



The Military Historical Society of Australia
ACT BRANCH



LE GROGNARD!

September 2022 - Issue #2022/9

Editor: tim.lyon@grapevine.com.au

ACT Branch Committee 2022/2023

President: Ian Stagoll - Ph: 6254 0199/0414 291 971 [ian.stagoll@gmail.com]

Vice President: Tim Lyon - Ph: 0424 486 686 [tim.lyon@grapevine.com.au]

Secretary/Treasurer: James Smith - Ph: 0414 946 909 [jackieandjames.1@bigpond.com]

Assistant Secretary/Treasurer: Bill Hooper - Ph: 0431 541 414 [whooper1@vtown.com.au]

**This month's Branch Meeting:
2.00pm, Thursday 22nd September 2022**

**Canberra Southern Cross Club Jamison
Cnr Catchpole & Bowman Streets, Macquarie**

**The Branch meeting will be followed by a presentation
starting at 2.30pm, by Craig CORMICK.**

***Australian Frontier Wars: Western Australia and Van
Diemen's Land.***

The next Branch meeting will be on Thursday 27th October 2022, starting at 2.00pm.

The meeting will be followed by a presentation, starting at 2.30pm, by TBA. The topic: TBA.

Anyone who has an interest in the study of military history, customs, traditions, dress, arms, equipment, medals, insignia and related matters, particularly where such are relevant to Australia, is most welcome to attend meetings of the ACT Branch of the Society.

For membership or other enquiries contact the ACT Branch Secretary, PO Box 249, Jamison Centre ACT 2614, or visit the Society's website: www.mhsa.org.au. [A membership subscription form is attached to this newsletter.]

IMPORTANT:

To continue receiving the Society's Journal *SABRETACHE* over the coming year you need, if you haven't already done so, to renew your membership now.

A membership subscription/renewal form, and payment option instructions, is attached to this newsletter. [If you have paid the annual subscription fee direct to the MHSA Membership Officer, based in Queensland, rather than to the ACT Branch, please advise me: jan.stagoll@gmail.com]

THE QUIZ!

Answers are at Page 18 of this issue.

Question 1

Can you untangle the following coincidences and name the men involved?

Both men were born in Australia.

Both men served in the RAF.

Both men reached the rank of Air Chief Marshal.

Both men served as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAF Middle East during the Second World War.

Both men were recommended by James Fairbairn, Minister for Air, to Prime Minister Robert Menzies in November 1939 as suitable RAF officers to be Chief of the Air Staff of the RAAF.

Both men served as Inspector-General of the RAF during the Second World War.

Both men were knighted.

Both men retired during the Second World War.

Both men returned to active duty in the Second World War following their retirement.

Both men were the equal highest-ranking officers of Australian birth in the Second World War.

Question 2

For what reason was Mervyn C. Shipard the No. 1 ranked Australian in the Second World War?

Question 3

During the Second World War, the Allied leaders (Churchill and Roosevelt) appointed Supreme Allied Commanders to manage the multi-nation, tri-service fighting forces for five theatres of war. These Supreme Allied Commanders were given operational control over all air, land, and sea units in that theatre.

These Supreme Allied Commanders were responsible to the British/American Combined Chiefs of Staff, although in the case of the Pacific and South West Pacific, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) exercised jurisdiction over all matters of operational strategy and in the case of South East Asia, the British Chiefs of Staff Committee exercised jurisdiction over all matters of operational strategy.

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower served in successive Supreme Allied Commander roles. Eisenhower was the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces for the Mediterranean theatre. Eisenhower then served as Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force (SCAEF) in the European theatre, starting in December 1943 with the creation of the command to execute Operation Overlord and ending in July 1945 shortly after the end of the war in Europe.

General Henry Maitland Wilson succeeded Eisenhower in the Mediterranean theatre, given the title Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean. Wilson was succeeded by Field-Marshal Harold Alexander, who continued in charge of that theatre until the end of the war.

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia (SACSEA) throughout its existence.

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur was appointed Supreme Allied Commander, South West Pacific Area (SWPA) on 18th April 1942. However, he preferred to use the title Commander-in-Chief.

The Pacific Ocean Areas (POA), divided into the Central Pacific Area, the North Pacific Area and the South Pacific Area, were commanded by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas.

Legally, the Commander-in-Chief of the Wehrmacht (the German Armed Forces, comprising the Kriegsmarine (navy), the Heer (army) and the Luftwaffe (air force), was Adolf Hitler in his capacity as Germany's head of state, a position he gained after the death of President Paul von Hindenburg in August 1934. With the creation of the Wehrmacht in 1935, Hitler elevated himself to Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, retaining the position until his suicide on 30th April 1945.

Unlike Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt, Hitler did not like to appoint any Wehrmacht officer to a position such as Supreme Commander. Mind you, Joseph Stalin did not appoint any Supreme Commanders either.

Though many senior officers, such as Erich von Manstein, advocated for a real tri-service Joint Command, or appointment of a single Joint Chief of Staff, Hitler refused. Even after the defeat at Stalingrad, Hitler refused, stating that Göring as Reichsmarschall and head of the Luftwaffe, and Hitler's deputy, would not submit to someone else or see himself as an equal to other service commanders.

However, there was one German officer in the Second World War who held a position equivalent to an Allied Supreme Commander.

Who was he?

Question 4

The following picture appeared in the August of *LE GROGNARD!* (in Aircraft of the Month):



Lieutenant John S. Thach tipped this F2A-1 onto its nose on Saratoga, March 1940.

What did Thach famously develop during the Second World War?

Ambush in Indonesia

The first (and only?) United Nations' casualties in its involvement in the Indonesian war of independence 1945-50.

By ACT Branch Member Graham Rayner.

