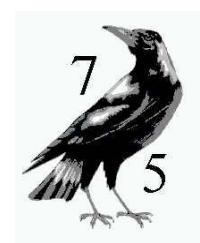




75 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED



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NEWSLETTER No 2/15 – December 2015

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings fellow Magpies, it's been quite some time since the last newsletter. The big news of course is that 75 Squadron has safely returned to Australia. An official welcome home function was held at Tindal on Fri 23 Oct for all the troops. CAF came up and presented medals and awards, and promoted the CO, Pete (Mav) Mitchell, to Group Captain. Congratulations Mav, and it was nice your family could be there to see you made up.

The new CO is Mick Grant. Congratulations Mick on taking command of 75 Squadron, and we look forward to working with you. Our next major event will be the commemoration, in Townsville, of the 75th anniversary of the squadron's formation on 4 Mar 2017. Mav, we're all proud of you and relieved that everyone got home safely. Mav's report follows.

CO'S REPORT

G'day Magpies, 2015 has been an extremely busy year for the squadron and a very proud one. As you now know, we deployed to Operation OKRA in the Middle East on the 3rd of March, conducted our first operational sortie on the 18th of March and took responsibility for Australia's strike effort on the 27th of March. Over the next six months, the squadron deployed about 160 of its members over two rotations, with the support of an additional 10 or so critical intelligence staff from 87 Squadron.



Departing Tindal for the Middle East – 03 Mar 15

ANZAC Day in the Middle East was an extremely moving and memorable day. To be on operations for the 100th Anniversary and only a stone's throw away from the Gallipoli Peninsula was an absolute honour. Even more fitting was the fact that 75 Squadron launched a Close Air Support and Strike mission late on the evening of the 24th of April, with the jets returning just after dawn on the morning of the 25th of April having successfully engaged Daesh. Seeing our jets arrive home as we started our Gunfire breakfast is something that we'll never forget.

Operation OKRA was the first operational deployment for almost all involved and in true Magpie spirit worked as a team to get the job done – regardless of the strains and struggles faced. In another significant first, the unit conducted the first missions into Syria in mid-September – the first fighter missions into that country since 3 Squadron in World War I. Fittingly, it was our most junior bograt who dropped the first bomb in Syria for the OKRA campaign – and he didn't miss....good bograt!!!

By the time the squadron redeployed to Tindal on the 23rd of September we had flown over 400 combat sorties, amassing more than 3000 flight hours. To put that in perspective, during peacetime operations here at Tindal we only fly 2800 hours each financial year! The squadron did a magnificent job on operations and despite some extremely harsh conditions and close living quarters (60+ degrees on the flight line and up to 7 in each 'tent') managed to more than match the operational performance of the more fancied 'Super Hornets' of 1 Squadron.

In late October we were lucky enough to have the Chief of Air Force attend our Welcome Home function, an informal affair at the Airmen's Club. It was an excellent afternoon for the members and families and an honour to have the Chief present each member with their Operational Service Medal – just need to start those push-ups for ANZAC Day next year!!!

In early November the incoming CO, Mick 'Cletus' Grant, came up for a week and the official handover ceremony – although he doesn't take the reins until early January. 'Cletus' and I flew together in our first tour at 75 Squadron in 2001 and it's a really satisfying feeling handing over the squadron to a top bloke and someone who has Magpie blood running through his veins. I know he'll do an outstanding job and will take the squadron to new heights during his command. All the very best in your Command mate – it is an awesome opportunity to be able to lead the Magpies!!!



