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps, as a private (service number 666) on 6 September, 1916. Abner embarked for overseas service in the troopship Ulysses, at Melbourne on 25 October 1916, with the 18 officers and 230 men of 2 Squadron. While in port on 17–18 November, 1916 (possibly in South Africa), he was absent without leave and was admonished for his transgression.

The Ulysses arrived at Plymouth, UK, on 28 December, 1916, and 2 Squadron was renamed 3 Squadron AFC when it was discovered a 2 Squadron AFC already existed in the Middle East. The squadron was renamed again in March 1917 as 67 Squadron Royal Flying Corps, but eventually became 3 Squadron again in January 1918. The squadron was sent to South Carlton in Lincolnshire for training.

On 9 January, 1917, Abner was sent to complete the one-month aircraft riggers course at Netheravon, Wiltshire (near the Salisbury Plain). On completion of this course he returned to his squadron and was promoted to aircraftsman 2nd class on 28 February 1917, and the following day was advanced to aircraftsman 1st class. As a result of his extensive prior service he was promoted to corporal on 11 March 1917, and then on 1 May 1917, was promoted to sergeant.

During the afternoon of 18 June 1917, at South Carlton, an R.E.8 aircraft piloted by a Sergeant RE Holmes (believed to be a Royal Flying Corps pilot) crashed and caught fire. Sergeant Dalzell and three other Australian airmen (Thomas Carmody, Cyril Lee and Vincent Smith) made a gallant rescue attempt, and despite being beaten back by flames, they eventually dragged Holmes from the burning wreckage. All four rescuers were badly burned, but Holmes survived the crash and...
recovered from his injuries. As a result of their actions, all four men were awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for Gallantry (MSM) which was announced in The London Gazette on 21 August 1917.

No. 3 Squadron moved across to France in late August 1917 and eventually settled at their new aerodrome at Savy (Picardy region) on 10 September. Flying R.E.8 aircraft, the squadron provided support to British and Canadian ground forces near Arras.

In November 1917 the squadron moved to Flanders to support Australian troops and also conducted photo reconnaissance flights and the dropping of propaganda leaflets. In April 1918 the squadron moved again; this time to the Somme Valley to provide artillery spotting support during the German Spring Offensive. On 21 April, 1918, 3 Squadron personnel were involved in the recovery of the remains of Rittmeister Manfred von Richthofen (‘The Red Baron’) who was shot down that day. Dalzell is recorded by the Australian War Memorial as one of the men involved in that activity. On 17 May 1918, Abner Dalzell was remustered as a sergeant mechanic.

The final months of the war saw 3 Squadron carrying out experiments in aerial supply methods for ground troops, noise diversion operations in support of the battle of Hamel, and the dropping of smoke bombs and reconnaissance duties during the attacks on the Hindenburg Line. The squadron remained in France after the Armistice and in late February 1919 began to move back to England where it was based at Hurdcott Camp near Salisbury.

Sergeant Mechanic Dalzell departed France in early March 1919, and following some leave in England, embarked with the rest of his squadron in the troopship Kaisar I Hind at Southampton on 6 May, 1919. They arrived at Port Adelaide on 16 June, 1919, and Abner was discharged from the AFC on 24 June, 1919. Three months later, on 15 September, 1919, he enlisted as a sergeant (service number 143) in the Australian Instructional Service (AIS) at the Central Flying School at Laverton.

The AIS was disbanded on 31 December, 1919, and the next day became the Australian Air Corps (AAC), the forerunner of the Royal Australian Air Force. Sergeant Dalzell transferred to the AAC and was allocated service number 13 on 1 January 1920.

Mary and Abner’s second child, a son who they named Desmond, was born at Carlton on 31 May 1920. On 23 September 1920, however, tragedy struck the family when Abner Dalzell failed to return from a flight over Bass Strait. The events leading up to this are as follows.

On 21 August, 1920, the three-masted 400 tonne schooner Amelia J, under the command of Captain George Atwell with a crew of 12, sailed from Newcastle for Hobart with a cargo of coal, but she failed to arrive. The vessel was last seen off Jervis Bay, NSW, by the crew of the SS Musgrave on 5 September 1920. Her owners then arranged for the SS Melbourne to conduct a search of the Furneaux Island Group, beginning

Cadets at the Royal Military College of Australia inspecting the Australian Air Corps D.H.9a bombers flown by Lieutenant Colonel R Williams and Major L J Wackett in July 1920. (Frank H. Boland collection, National Library of Australia)
what was then the largest search for a missing vessel yet conducted in Australia.