At about ten o'clock on the morning of 18th March 1949 a Dutch military jeep, painted white and clearly marked as "UNITED NATIONS" was ambushed by what were presumed to be militant Indonesian republicans on a lonely stretch of road 14 kilometres from their destination. They had been travelling from Medan, near the north-east coast of Sumatra, to Kabanjahe in the central highlands and were attacked near the village of Berastagi (in all contemporary documentation the village was spelt as Brastagi). The attackers had waited until the vehicle had passed their location on a hair-pin bend before opening fire into the back of the jeep. 25 bullet holes were later counted in the jeep.

Driving the jeep was British Lieutenant Colonel Howard Douglas Chaplin with Major John Albert Simmons Junior of the US Air Force sitting in the passenger seat. Both were unarmed as they were part of the international military observer team in country supporting the work of the United Nations Commission for Indonesia (UNCI), the new name for the Security Council's Committee of

*On 17th August 1945 Sukarno declared the independence of Indonesia, a previous colony of the Netherlands. The ensuing conflict between Indonesian republicans and Dutch authorities eventually resulted in the involvement of the United Nations in 1947. The United Nations' Security Council called on both parties to end the fighting and work towards a settlement. The Security Council also established a **Consular Commission at Batavia** to monitor and report on the situation, and a **Committee of Good Offices (UNGOC)** to help the parties resolve the conflict. The Consular Commission sought the help of military officers from the UN member states represented on the Commission – Australia, USA, UK, Belgium, France and the Republic of China. These military “observers” supported the work of both the Consular Commission and the UNGOC. On 28th January 1949 the UN changed the name of the UNGOC to the **UN Commission for Indonesia (UNCI)** with increased authority and role.*

Good Offices (UNGOC) formed in September 1947 to help resolve the conflict between the Netherlands and the self-declared Republic of Indonesia.

Sitting in the back of the jeep was their Dutch liaison officer, army Reserve First Lieutenant Roderic Paul Marie baron van Voorst tot Voorst, a member of the Royal Netherlands Army and Dutch nobility. He had been deployed to the East Indies immediately after he had completed officer training in the UK in January 1946; he had joined the Dutch Army in 1939 but spent the war in the Belgian resistance. After Germany had occupied the Netherlands, Roderic had been sent as forced labour to the German area of Limburg, where he escaped and joined the Secret Army of Belgium. He had been seriously wounded in action against the enemy. By the time he was sitting in the back of the UN jeep in Sumatra he had served for three years in the East Indies with the 1st Armoured Car Squadron (of Willem van Boreel). LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst was armed with an Australian Owen gun with about 8 spare

magazines (as given in his post incident report).

All occupants of the jeep were wounded and in the ensuing confusion the jeep ran off the road, hit the soft kerb and came to a stop leaning on an embankment. The only mention of the state or situation of the vehicle made in reports of the incident were in a note from the Principal Secretary to the UNCI, dated 29th March, which refers to “*where the jeep fell against the embankment*”; and the version of events from Indonesian sources which state that the vehicle “tipped over”. LTCOL Chaplin had been seriously wounded, hit by six bullets or fragments in the chest and back as well as being injured in the foot. Both MAJ Simmons and LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst received bullet and shrapnel wounds as well, but the wounds were less serious. MAJ Simmons was hit in his left leg as he got out of the jeep, and later received lacerating wounds from shrapnel across his chest and back. LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst was initially shot in the leg, but was later wounded in his left shoulder, his ankle, other leg and left hand.



A French observer indicates one of the 25 bullet holes in the jeep.

Komisi Tiga Negara - Committee of Three States – a term widely communicated across Java and Sumatra to announce the arrival and work of the UNGOC/UNCI. The UN jeep had 'KTN' on its bumper bars.

LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst shouted “**Komisi Tiga Negara!!**” to try and get the attackers to stop, but was rewarded with the reply “Mati, Mati” – “Kill, Kill!”. He returned fire, initially from within the jeep, but later from behind the jeep, managing to keep up the fire even after he was wounded in the left hand. He kept the sub-machine gun stabilised on one of the wheels of the jeep and was fed magazines by MAJ Simmons. After they had been under attack for about 30 minutes they made a dash for cover in the undergrowth some way up the road, but they got separated from each other.

The attackers got to the jeep and attempted to set fire to it by lighting rags stuffed into the petrol filler tube. Apart from scorching, this was unsuccessful and after failing to find the jeep’s occupants, they broke off the attack and disappeared. None too soon, as the Dutch officer’s ammunition was almost exhausted, and the consequences would have been dire.

About 90 minutes after the attack began a civilian bus came onto the scene from the direction of Berastagi. After some attempt by LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst to describe where the other two were, without success, he took the decision to board the bus and make his way to Berastagi to raise the alarm himself. As it was, the bus had only travelled a short distance before it was met by two Dutch army trucks sent to investigate the sound of gunfire. One truck took the Dutch lieutenant to Berastagi whilst the other went to the attack scene and recovered the two UN observers.

All three officers were initially treated at Berastagi by a Dutch civilian doctor from Kabanjahe, the action probably saving the life of LTCOL Chaplin, before being stabilised and transferred to the military hospital at Medan.

The UNCI immediately appointed a 5-man team of investigators from the UN observers group: COL Morizon (France), COL Rose (UK), LTCOL Meuleman (Belgium), MAJ McLeod (Australia) and MAJ Montana (USA), who all travelled to the scene the following day.



MILEX Investigation team at the site of the incident. Colonel Rose ('white' shorts) is standing at the point where the jeep hit the embankment.

As well as determining the facts of the incident, the investigation team concluded that there were about ten well-armed attackers from the TNI (Indonesian army) involved in the ambush and that LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst had saved the lives of the two observers.