In late November the squadron deployed to Amberley to work with 1 Squadron Super Hornets in preparation for Exercise Red Flag which will be held in Nevada, US in February next year. While in Brisbane we managed to get a few old 75 Squadron Associates together at the Sherwood Services Club for an impromptu Sunday afternoon. Distinguished attendees (other the current aircrew reprobates) included Patricia and Arthur, Horse and Bill Jackson (children of WWII CO's John and Les Jackson), Brad Fox (brother of WGCDR Ross Fox – CO killed on 02 Aug 90), Jennifer McCormack and Kim Conlon (mother and sister of SQNLDR J.P Conlon, XO killed 02 Apr 97), AIRCDRE (Ret) Doug Edwards of 75SQN Fast Caravan fame as well as the current Commander of Air Combat Group and Former CO, AIRCDRE 'Zed' Robertson. It was an outstanding afternoon and great to get so many generations of Magpies together. The next big opportunity will be ANZAC Day in Sydney and I certainly encourage as many 'east coasters' to try and get there as possibly to commemorate that occasion.

As I sign off as Commanding Officer of the best squadron in the Air Force I reflect back on the last three years with pride – not at my achievements but that of the squadron. I feel a contentment and satisfaction that we have lived up to the reputation laid before us by our founding members. It has been an honour to lead the squadron on operations and lay down another chapter in the history of 75 Squadron and I look forward to the build up toward the 75th Anniversary of our formation in 2017.

Once a Magpie, Always a Magpie.

Mav

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - Continued

Change of Vice-President

Although we haven't been able to run an Annual General Meeting (AGM) this year (more on that later), Patricia Jackson retired as VP mid-year and has been replaced by Daryl Pudney. Patricia, as you know, is the daughter of John Jackson, CO during the epic '44 Days' air battle at Port Moresby in early 1942. She became VP at the request of the then CO, Phil Arms, at the Nov 2011 AGM at Wagga. Pete Nelms became our Secretary at the same time. Patricia has been a wonderful VP and ambassador for the squadron. However, she's certainly not retiring. Despite not officially a committee member, she'll always be an integral part of the squadron's heritage.

Daryl Pudney is an ex Hornet pilot and was posted to 75 Squadron at Tindal as a 'boggy' fighter pilot in 1996. He can remember watching the documentary '44 Days' shortly after arrival in the Northern Territory and feeling proud to be part of such a great squadron. He completed his first tour and then returned again as A Flight Commander in late 2001. During this period he deployed to Iraq with the squadron where he received a CAF commendation for leadership during combat operations. His final tour was as XO 20CU before retiring from the Air Force in 2006 to study medicine. He currently works as GP Anaesthetist in the Hunter area of New South Wales. Welcome on board Daryl.

Association Organisation – The Way Ahead

The delay in issuing this newsletter was solely a result of the overseas operational deployment of the squadron. As the Association is currently structured, core administrative functions are performed by squadron based serving personnel, all of whom were deployed at some stage. Our Secretary, Pete Nelms, who lives in Canberra, could do little when key squadron committee members were unreachable. Even now, he still doesn't have access to our membership database. This is also why we haven't been able to conduct this year's AGM. Quite apart from being able to provide the required notice, and get a quorum, we can't get a financial report as our Treasurer is currently unavailable and nobody outside the squadron has access to the database. We've notified the NT corporate regulator, and they accept that the situation is beyond our control. We'll therefore conduct the AGM when we can, probably next year at this late stage.

As fighter squadrons we treasure our independence. At the 2011 AGM at Wagga, a clear consensus favoured not formally belonging to the RAAF Association, and going our own way. That's fine, but such independence imposes a heavy administrative burden, particularly for 75 Squadron where the tyranny of distance is greater. Operational exigencies, whether in Australia or overseas, will always limit the ability of squadron based personnel to perform core administrative duties for the association, and it is unrealistic to expect otherwise.