The Commonwealth Government initially refused to send a warship to join the search, but the public outcry was so great that the submarine depot ship HMAS Platypus, based at Geelong, was sent to investigate the Furneaux Islands, then considered to be the most likely spot the vessel may have come to grief.

On 23 September 1920, two Australian Air Corps De Havilland 9a biplanes took off from Point Cook to conduct a search of the Furneaux Group. The flight plan for the two aircraft was that they were to go from Melbourne, via Wilson’s Promontory, to Flinders Island. They were to also search other islands in Bass Strait and then head down the east coast of Tasmania to Hobart.

One of the aircraft (E8616), flown by Major William John Stutt, with Sergeant Abner Dalzell as observer and mechanic, was last seen flying into heavy cloud on the north-western coast of Cape Barren Island that afternoon. The aircraft failed to reach Hobart and the search was then widened to include both the missing aircraft and the schooner. Soon after, the barquentine Southern Cross was also reported missing near King Island and the search for her began as well.

The destroyer HMAS Swordsmen later replaced Platypus and further searches centred on the Furneaux Group were also carried out by the SS Dolphin, the motor launch Toroa, and the SS Melbourne.

No trace of either vessels or aircraft was ever found. The search for Stutt and Dalzell was called off on 18 October 1920, and a court of inquiry, held on 16 November 1920, stated both men lost their lives whilst in performance of a military duty.

Dalzell and Stutt were subsequently listed as missing believed killed on 23 September, 1920. As both men died prior to 31 August 1921, their names are now recorded (as of 2014) by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the Australian Book of Remembrance held in Canberra.

It was originally believed that Stutt and Dalzell’s aircraft went down in Bass Strait but, in the 1990s, evidence came to light that they may have crashed near St Helens in north-eastern Tasmania. In the 1950s, a 14 year old boy wandering in bushland found various items but did not know what they were. Some 40 years later he saw an aircraft radiator in a Museum in Queensland, and recognised it as very similar to the item he had seen as a boy. By then, however, he could not remember exactly where he had seen it. Perhaps the aircraft wreckage, and the remains of Abner Dalzell and William Stutt, lie in the dense and rugged bushland of north-eastern Tasmania, waiting patiently to be found.

Endnotes

1. Abner’s date of birth on his RAN Service record states 12 June 1889, but his marriage certificate and AIF service records indicate his date of birth was 10 June 1887.

2. Abner had two half-sisters, Constance Lillian Dalzell (born 1897) and Vera Esther May Dalzell (born 1905), and a half-brother, George William Odgers Dalzell (born 1900). George William Odgers Dalzell joined the RAN on 29 March 1920, and was ‘Discharged Engagement Expired’, as an acting stoker petty officer, on 28 March 1927.

3. Mary Dalzell married Percy Adams in 1926, although both sons retained their father’s surname. Gilchrist Dalzell and Desmond Dalzell both joined the Royal Australian Navy on 5 July 1938, as stokers and saw service throughout World War II. Desmond was a leading stoker when he was discharged ‘Permanently Unfit for Naval Service’ on 4 May 1948, and Gilchrist was a chief petty officer stoker who was ‘Discharged Engagement Expired’ on 4 July 1960.
Brief bio?

I’m a teacher at a regional secondary College on the NSW South Coast. I’m head of English but I also teach some senior history courses. I’ve written four books on the early history of aviation, the most recent of which is a biography of Sir Ross Smith. I completed a PhD in History at UNSW in 2013; my thesis was on Australia’s involvement in the First World War in the air.

Member of ASWW1AH since…?

I discovered the Society in about 2008 when researching my first book, *Fire in the Sky*. I went through decades of past issues at the National Library, relishing the interviews conducted during the 1960s and 70s with veterans from the First World War. I joined the Society around that time too.

What are you reading at the moment?

I’m slowly working my way through John Steinbeck’s oeuvre—I think *East of Eden* is one of the most profound things ever written. Each holidays I am also slowly but surely getting through Bernard Cornwell’s ‘Sharpe’ series; they are a lot of fun and I find I am learning quite a lot about the Napoleonic wars too.

When did you first become interested in WW1 aviation?