The investigation report was supported by the full Military Executive Board (the senior officers from each of the five countries which had despatched observers to Indonesia), however the members from Australia (BRIG Prior) and the US (COL Carlock) considered that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the perpetrators of the attack had been members of the TNI, as the investigators had surmised. The essence of the investigation report was reflected in the report to the Security Council made by the Chairman of the UNCI, Mr Thomas Critchley (an Australian diplomat).

The investigation report was poor by today’s standards. It lacked any description of the attack, relying upon the information contained in the statements made to a member of the investigation team (Australian Major Norman McLeod) by MAJ Simmons and LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst to convey the story of the incident. The report did not indicate any effort to question others,

including local Dutch commanders or the operators of the bus which had arrived on scene. The focus of the report was to call for observers to be armed and to travel in armoured vehicles; to call for LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst to be praised; and to recognise the support given by the Dutch army.

A few weeks later, in April 1949, the Netherlands presented to the investigators its translation of transcripts of messages that they had had intercepted, purportedly sent by the TNI, which clearly indicated the TNI's involvement. However, there are some inconsistencies about the contents of the messages which bring into question their veracity. Either the TNI was reporting an embellished version of events or claiming credit for the attack which had been perpetrated by others; or the Netherlands had concocted the transcripts to lay blame at the feet of the TNI. The TNI report of the incident states that the jeep in which Chaplin, Simmons and van Voorst tot Voorst were travelling was at the tail end of a fast-moving convoy of a tank, an armoured car, a truck and the jeep. The TNI group attempted to stop the jeep but it would not do so, with someone aboard the jeep (presumably van Voorst tot Voorst) shouting "*We are the Komisi Tiga Negara*". The report stated that the TNI commander then re-assured the occupants that they would be "*given safe passage*". The TNI commander then waited "*one minute*" before "*stengunfire (sic) was given by one of the occupants of the said motorcar*", after which the TNI responded in kind.

This suggests that although the jeep would not stop, and was travelling at speed, after a short exchange of words followed by a full 60 seconds, the jeep was still in the vicinity of the incident. This is simply not credible. And why would LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst open fire unprovoked without any backup from the men in the other convoy vehicles. Why did the other vehicles not hear and respond to the ensuing gunfire but continue on seemingly unaware of the absence of the jeep? Again, not credible. Furthermore, there is no mention of a convoy in either the UNCI investigation report or the statements of LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst or MAJ Simmons taken a couple of days after the event. That said, a convoy was mentioned in one newspaper article published in the UK the day after the attack, but that was the only mention other than in the translated transcripts provided by the Dutch.



The recovered jeep with members of the military observer team and Dutch personnel.

The cautionary stance taken by BRIG Prior and COL Carlock over the identification of the attackers was probably the better conclusion, with the only other alternative being a group of militants who supported the nationalist cause.

There was never a suggestion that any fault could be laid at the feet of the Netherlands in any way. The investigation report and Critchley's report to UN headquarters praised the support given by the Dutch military, and LEUT baron van Voorst tot Voorst in particular.

Was the ambush planned?

An interesting article, unattributed to a particular newspaper and which has not been found published, is to be found on file 405/3/1/5 in the National Archives of Australia. It is dated 24th March 1949 and taken from ANETA – the Netherlands East Indies press agency considered at the time to be pro-Dutch. The article reported the arrest of a man named John Rasjmarra, the author of a document which directed Indonesian guerrillas to attack members of the UNCI “to prove that Jogjakarta is not a quiet place as the Dutch claim.” The article claimed that the document was handed to UNCI military observers at Jogjakarta. When questioned (presumably by the journalist who wrote the article), a spokesman for UNCI admitted the existence of the document but could not comment as the UNCI’s investigation had not yet ended.

There is no reference to this document in the investigation team’s report or Critchley’s report to UN headquarters, but if it did exist it may have contributed to BRIG Prior and COL Carlock’s caution in attributing the ambush to the TNI.

Aftermath

Apart from the investigation team attending the scene shortly after the ambush, the vice-chairman of the Dutch delegation to the UNCI, Mr Ton Elink Schuurman, visited the US representative on the Commission and the British Consul to express the Netherlands’ sympathy over the incident. Mr Elink Schuurman had been the Netherlands’ Consul-General in Australia between 1935 and 1942, before being posted as Consul-General in the US.

The ambush was reported in local media and abroad. Reuters and British United Press agencies picked up the story which was published in many newspapers across the UK and the Netherlands. Most of the articles were very short and follow-up articles were few. In Australia a simple 100-word item appeared in Brisbane’s Courier-Mail on 21st March. On the same day, a much longer article, with images of the bullet-ridden jeep and of LEUT baron van Voorst tot Voorst, appeared in the Sumatran newspaper Het Nieuwsblad Voor Sumatra which reasonably described the events. Only one newspaper item, the UK’s Daily Herald of 19th March, referred to the jeep travelling in a Dutch convoy. Behind closed doors however, the attack raised the question of whether military observers with the UNCI should be armed. The Chairman of UNCI, Critchley, sent a request to UN headquarters in New York requesting advice on the policy of the UN in regard to the protection of observers, and whether they should be armed.

The UN’s reply was extensive, but essentially advised that observers should, in general, not be armed but left the final decision in the hands of the head of the mission, and only then as sidearms for personal protection. This reflected the situation in Palestine the previous year (1948) when the UN Mediator for Palestine, Count Folke Bernadotte approved such arms in certain circumstances. The UN also stated the general principal that the UN considered “*military observers attached to the Commission as UN officials*”, and that their protection was the

During their 7 years in Australia, Mr Elink Schuurman’s French-born wife, Adine, sat for a portrait by Nora Heysen which won the 1938 Archibald prize. This was the first time that a female artist had won the coveted prize and Heysen was the youngest winner to do so at the time, aged 27. It was controversial, many believing that the portrait was chosen because of the subject’s exotic beauty (all of the judges were middle-aged men). This was unfair. Heysen was an accomplished Australian artist who only achieved her due recognition in later life.



responsibility of the party which controlled the territory in which the military observers were operating.