We're not the only ones experiencing these issues. Pete Ring (Ringo), President of the 77 Sqn Association, has convened a meeting of FSB committee members and squadron association reps on 10 Dec 15 at his place on the central coast to consider the following (his words - *'The 3, 75, 76, 77, 450 Fighter Squadron Associations are independent, active and well-managed entities where collaboration with other Associations is welcomed by each but practiced only informally. My questions are:*

- *could the way our associations collaborate be improved to better satisfy all our individual association goals, and*
- *are additional focuses warranted for Associations either individually or as a group.*

This is a timely meeting which I'll attend. Given our administrative challenges, a possible additional focus is a closer relationship with the one organisation that already exists purely for our benefit - the Fighter Squadrons Branch (FSB) of the RAAFA. Personally I find it hard to see how we expect to survive in the long term by staying at arm's length from it.

In early Nov this year the FSB became a fully independent and self-administered branch of the RAAFA. FSB members would still belong to the RAAFA, with the standard blue card, but the FSB would be fully responsible for all its own financial, subscription and membership admin. This is a big change, allowing us to consider whether squadron association admin could be collectively and more efficiently performed by the FSB. The FSB also recently significantly upgraded its computer systems support to do this.

Preliminary legal advice is that incorporation in the NT would not preclude, for example, the 75 Squadron Association (and others) from becoming chapters of the FSB. A more collaborative arrangement with the FSB would also allow more flexibility for members who have served in more than one fighter squadron, the norm these days.

Lest members be alarmed, all we're doing at this stage is throwing ideas at the wall to see what sticks. After five years with our existing Association organisation, a review is to be expected. Any proposed change to our business model must of course allow freedom of manoeuvre for individual squadron associations, with separate committees to control and preserve our heritage. In any case, whatever comes out of the meeting would require extensive committee and member consideration, and individual AGM endorsement.

Given that the festive season is almost upon us, I wouldn't expect a concrete proposal until early next year. In the meantime, current membership and subscription arrangements will apply. As our membership year coincides with the financial year, annual subscriptions are not due for renewal until 1 July 2016.

Fighter Squadrons Reunion and other events

The Fighter Squadrons Branch (FSB) sponsored all ranks function for current and ex-members, and wives/partners, originally scheduled for Saturday 12th September at Fighter World, had to be cancelled. There were too many competing events, and issues with the venue and format. FSB has no immediate plan to re-schedule this event.

Members should check the FSB website for significant upcoming events, including next year's centenary of the formation of 3 Squadron.

Squadron Community Award

At our committee meeting in Townsville last October, Richard Deane-Butcher raised the idea of having an Association award to recognise a significant contribution to the greater Squadron community. The CO suggested the award could be along the lines of the Ross Fox Memorial Trophy but eligibility could be broadened to include, for example, the dependents of Squadron members.

Although recent operational priorities have obviously constrained progress in this regard, Richard has developed a proposal for committee deliberation. Our new VP, Daryl Pudney, will manage the project.

39th Battalion Association reciprocity

Our informal reciprocal arrangement with the 39th Battalion (Bn) Association is bearing fruit. See following reports from Patricia Jackson and Peter Tucker who represented us at events sponsored by the 39th Bn.

Anzac Day Sydney 2016

Planning is well underway for next year's Anzac Day. The excellent Radisson Hotel in Sydney will again be the venue for lunch. Further updates will be available on the FSB website.

Cheers

Bill Evans

REPORT ON RECIPROCAL EVENTS WITH THE 39TH INFANTRY BATTALION ASSOCIATION

Kokoda Day Memorial Service, Brisbane, Sunday 9 August 2015 (Report by Patricia Jackson)



I was invited to attend this 73rd Anniversary Kokoda Day Memorial Service, as Vice-President of the 75 Squadron Association, by the Sherwood Indooroopilly RSL Sub-Branch on behalf of the 39th Infantry Battalion (Bn) Queensland, and their comrades-in-arms, the 49th Bn, and the 2/24 and 2/16 AIF Bns. The Service was held at the Kokoda Stone and Kokoda Plaque, in the Croll Memorial Precinct, Corinda, Brisbane. From left to right in the photo are George Palmer (Qld contact for 39th Bn), me (Patricia Jackson), and George Turner.