When I was about 10 years old my neighbour handed a copy of Biggles: Pioneer Air Fighter over the fence. I must have read it more than a dozen times over the next few years and I still have it. A few years later I came across Denis Winter’s *The First of the Few* in my high school library and that helped to consolidate my interest in the subject. I also grew up as a student of the ‘Airfix School of History’—I spent countless hours gluing together plastic and balsa scale model kits.

What areas of aviation history most interest you?

My research output has focused on the period before the Second World War—mainly military (within the British Empire) but with some civil aviation included too. I have also read extensively on air power during and after the Second World War, particularly on strategic bombing. I must admit, I’m not very knowledgeable when it comes to the technical aspects of aviation. My interest lies more with the human side of flying and the intellectual and cultural dimensions of aviation. When it comes to engines and other technical specifications I need to defer to the expertise of others!

What areas of aviation history most interest you?

My next book is on the 1931 *Southern Cloud* disaster and the rise and fall of (the original) Australian National Airways. The book will use the accident to tell the story of early commercial flying in Australia, as well as look at the longer term impacts of the crash—including its discovery nearly three decades later.

What’s your work schedule when you’re writing?

I try to research and/or write for an hour each day when I am working on a book project. Usually this is
first thing in the morning before work, but because of the demands of my job I need to keep things flexible and fit it in whenever possible. I get extra writing done in school holidays. Only writing for an hour each day means that progress is slow but steady. The key is consistency: I wrote 50,000 words in 2018 on my Ross Smith book by approaching it like this.

How do you archive or index your research material?

My process has changed a bit over time and is always shaped by the requirements of each project. When I began researching in archives as an Honours student, I relied on pencil and paper. Later, I introduced a digital camera into the process, which has helped me to cover larger quantities of archival material (this was especially helpful when I was researching my PhD in the UK—I came home with over 10,000 pages copied from the AIR 1 series at Kew, for example). In terms of notetaking, the most efficient method I’ve found is to take notes directly into chapter scaffolds/outlines. This cuts out much of the time-consuming re-organisation of notes before writing. It means, however, that I need to begin with an outline (usually a chapter structure). Inevitably, what I learn as I am researching prompts me to make adjustments to this structural outline—but having something there to begin with is important. In my experience, research and writing are inextricably linked: it is never a matter of ‘doing the research’ and then ‘doing the writing’. Of course, this means that I’m revising drafts continuously, usually right up to the deadline.

Have you come across any useful or unusual sources recently that you can share with members?

I’ve noted that the National Archives in the UK has made its digitised records free to help make its collections more accessible during the pandemic. This includes some useful First World War records, including those of RAF personnel. I’m currently co-supervising a PhD thesis on leadership in the RFC which is shaping up to be a really interesting study.

What advice would you give those just starting out on research into WW1 aviation?

Read widely into the literature—there is so much of it but many topics remain under or even un-explored. Also, engage with the Society’s members. I’ve benefited immensely from the generosity shown by Society members who have shared their expertise with me over the years. And if you are writing a book, find a good model to help guide you. All my books have been based on another book that I have really admired.
Contributions on air power at Gallipoli must be welcomed, given the ambitious role assigned to aviation at the Dardanelles. How did the successes and failures of that campaign contribute to the theory and application of air power in the years that followed? The author is a professor of air power history at the US Air Command and Staff College, and the book is part of a series from Naval Institute Press that explores ‘previously ignored facets of the history of airpower.’

The meat of the book covers, in 131 pages, the birth of air power, early Ottoman experiences of military aviation, the aims and objectives of the Dardanelles expedition, an operational review of the naval attack and the military campaign in 1915, the evacuation of the peninsula in December 1915 and January 1916, and the author’s conclusions. Three appendices (potted bios of Gallipoli personalities, the aircraft types employed and the literature of the Gallipoli campaign) add a further 40-odd pages.

The author begins by making a strong case for studying air operations at Gallipoli: air power played a significant role in the campaign, even if it was not enough to turn the tide; there were dynamic and influential leaders, who began to realise the promise of air power in modern warfare; and, it marked the ‘expansion’ of joint operations, adding the third dimension of air combat to the tactical mix.

No argument there! But the author argues only this case, rather than exploring if and how the lessons were applied. The author may have felt his subject so obscure that an operational history was of the first importance. He calls it a ‘neglected story’ that ‘deserves its own record.’ Hugh Dolan, who published Gallipoli Air War in 2013, may be surprised to learn from Pavelec that ‘of all the tomes on Gallipoli [...] none mentions the air war over Gallipoli in more than a passing reference.’