Based on the advice, the UNCI decided not to change its modus operandi.

The survivors

LTCOL Chaplin was reported as “out of danger” within 24 hours of the ambush and on 25th March all three survivors were shown in their hospital beds in photographs on the front page of a Batavian newspaper, *Det Dagblad*, looking relaxed.

No evidence has yet been found of what became of either MAJ Simmons or LTCOL Chaplin immediately after they left hospital. The Dutch medical report on MAJ Simmons’ wounds and treatment at the time indicated that he was expected to make a full recovery and presumably this was the case as he went on to complete 20 years of service in the USAF then 15 as a civilian in the US Naval Ordnance Testing Unit at Cape Canaveral. MAJ Simmons, a decorated pilot and mechanical engineer, had only been in Indonesia a matter of weeks when the ambush occurred.

The medical report on LTCOL Chaplin however, indicated that the wound to his foot would likely affect his gait permanently. No evidence has been found of what became of LTCOL Chaplin other than his death in 1980. MAJ Simmons died in 1998.

And what became of 1st LEUT R.P.M. baron van Voorst tot Voorst?

LEUT baron van Voorst tot Voorst spent seven weeks in hospital recovering from his wounds before returning to his operational unit with the temporary rank of Ritmeester (name of the rank of captain given to cavalry officers). After having spent nearly four years serving continuously in the East Indies, he was sent home in August 1949 and demobilised in October of that year. He returned to his civilian occupation in the insurance industry but continued to serve in the Dutch reserve force until 1963 when he was honourably discharged as a Ritmeester.

Award for gallantry. In its report into the attack, the UNCI investigation team requested that *“the UNCI express its gratitude in writing to Lieutenant baron van Voorst tot Voorst for his courageous action, by which fatal results may have been prevented”*. Major Simmons, in his statement to the investigation team felt *“that both LTCOL Chaplin and I owe our lives to LEUT Voorst who conducted himself in an exemplary manner in an emergency and was keeping our safety foremost in his mind”*.

The Dutch authorities took note of his actions and on 24th October 1949, just a week before he finished his full-time service, approved the award of the Bronze Lion, the second highest national award for gallantry. It was presented to him by His Royal Highness Prince Bernhard, the Prince Consort of the Netherlands at a ceremony at the Prince Willem III cavalry barracks in Amersfoort on 1st August 1950.



Lieutenant Baron V van Voorst tot Voorst in military hospital Medan receiving a visitor

As well as the Bronze Lion for gallantry in the East Indies, he had been awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre with Palm (mentioned in despatches) and Belgian Resistance Medal for his service and actions in the Second World War. He was a modest man who never regarded himself as a hero. Reflecting on this, he expressed his sentiment as *“I happened to be there and apparently did the right things; you also have to be very lucky.”* (courtesy of his family) Roderic baron van Voorst tot Voorst continued to serve his country and community in many capacities during his later life and did so with the same dedication as he applied to his military service. For 34 years of service to HM Queen Juliana as her Chamberlain in the province of Overijssel he was awarded the Cross of Honour of the Order of the House of Orange; and for services to the King of Spain during a state visit he was made a commander in the Spanish Order of Isabel the Catholic. He was also made a Grand Officer in the Maltese order *“Pro Merito Melitensi”* for his service to the Malta Association of the Netherlands. He died in 1988.

Reserve Ritmeester R.P.M. baron van Voorst tot Voorst was a professional and courageous officer of the Royal Netherlands Army who prevented the deaths of two of the United Nations’ military observers in Indonesia.



1st LEUT baron van Voorst tot Voorst receiving the Bronze Lion from HRH Prince Bernhard.

It is believed that Major Simmons and Lieutenant Colonel Chaplin were the only casualties suffered by the UN during its involvement in Indonesia.

----- ooOoo -----

Acknowledgements: In researching the background of LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst I am indebted to the support and generous assistance of his son Seger baron van Voorst tot Voorst and the personal help of the staff of the National Archives of the Netherlands.

Images of the attack scene, jeep and hospital are courtesy of the photo collection of the National Archives of the Netherlands; of HRH Prince Bernhard courtesy of the van Voorst tot Voorst family; and of Nora Heysen taken from Sydney Morning Herald website article on Heysen by Jennifer Higgie, 01 April 2021.

Sources: Most of the primary source material used in preparing this article can be found in files held by the National Archives of Australia, the Netherlands and the United Nations. Additional information was provided by LEUT van Voorst tot Voorst’s son and the National Library of the Netherlands.

FOLLOWING UP

CONUNDRUMS

Who was Vice-Admiral T.B. Drew?

In the July 2022 issue of *LE GROGNARD!* the Editor asked three questions:

Why did he retire in the middle of the Second World War at the age of 55? (He was younger than Admiral James Somerville and the same age as Admiral Bertram Ramsey who continued to serve.)

Why was he then reduced in rank to Captain and lent to the Royal Australian Navy?

Does anybody have any further information about Vice-Admiral Thomas Bernard Drew?

Vice-Admiral T.B. Drew

By David Deasey

In the July issue of *LE GROGNARD!* (issue 2022/7) the Editor raised the strange case of Vice-Admiral T. B. Drew who was awarded his CB 1943/44 while serving with the RAN. The strange features being that he had been seconded to the RAN as a Captain not as a Vice-Admiral. To add to the confusion from 25th June 1943 until 1st October 1945 he is shown as Commodore 2nd Class and his posting as Commodore Superintendent of Training at HMAS *Cerberus*. Is it a case of 'choose your own adventure' or do our well regulated ADF minds sense a demotion scandal? So, what gives? Well first off demotion is not in the equation, it is almost a 'choose your own adventure'. I cannot shed too much light on his RAN career but the RAN was expanding rapidly into one of the largest navies in the Allied forces. Sea going officers were at a premium but a senior trainer who was in the twilight of his career still had much to give the RAN. This article will show how decisions made in the early years of the century gave the Royal Navy a flexibility in rank structure that would probably have the bureaucrats at Russell reaching for the valium.