I had contacted George Palmer earlier to introduce myself. George is one of a few survivors of the 39th Bn's Battle for Kokoda. He is 94, as fit as a fiddle, memory intact and with a wonderful sense of humour. He joined up in East Gippsland when he was 21. This was before Japan entered the war. The volunteer militia were to be sent to New Guinea. George was elated as he imagined himself swinging on vines surrounded by dusky maidens. The reality was starkly different as we know. George features in one of Damien Parer's iconic photos of the Kokoda Track of five men plodding through mud up a hill.

George remembers the day 75 Squadron flew in to land on Seven Mile Strip. The 39th Bn had been waiting for what seemed ages for the Kittyhawks to put a stop to their endless bombardment by the Japanese. However, they had not been advised that 75 Squadron was finally arriving and thought it was another Japanese raid. They fired at the planes and destroyed two of them – the pilots survived. At the Memorial Service, I met George Turner (also 94) who had also been there that day. He went on to join 2/14 Bn as he was an expert with radios. He remembered it well too.

At 11 a.m. the Catafalque Party (218 Sqn AAF Cadets) and Flag Orderlies took their post and the Service began. The guest speaker was Brigadier Ross Grant. Wreaths were laid by various groups. I laid a sprig of lantana, as did many others. The Last Post was followed by George Palmer reading the Ode, then silence, and the Rouse and Benediction. George made a short speech about remembering the day 75 Squadron came through the clouds to save them.

We then adjourned to the RSL rooms for a light lunch. It was a proper RSL, no poker machines, lots of Honour Boards and memorabilia and a lovely old fashioned feel to it. I sat with Josie Palmer, George's wife. She is 90, also as sharp as a tack and great fun. I feel very privileged to have met them and hope they will always be my friends.

75 Sqn Radio Reunion

In conjunction with the RAAF School of Radio reunion (refer <http://www.radschool.org.au/2016reunion/>), there will be a 75 Sqn Radio reunion in Brisbane for Anzac Day 2016. All current and ex-members (and their partners) are invited to attend. For more information contact the Association secretary, Peter Nelms.

Dedication of the Kokoda Hall, Camberwell RSL, Melbourne, 2 September 2015

(Report by Peter Tucker)

On September 2nd my sister Margot and I represented the 75 Squadron Association at the dedication of a space at the Camberwell RSL Sub-branch, to be known as the Kokoda Hall. The hall will be used for educational and commemorative purposes.

Dad (Arthur Tucker) was a WWII Kittyhawk pilot and a founding member of 75 Squadron when it deployed to Port Moresby in Mar '42. He would naturally have rubbed shoulders with the 39th Battalion at Port Moresby during the '44 Days', which was part of the lead-up to the Kokoda Campaign. He also flew the last barely serviceable Kittyhawk on an operational mission at the end of that air campaign.

Camberwell is an inner Melbourne suburb, SE of the city. The RSL Sub-branch is a charming club, complete with a fabulous spit-roast lunch offering a choice of: beef, lamb and pork. I can certainly understand Patricia Jackson's feelings about the uplifting nature of sharing a common link of such significant WWII history, which I feel has been waiting to be discovered by both our Associations.

We very much enjoyed wonderful hospitality from the President, Vice President and Secretary of the Sub-Branch, as well as from the 39th Bn Association President Daryl Clarke and a British Army mate of his (Garth) who were especially good company at our table. It was also great to meet other distinguished veterans, committee members, and other various Association members with their interesting and diverse backgrounds.

Colonel Marcus Fielding, the RSL Sub-Branch Vice-President, mentioned that they also network with quite a large range of other organisations, including the Air Power Development Centre and the Point Cook Aviation Museum, with excellent facilities for functions, seminars and film screenings. The Kokoda Hall will largely be used by the 39th Bn as an educational space, with March-May each year (fittingly enough) dedicated to presentations on the New Guinea Air Campaign. All very impressive, I must say!



L to R: Myself, COL Marcus Fielding, Daryl Clarke