Pavelec also laments the absence of analysis in official records after the campaign. As evidence, he posits the lack of interest in air power in the deliberations of the Dardanelles Commission, but he has not considered the Mitchell Report (submitted in October 1919). The committee of six, headed by Commodore F. H. Mitchell and representing the military, naval and air arms, reflected on ‘air co-operation’ at all stages of the enterprise. In addition, chapters were dedicated to the effect of air attack on lines of communication, and observation by aircraft and balloons. Both Allied and Ottoman air services were considered.
The committee concluded that, for joint operations, air power ‘must have such an important bearing on future operations that it should take a prominent place.’

Another key source overlooked is *Grasping Gallipoli* by Peter Chasseaud and Peter Doyle, the most detailed description thus far on reconnaissance, aerial photography and mapping at Gallipoli (with important notes on the French air squadron’s role).


There is no doubt that the Ottoman story is difficult to access for English-speaking researchers, but there are 4 volumes of an air history published in the 1950s, while the Turkish General Staff published a single volume on air operations in 1969. The author has relied on Ole Nikolajsen’s *Ottoman Aviation 1909-1919* (which he read at the Australian War Memorial, and describes as unpublished, although it has been available since 2012) and a book by Cenk Aveç that should be treated with caution. German sources are better, including the important Serno narrative. The French contribution is touched upon only briefly, but the reference to Louis de Goÿs de Mézeýrac advising the Ottoman army pre-war on the air defence of the Gallipoli peninsula is tantalising.

There are some big conclusions that are hard to reconcile with the historical record. For example, the author says that ‘Samson and his squadron on Tenedos were completely isolated from the fleet and the ground forces, literally and figuratively, and had complete autonomy in planning and prosecuting operations.’ (A minor point: a cable connected Helles with the aerodrome.) There was ‘no strategic coordination,’ writes Pavelec.

While it is true that the aerial weapon was often misunderstood and poorly applied, or simply incapable of meeting the demand, war diaries reveal just how closely the air service cooperated with ground forces. For example, the war diary of VIII Corps HQ details the ‘aeroplane programme’ for what would be called the Battle of Krithia Vineyard, and two observers are requested by name for ‘they know the batteries in this zone intimately.’ War diaries also reveal how daily requirements were coordinated, and outline some of these requests, like determining whether a specific trench was garrisoned.

While there is no doubt that the air commanders often used their own initiative, and were sometimes ill-used or under-utilised by army and naval chiefs, they were by no means an independent force. Intelligence, reconnaissance and artillery cooperation flights were made in response to needs on the ground. The lack of coordination is probably overplayed in Pavelec’s argument.

Take care if using this book as a reference. The French seaplane tender *Foudre* was earmarked in 1914 for Dardanelles air support but never served in that capacity at Gallipoli, nor were her nominal roster of aircraft deployed there. The Ottoman army did not employ an Etrich *Taube* in this theatre. Unfortunately the type is featured on the book cover. There is some confusion with the location and chronology of Ottoman air bases and aircraft. The seaplane squadron was detached from the Imperial German Navy, and was not an Ottoman unit, but this is not made clear. Its sheds were south of Nara (sometimes ‘Nagara’ in British records) but not ‘Naga’. The French army air squadron arrives too early. A French mechanic, not pilot, was killed after a machine was forced to ditch in the sea with its bomb load intact.

Some repetition could have been avoided. We’re introduced to Samson and Cesari and their squadrons more than once. How *Ark Royal* employed her cranes is described three times.

Tales like Samson bombing Ataturk’s staff car have no place in a serious history if repeated without comment. The author is in thrall to Samson’s wonderful memoir *Fights and Flights*, but he is not alone. Too many accounts have used it uncritically as an unofficial operational history.

The book will suit the general reader interested in military history. It doesn’t assume prior knowledge of the Gallipoli campaign or of early military aviation. There are regular discursions, for example, into topics like firing through the propeller arc. A strength of the book is the author’s ability to summarise lots of information in readable form.

The hardcover book is pleasant to read with a crisp layout and friendly binding. A small selection of black and white photographs augment the text. They are primarily of aircraft types, half of them taken at Gallipoli, with a reproduced chart of the Dardanelles defences. The text is accompanied by a single map that does not illustrate all the places mentioned.