It really begins with the provisions of the Order in Council of the 8th December 1903 and more particularly how they were applied and interpreted in the Royal Navy. The aim of the 1903 regulation was to deal with the perceived problem of officers remaining in the service and thus blocking the promotion of others. The provisions allowed for senior ranks to be compulsorily retired on the expiration of the period of time from a last sea service, even if they had not reached retirement age. It also allowed, as part of section 2, officers to retire at any age at the discretion of the Admiralty on retired pay. This provision had the obvious attraction to many officers. It will be noted from examples cited that this retirement did not stop future promotion. It is also clear from promotions which occurred on the retired list that there was an understanding that being placed on the retired list would not be a bar to promotion-an incentive perhaps to accept retirement gracefully - or jump or be pushed! If 'pushed' an officer was unlikely to receive further promotion in retirement so an incentive to do the right thing. Retirement promotion carried prestige rather than financial benefit (Looked good at the golf club.)

Unless you were specifically asked to stay on, once an officer turned 50 and there was no sea going post likely the retirement option loomed. In Drew's case his promotion was less than three weeks before his retirement and one has to ask whether the Vice-Admiral Mine Sweepers post

was merely a device to promote him while still active as the system must have known that he was retiring. Such a promotion prior to retirement had financial implications so should be seen as an honour.

In terms of oddities of rank and its flexibility such that it can serve the state, the case of Vice-Admiral Richard Bell Davies VC shows us another interesting case. After an extensive career including World War I and naval aviation (and the award of the VC) he was promoted to Rear-Admiral, Naval Air Stations in 1938. On retiring (at own request) due to age on 29th May 1941 he was promoted to Vice-Admiral on the retired list. He was then allowed to join the Royal Naval Reserve dropping his rank to Commodore 2nd Class. As such he served as a Convoy Commodore on Atlantic convoys. Later he was recalled to be the commissioning captain of the escort carriers HMS *Dasher* and HMS *Pretoria Castle* before retiring again in 1944 and reassuming his retired rank.



A full length shot of Vice-Admiral Richard Bell Davies VC CB DSO AFC RN onboard the escort carrier HMS *Pretoria Castle* (as Captain RN).

Going back to World War I there are some even more bizarre cases. An interesting example of the workings of the promotions policy in British service is that of Vice-Admiral Gerald Marescaux CB, CMG, in many ways an eccentric character even during his naval days. His service records recorded an instance in 1909 where he was censured by the Admiralty for conduct that was 'most unsatisfactory'. As a captain and commanding officer of the cruiser HMS *Europa*, he had apparently sent for the Officer of the Watch and the ship's Signal Bosun for disciplinary reasons and interviewed them in his cabin late at night attired only in his pyjamas. Their Lordships consider that he quite forgot his position as captain of one of His Majesty's ships.

This however did not stop him from further promotion so that by World War I he was a Rear-Admiral having been promoted in 1913. During 1915 he was posted as District Naval Officer in command of British operations at the port of Dunkirk (An important post but a clear sign he could expect no further seagoing appointment) and was awarded a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) as a Rear-Admiral, Royal Navy 23rd June, 1915. In this position

he was involved in coordinating the port and logistics between the Royal Navy and the army. At the same time, he was given a commission in the British Army as a temporary Lieutenant-Colonel, so was thus holding an active commission in two services at the same time. His army role was shown as being Colonel Commandant, Dunkirk. Thus, he was now a Rear-Admiral, Royal Navy but also a Lieutenant-Colonel on the active list of the British Army. It was not in fact until November 1915 using the provisions of the Order in Council of 1903, that he voluntarily retired at his own request. Thus, he was now a Rear-Admiral, Royal Navy on the retired list but also a Lieutenant-Colonel on the active list of the British Army. He was promoted to Colonel in 1918 and at the time of the armistice he was Officer Commanding Troops, Paris. His service at Dunkirk was again recognised when he was made a Companion of the Bath (CB) in January 1919 as an army colonel. At the time of the award, the citation notes him as being a Temporary Lieutenant-Colonel, (Army) with the notation Royal Navy retired alongside. The citation for this award actually describes him as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General (Base). On 21st January 1919 nearly 4 years after his retirement from the Navy he was promoted to Vice-Admiral (retired list) of the Royal Navy while still an active colonel in the army. He was also awarded the French Legion d'Honneur, as well as four Mentions in Dispatches (MID). He retired from the Army with the rank of Colonel later in 1919.



Gerald Charles Adolphe Marescaux (as a British Army Colonel)

Marescaux's promotion to Vice-Admiral occurred at the same time as a promotion of yet another Admiral on the retired list. This was Rear-Admiral John Rolleston DSO, who had been Naval Officer in Charge – Sydney from January 1909– April 1913. His promotion occurred nearly 5 years after been placed on the retired list. John Rolleston was elevated yet again, this time to Admiral (retired list) in March 1924, 10 years after his formal retirement from the Navy. Rolleston saw no service in World War I. Retirement promotions were a common practice as a result of the 1903 Order in Council.

The Royal Australian Navy also had a case where a senior officer was promoted in retirement presumably under the same practice that resulted from the 1903 Order in Council. Vice-Admiral Sir William Rooke Creswell, (1852–1933), is considered to be the father of the Royal Australian Navy. He was born in Gibraltar and trained as a naval officer in the Royal Navy. He retired from the Royal Navy in 1878 and migrated to Australia in 1879. A failed pastoral attempt in the Northern Territory led him to join the South Australian Navy in 1885. He agitated even in the 1890s for an all Australian naval force and in 1904 became Naval Officer Commanding the Commonwealth Naval Forces, the forerunner of the RAN. He was very much involved in the passing of the Naval Defence Act of 1910 setting up the RAN. Promoted to Rear-Admiral and knighted in 1911, he never commanded the RAN squadron, partly due to age and partly due to the firm belief that as the RAN was a British squadron it should be administered as part of the Royal Navy by a regular British officer with current large ship experience. He retired in 1919 and was knighted for the second time. He was promoted to Vice-Admiral in retirement in 1923 at almost 71 years of age and after four years of retirement.



Another Australian example is that of Vice-Admiral John Glossop. A Royal Navy officer assigned to the RAN, he commanded the HMAS *Sydney* during the sinking of the SMS *Emden* at the Cocos Islands in 1914. At the end of his career, he was promoted to Rear-Admiral, 20th November 1921, presumably as a reward for his distinguished war service and retired the following day. He was appointed Vice-Admiral on the retired list after five years of retirement in 1926. Note here that his would have been a voluntary retirement at fifty years of age.



Glossop as a Commodore 2nd Class

A much more recent example of rank being granted as a reward in Australian service is that of Admiral Mike Hudson who was granted his fourth star and promoted to Admiral by Prime Minister Bob Hawke on the day of his retirement 8th March 1991. This was not so much an outworking of the British 1903 Order in Council but rather that of the Australian Defence Act 1903. That act contained a section, the last iteration of which read:



The Governor-General may appoint a soldier to be an officer, or promote an officer to higher rank, for distinguished service in time of war or for marked ability or gallantry on active service notwithstanding that the member has not complied with a condition, qualification or requirement in relation to appointment or promotion to the rank concerned for which provision is made by or under this Act

Note of course that this actually did not require an officer to be active to receive such a promotion. This provision has now disappeared from the Defence Act, obviously the concept of such flexibility in service promotions caused some heart burn in the bureaucracy.

What all these cases demonstrate is that for the good of the service throughout the twentieth century the award of rank was much more flexible than modern readers might expect

Lieutenant Colonel David Deasey OAM, RFD was born in Corowa, NSW, 15th September 1949. He was educated at Sydney Technical High School and the University of NSW (BA (Hons) 1971 Dip. Ed.1972. He enlisted in the University of NSW Regiment in 1968 and was commissioned in 1971. He undertook postings in UNSWR, 17 RNSWR, 4 RNSWR and 4/3 RNSWR as well as postings at Brigade, Division, Military District and Command Level before commanding UNSWR 1995-1998. He was posted to the Inactive Reserve in 2001 and retired in 2014. With K. J. McKay he was Co Author of *A History of the University Of New South Wales Regiment 1952-2006*. In civilian life he taught English and History in NSW schools from 1973 until 2009 retiring as Deputy Principal of Picnic Point High School. He is currently Chairman of the NSW Committee of the National Boer War Memorial Association

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

A copy of Issue 2022/7 July 2022 of "LE GROGNARD" was passed to me by Nigel Webster. As a retired Naval officer, I particularly noticed your request on page 14 for information about Vice-Admiral T.B. Drew CB OBE. The following information may be helpful.

Drew was promoted to Vice-Admiral on seniority and then retired shortly thereafter, presumably because there were no further postings available for him at that rank in the RN. Being now on the retired list he could be employed in any job for which he was suited and in any rank. Presumably he volunteered, or was offered the opportunity, to go out to the RAN to be employed in any job for which he was suited, in any rank. Loan Service with the RAN as a Commodore 2nd Class enabled him to keep serving. Commodore 2nd Class was an acting

rank at that time. (There were many retired Flag Officers of every grade who served as Convoy Commodores at the lower rank of Commodore 2nd Class.)
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Convoy_commodore

His CB was listed in the London Gazette under UK awards. As the award was made some 8 months after he joined HMAS *Cerberus* it was obviously not for any service in the RAN, but was included in HMAS MK III as he was on loan to the RAN at that time.

As regards the comments on Somerville and Ramsay, they were both (very) special cases - Somerville had been invalided out in July 1939, supposedly with TB, which was a mis-diagnosis, and 30 months later, after being given a clean bill of health, was re-employed as a Vice-Admiral (Retired). He was promoted to Admiral (Retired) and restored to the Active List in 1944. (The comment on the age of Ramsay is wrong as he was born in 1883).

In Ramsay's case, he was placed on the Retired List as a Rear-Admiral in October 1938. After retirement, he was promoted to Vice-Admiral on the Retired List, and ten days before WW2, was recalled, in the rank of Vice-Admiral (Retired) and re-employed as Flag Officer in Charge, Dover, where he masterminded the Dunkirk evacuation. In April 1944, after he had planned and carried out the Allied landings in North Africa and Sicily, and was in the course of planning the Normandy landings, he was restored to the Active List in the rank of Vice-Admiral, and one day later was promoted to Admiral.

Kind Regards,

Les Roberts

Commander RAN (Retired)

WEBSITES WORTH A LOOK:

[Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies Australia](https://www.rusi.org.au/)

<https://www.rusi.org.au/>

[United Services Institute Australian Capital Territory](https://www.rusi-act.com/)

<https://www.rusi-act.com/>

[Stinson L-5 Sentinel with Brodie System](https://www.si.edu/object/stinson-l-5-sentinel-brodie-system:yt_o9vAWEgw6cc)

National Air and Space Museum

https://www.si.edu/object/stinson-l-5-sentinel-brodie-system:yt_o9vAWEgw6cc

THE JAVELIN COLLECTION



The Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies – Australia

THE JAVELIN COLLECTION Monograph Series

We invite our members, our readers and the wider community to contribute to R.U.S.I.- Australia's newly launched Javelin Monograph Collection, by providing non-fiction essays of roughly 2,500 - 5,000 words on subjects relating to defence and security in general, and in particular, the defence and security of Australia. <https://www.rusinsw.org.au/site/Monographs.php>

We are looking for well-researched papers with a clear, logical narrative, which are highly readable and a valuable source for researchers. Subjects chosen may include: strategy and tactics; military history from all periods and theatres of war; first person recollections of major events, whether while serving in the armed forces, or as a civilian.