*Bernard de Broglio*
**The Gallipoli Evacuation** by Peter Hart

312 pages with illustrations and maps. Published by Living History (Manly, NSW) 2020 in softcover (AUD $35.99) and ebook (AUD $16.99) formats. Available from [livinghistorytv.com](http://livinghistorytv.com)

No book has taken the evacuation of Gallipoli as its focus—until now. That’s surprising, as the withdrawal from the peninsula is generally held to be the campaign’s only success.

*The Gallipoli Evacuation* covers the politics of withdrawal (dithering and irresponsible, not wanting to pull out until almost too late), the planning for the evacuation (creative and considered) and its execution (disciplined, with outbreaks of gentle looting).

If you’ve read Peter Hart, you’ll know that he has an ear for a story and an eye for a quote. Typical of his books are the many first-hand accounts that support and advance the narrative. These vignettes transport you effortlessly between the soldiers in the trenches and the deliberations of staff officers and politicians.

Many of the first-hand testimonies are from the Imperial War Museum’s document and sound archive but the author handily lists the books ‘relatively recently published’ that furnished him with additional accounts. Many of the voices are British and dominion, but we also hear from Frenchmen, Germans and Turks, for whom Peter Hart accords the final honour.

Occasionally, he breaks cover from 1915 to reference developments on the peninsula today, like the cleared sections at Anzac that allow you to stand at the machine gun post that enfiladed the Nek from Turk’s Head, or the existence of the scrub-choked aeroplane dugout alongside Hunter-Weston Hill where Donald ‘Bunny’ Bremner hacked apart his Voisin on the very last night of the Helles evacuation. Sadly, air operations are mentioned only in passing!

Not forgotten are the diversionary actions at Helles in support of the withdrawal from Anzac and Suvla. These small but deadly actions claimed their share of killed and wounded. Lives laid down, says Peter Hart, for the greater good. The terrible November storms, and the increasing weight of Ottoman artillery, are graphically depicted.

On the other side of the ledger are wistful accounts of looting (rum and beer and bicycles!) and comic episodes like that of Private Pollack, who took a kip on Cheshire Ridge only to awake and find the battalion gone and just him between the Turks and the beach. The slight panic you get waking up late for work doesn’t quite cut it! As for ludicrous, how about the navy’s desire to make more landings and have another crack at the Dardanelles. The army chief of staff at Gallipoli called it ‘the swan song of the lunatics.’ The author delights in the description but forgives the navy’s momentary lapse of reason by highlighting their role in getting 118,316 men off the peninsula.

Peter Hart’s conversational writing style, spiced with comment and perspective, delivers an enjoyable and illuminating read. The author has a gift for drawing together many and complicated threads into one clear narrative with the key points plainly made.

A small but helpful selection of photographs illustrate the text. The maps (three in number) are clearly drawn and eschew unnecessary detail. Design and layout is elegant, although I couldn’t increase the font size on my ePub ebook.

Recommended.

*Bernard de Broglio*
**Royal Flying Corps Kitbag** by Mark Hillier


This is a fascinating guide to the uniforms and personal equipment used by members of the RFC on the Western Front.

There are comprehensive guides to tunics worn by officers and other ranks, together with explanations of the orders covering their use. Badges and other uniform insignia receive the same treatment. Flying clothing, including goggles and helmets, is also covered, both items issued by the RFC and those bought privately. The final chapter deals with the change in uniforms following the absorption of the RFC into the RAF. In addition, the text is supplemented by a huge number of photographs, both colour and monochrome, showing men in uniform.

The book is made more interesting by the use of dozens of quotations from various fliers, as well as extracts from official publications which determined the style, size and use of uniform items. There’s much to be learned from the pages, an obscure example being the existence of a combined pilot’s and observer’s badge, ie pilot’s wings with an O below the RFC centre piece. The badge was proposed by airmen who had qualified as observers before going on to become pilots, but was not approved for wear.

In short, the book is a marvellous insight into the way the RFC was organised and equipped, and I strongly recommend it.

*Gareth Morgan*

**Don’t let them bag the Nines**

by de Havilland pilot Captain F. Williams, MC, DFC

The History Press, 192 pages, hardcover.