The Ursula Davidson Library, housed in the RUSI-NSW rooms at the Anzac Memorial in Sydney, is an excellent resource for those writers who require more information on topics they wish to write about.

The field is open: we welcome all contributions, except those that have been published elsewhere. For essays of a more technical nature, illustrations, maps and photographs can assist in aiding a reader's comprehension. Copyright clearances will be necessary.

Ordinary essay formatting rather than columns of script is our preference. Sources can be listed at the conclusion of the document, and typed documents should be in Word, not PDF. Submissions can be sent:

- i. By email: diana.figgis@rusinsw.org.au;
Email Subject heading: "The Editor - Monograph Series", attach your monograph as a Word document not PDF
- ii. By post: The Editor – Monograph Collection
RUSI NSW
P.O. Box A778
SYDNEY SOUTH NSW 1235



THE QUIZ! - ANSWERS

Question 1

Arthur Longmore and William Mitchell.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore.

Born in St. Leonards, New South Wales, on 8th October 1885, the son of Charles Croker Longmore and Janet Murray. Longmore started his service career in the Royal Navy, entering Dartmouth Naval College in 1901. He was commissioned into the Royal Navy in 1904. He worked his way up from Midshipman to Acting Lieutenant-Commander and in 1911, having developed an interest in flying, he volunteered for pilot training when the Navy accepted an offer of training facilities by the Royal Aero Club, and was one of the four officers, out of 200, to be selected. Longmore joined the newly formed Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) in 1914. During the First World War, he saw action in the Battle of Jutland and spent time as an instructor at the Royal Navy's Central Flying School where he taught Major Hugh Trenchard, 'Father of the RAF', to fly as a military pilot. He took Winston Churchill on a fact-finding flight searching for submarines and was a pioneer of both flight and aviation warfare, launching the first torpedo from a British aeroplane in July 1914. He was decorated many times over in the First World War, by the British, Belgian, French and Italian Governments.



After taking up commission in the RAF in 1920, he served in Iraq and Bulgaria. He was made Air Officer Commanding No. 7 Group in 1924, Director of Equipment at the Air Ministry in 1925 and Chief Staff Officer at Headquarters Inland Area in 1929. Subsequent appointments included Commandant of the Royal Air Force College Cranwell in December 1929, Air Officer Commanding Inland Area in 1933 and Air Officer Commanding Coastal Area (which was renamed RAF Coastal Command under his leadership) in 1934. He went on to be Commandant of the Imperial Defence College in 1936. He was one of a group invited to watch German service manoeuvres in 1937.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Longmore was an Air Chief Marshal and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Training Command. On 2nd April 1940, he was appointed Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, enhancing his reputation for leadership and, as he always insisted on piloting his own aircraft, he was extremely popular with his men.

In the 2nd week of June 1940, the Italians joined the war and very shortly afterwards Longmore launched an attack on their airfields, taking them completely by surprise.

In the House of Commons in December 1940, Churchill said:

We have seen the spectacle of a whole Italian Division laying down its arms in front of a far inferior force, and the work of our Air Force, against three, four or five to one has been attended with continued success ... I must not forget the work that has been done in this battle by Air Chief Marshal Longmore, who at the most critical moment in his preparations had to have part of his force taken away from him for Greece. Nevertheless, he persevered, running additional risks, and his handling of the situation and his co-operation with the Army has been of the highest value.

The Army, too, acknowledged a great part of their success in North Africa was due to Longmore's well-calculated and consistent plans for bombing enemy airfields.

In March 1941, King George VI bestowed Longmore with the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath.

However, within a few short month's Churchill had formed a very different opinion of Longmore, as shown by the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography:

Longmore's constant demands for reinforcements resulted in some unwelcome attention from Churchill, who hated pessimists and senior commanders who complained about their lack of resources. After some acerbic correspondence, in which Churchill accused Longmore of failing to make proper use of the manpower and aircraft he had, Longmore was recalled to London in May 1941. He was succeeded in the Middle East by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder.

He subsequently became the Inspector General of the RAF before his formal retirement in 1942. In retirement he was Vice Commissioner of the Imperial (Commonwealth) War Graves Commission.

Sir Arthur was a big supporter of the Air Training Corps. He helped establish the Grantham ATC with Lady Longmore – he was the chair and she was secretary.

Later in the war, Longmore skippered a Naval support vessel which acted as a tender to the invasion fleet before the D-Day landings. His crew had an average age of 60.

During the war Longmore suffered the loss of his son, Wing Commander Richard Longmore who was killed in action while serving in RAF Coastal Command.

Considered by some as one of the Fathers of the RAF, and one of the 'Big Six' of the RAF during the Second World War.

Longmore's memoirs, *From Sea to Sky 1910 -1945*, were published in 1946.

Air Chief Marshal Sir William Gore Sutherland Mitchell.

Air Chief Marshal Sir William Gore Sutherland Mitchell (8th March 1888 – 15th August 1944), was born in Cumberland, New South Wales, Australia, on 8th March 1888, the son of William Broadfoot Mitchell, a brewery owner of Sydney, and his second wife, Edith Gore.