This 190 page hardcover book is extremely good value for the price. I have not read it but only flicked through, but any book away from the fighters and giving coverage to the men who flew the reconnaissance and bombers is worth buying if only for their rarity.

This book came about when the author’s RAF trunk was examined by his niece’s husband, James Coyle. He put the book together in the hope that others will enjoy this insight into the experiences of a WWI bomber pilot.

A few photographs from the RAF Museum complement the text. Unfortunately, there is no index. Price varies on the Internet. Recommended.

*Colin A Owers*
**Freeing the Baltic** by Geoffrey Bennett


This is an updated edition of *Cowan’s War*, published in the early 1960s, and tells the story of the Royal Navy’s 1919 campaign in the Baltic Sea, primarily supporting the emerging states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania against German and Soviet aggression. Although hostilities with Germany had ended with the November 1918 Armistice, the German *VIII Armee* under Major-General Rudiger von der Goltz was still active, believing that the Armistice only applied to forces on the Western Front. At the same time, the Bolshevik Government in Russia was endeavouring to expand into the three former Russian provinces who had declared their independence.

In an effort to assist the Baltic states, the British Government despatched a force of light cruisers and destroyers under Rear Admiral Walter Cowan. The ships were later reinforced by the aircraft carrier *HMS Vindictive* (commanded by the son of legendary English cricketer Dr W G Grace) which carried an RAF contingent, commanded by pre-War Scottish Rugby international Major David Donald, which flew Ship’s Camels and Strutters, Short 184s and Grain Griffins. Cowan maintained an aggressive policy against the Bolshevik Navy, which was mainly based in Kronstadt, just outside Petrograd (now St Petersburg).

The almost forgotten Baltic episode included many dramatic actions, including the loss of a British cruiser to a Bolshevik submarine and the sinking of Bolshevik ships by torpedoes launched from RN Coastal Motor Boats (CMBs). In August 1919 the British launched a highly successful raid on Kronstadt, when CMBs attacked Bolshevik ships in the harbour while the RAF provided air cover. In summary, the book is an engaging and readable account of a fascinating period in the aftermath of the Great War.

*Gareth Morgan*

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**Planes on Film – Ten Favourite Aviation Films**

by Colin M Barron


You get one man’s 10 favourite films in this book. *The Dambusters; Reach for the Sky; Flight of the Phoenix; Tora, Tora, Tora; Dark Blue World; The Blue Max; 633 Squadron; Raid on Entebbe; Memphis Belle; Battle of Britain.*

Firstly, I must say it is a pleasure to get a view other than an American one on the best aviation films. Another recent Chinese virus purchase was 100 years of Aviation Films that did not recognise anything other than US and US influenced films, that is released by US companies.

The author knows his material and gives cast and crew and lists all the aircraft identified in the films and if they survived and where they were in 2016. A selection of photographs at the end of the book could have been better, however they are correctly captioned and the book has an index!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The price varies on the Internet. Recommended.

*Colin A Owers*
In December 1918, French newspaper *Le Petit Journal* announced that all sportsmen... aviators, cyclists, automobilists, footballers, boxers ... all without exception will be interested in a series of events including a Tour of the Battlefields which will pass through the whole of Alsace, the whole of Lorraine, through martyred Belgium, through all those places whose chains have been broken by Victory.

Less than 6 months after the Armistice, 87 riders rolled out of Strasbourg to tackle the *Circuit des Champs de Bataille*, a 7 stage road race covering 1,981 km on slippery war-torn roads and pock-marked *pavé*.

*Une course cycliste monstre*, declared the newspaper, and you don’t need a translation to get the gist of that!

Journalist, photographer and amateur cyclist Tom Isitt brings this bonkers bike ride back to life in a very likeable travel book. He rides a similar course whilst telling the story of the tour, and the towns and the battlefields through which it passed.

The author does a great job evoking the devastation wrought along the Western Front, and how France and Belgium would’ve looked to a visitor immediately after the war. He’s certainly done his research—this is no weekend travel supplement jolly—and his bibliography threw up several books that I’ll be tracking down.

An interest in professional cycling is not essential to enjoy the book, but it will certainly appeal to those who know their Mercx from their Wiggins. I tune into the *Tour de France* more for the scenery than for the race, but I enjoyed learning a little of the history of professional cycling, and its appeal. *Riding the Paris–Roubaix cobbles is like hanging onto an out-of-control pneumatic road drill*, writes Isitt, while having your genitals kicked by a gang of skinheads. It’s great!

The connection with WW1 aviation, and this newsletter, is tenuous, I admit. But the author notes that many pre-war professional cyclists became pilots in the *Service aéronautique*. Among those who perished in the war were Tour-winner Octave Lapize, Fracois Lafourcarde, Leon Hourlier, Aime Behaeghe, Leon Comes, Albert Delrieu, Emile Quaissard and Emile Guyon. You’ll also find that the eventual winner of the *Circuit des Champs de Bataille* was an air mechanic in the Belgian air force.

The author’s next book will tackle the Italian front. He’s posted spectacular photos of mountains, rock-hewn trenches and battlefield detritus (a howitzer hauled up a glacier to 3,500 metres!) on his website isitt.org.uk and social accounts: @masaccio60 on Twitter and @bikesandbattlefields on Facebook.

*Bernard de Broglio*
When you see a hardcopy edition at less than the softcover version, one expects that one has found a bargain, even if it does not match up to your expectations. Fortunately, this book more than meets my expectations.

This is a reprint of a 1919 book printed in Canada, Being a Brief Account of the Work of the Royal Air Force, Canada, the Aviation Department of the Imperial Munitions Board, and the Canadian Aeroplanes Limited. In its 318 pages one can find details on everything related to the starting of such an ambitious program in Canada in WWI. The acquisition of land, building of airfields, manufacturing of aircraft, armament, gunnery, photography, wireless, accidents, engine repair, mechanical transport, medical, training in the USA. The surprise is that it is quite readable unlike some of these histories printed right after the end of the war where everyone who was associated with the raising of the corps wanted their names included.

The photographs have copied well. Unfortunately, again there is the lack of an index. [A digital copy of the book can be searched at the Internet Archive – Ed.]

Highly recommended.

Colin A Owers

An intriguing German resource is the digital collection of the Upper Austrian Regional Library (digitale Landesbibliothek Oberösterreich) at digi.landesbibliothek.at.

Their website is fully-featured and gives unrestricted access to the library’s digitised and copy-right-free books and manuscripts. Keyword search the corpus or browse the WW1 collection (2,115 items). Download high resolution images or the entire book in PDF (click on ‘cite and reuse’). There is a table of contents, and page thumbnails to find the pictures!

Behind the bold graphic covers would seem to lie plenty of nuggets for the dogged researcher armed with Google Translate.

A couple of books that I downloaded were 40000 km Zeppe- lin-Kriegsfahrten and Kämpfer an vergessenen Fronten.
The librarians of the newly formed Australian War Memorial compiled a glossary of slang and peculiar terms in use in the A.I.F. in the early 1920s. More than 900 words and phrases were collected, including terms used by the Australian Flying Corps.

More recently, Amanda Laugesen has compiled an annotated version of the glossary. Alongside the original entry is further information about the word and its origins, the first date it was recorded and examples of the word in context.

Both original and annotated glossaries can be read online at the Australian National Dictionary Centre.

Thanks to James Oglethorpe for the steer.


Aéronautique, aviation, aviateurs are to be found in the Gaumont Pathé archives. First register on the site, then click the link for WW1 aviation.

This tip may be old hat to you, but it was new to me. You can search Australian War Memorial records via the National Archives of Australia.

Go to naa.gov.au and click RecordSearch. Then choose Advanced search. Add your keywords, and set the Location of items as Australian War Memorial.

RecordSearch threw up a number of records that I hadn't found on the AWM website search—although that might be ‘user error.’ Even so, another view of the AWM archive is helpful, and I preferred RecordSearch when collating a list of file requests for the research centre.

The AWM website is best, though, for digitised records, photographs and items in their library. I don't think these are visible through RecordSearch.

Convert WW1 trench map locations to modern maps with tMapper.

Punch in the coordinates 62D.J.19.b.44 and tMapper will drop you into France, just north of Corbie and the River Somme. A modern map is presented side-by-side with the WW1 map sheet for that location.

The grid reference—Sheet 62D, grid J19 b 44—was recorded by Lieutenant Walter John Warneford, 3 Squadron AFC, after he led a recovery party to Richthofen's aeroplane when the German ace was shot down and killed on 21 April 1918.

tMapper has loads of options, requiring a little time to get familiar with the interface, but it’s an incredibly useful tool, and a great way to explore trench maps.

And, it’s built by an Aussie!