He was educated in England at Wellington College (1902-6), where he captained the Rugby XV. On leaving school he was commissioned into the special reserve battalion of the Devonshire regiment, and he transferred to the regular army in 1909, when he joined the

Highland light infantry. In common with other enterprising and adventurous officers of the period, he was seized with a desire to fly. He attended the Central Flying School in 1913, being awarded his Royal Aero Club Aviator's Certificate No. 483 on 17th May 1913, before becoming a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps.

On the outbreak of the First World War, Mitchell went to France with 4 Squadron as part of the original RFC deployment in support of the British expeditionary force. Flying the B.E.2 and Farman S.7, he took part in the retreat from Mons. As a Temporary Captain he was sent home to command 10 Squadron, which, equipped with B.E.2c aircraft, he took to France in July 1915, later taking part in the battle of Loos. After serving on the Somme, where he was awarded the MC and promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel, he commanded the 12th (Corps) Wing at Arras from the spring of 1917.

He was appointed to the DSO, mentioned four times in dispatches, and awarded the AFC. In 1918 he took over 20 Group in North-West Africa, and the following year he was awarded a permanent commission in the Royal Air Force, with the rank of Wing Commander. Later in 1919 he went to India, where he commanded 52 (Corps) Wing on operations in Waziristan (1922-23) and was twice mentioned in dispatches and awarded the CBE.

He was appointed Officer Commanding, No. 1 Flying Training School in 1924, Group Captain – Administration at RAF Halton in 1925 and Officer Commanding Aden Command in 1928. He went on to be Director of Training at the Air Ministry in 1929 before being made Air Officer Commanding RAF Cranwell in 1933, Air Officer Commanding British Forces in Iraq in 1934 and Air Member for Personnel in 1937.

Knighthood (KCB) in 1938 and promoted to Air Chief Marshal, he served in Egypt as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East, from March 1939 to April 1940 and was Inspector-General of the RAF from 1940 to 1941. Mitchell's final responsibility in the RAF demanded his zeal, leadership, and organizational skills, as he was based in Glasgow to oversee the distribution, installation, and speedy completion of the chain of radio direction-finding (radar) stations on the highlands and islands of Scotland. Described by the air minister as 'temporary work of exceptional importance', his task was completed by September 1941, and he was placed on the retired list. This enabled him to take up his new post as Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod in the House of Lords, the first officer of the RAF to be appointed to that post.



Mitchell was also commandant of the Air Training Corps in London and Essex and was at Lord's watching his cadets play the army at cricket on the day of his death. He died of a cerebral thrombosis at his home, 14 Eresby House, Rutland Gate, Westminster, London, on 15th August 1944, survived by his wife, and was buried at Putney Vale cemetery four days later.

Question 2

Mervyn C. Shipard was the highest scoring Australian nightfighter pilot of the Second World War.

Flight Lieutenant Mervyn C. Shipard was born at Albury, N.S.W. on 24th July 1917, and joined the R.A.A.F. under the Empire Air Training Scheme on 22nd July 1940. After initial flying training in Australia, he embarked in November 1940 for Canada. After further flying training he was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in April 1941 and was sent to the United Kingdom. On arrival he was posted to No. 54 OTU and in August 1941 to 68 (Nightfighter) Squadron RAF. He was later attached to Headquarters 50 Group RAF. Early in 1942 Shipard was posted to the Middle East and joined 89 Squadron RAF. In June 1942 he went with a detachment of the squadron to Malta, and achieved outstanding success while taking part in the nightfighter defence of the Island, during the period of most intense enemy bombardment. Shipard (together with his observer (radar operator) Flight Lieutenant D.A. Oxby) is credited with shooting down 13 enemy aircraft, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 16th February 1943 and the Bar to the DFC a week later.



Shipard (right) and Oxby (left) in front of their Bristol Beaufigther *Slippy Ship Mk. II*.

Shipard returned to the United Kingdom in July 1943 and was posted as a flying instructor to No. 54 OTU. After a course at the Central Gunnery School RAF, he returned to Australia in March 1944 and was appointed as a Gunnery Instructor at the RAAF Central Gunnery. In January 1945 he was transferred to the RAAF Reserve.

Question 3

Albert Kesselring was born at Markstedt, Lower Franconia, on 20th November 1885, the son of a professor. He joined the 2nd Bavarian Foot Artillery Regiment in 1904 as a volunteer officer cadet, and became a Leutnant of artillery in 1906. During the First World War he proved himself a first-rate artillery officer and in 1918 was seconded to the General Staff.

In the first years of the Reichswehr, Kesselring held a number of staff posts, and from 1930 to 1931 was the commander of the 4th Artillery Regiment in Dresden.

Kesselring had long been fascinated by air power, however, and on 1st October 1933 he was discharged from the army to take up the position of head of the Administration Office of the Luftwaffe, as yet still a secret organisation. Although in his late 40s, Kesselring learned to fly. By 1936, he was the Luftwaffe's Chief of Staff.



Kesselring wearing his Knight's Cross in 1940.

In the invasion of Poland, Kesselring commanded the Luftflotte I, and was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross at the end of the campaign. In the attack in the West he commanded the Luftflotte II, which also took part in the Battle of Britain before moving east for the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. Luftflotte II operated very successfully in support of Army Group Centre. Early in 1942, however, Kesselring and his air fleet were transferred to Italy

Command in the Mediterranean

In the winter of 1941, however, Kesselring was posted to Italy to provide much-needed support for the flagging Italian war effort in the Mediterranean. The idea had been for Kesselring to combine command of Luftflotte II with that of the entire southern theatre of war, but, in practice, he found himself restricted by the jealousies of the Italians and Rommel's determination to preserve his independence of action. It took all Kesselring's considerable diplomatic skills to establish a modus vivendi between the conflicting views and priorities of the Italian and Rommel - not to mention the demands made by Hitler from Berlin.

In October 1942, however, with the collapse of the Axis forces in the Western Desert, Kesselring was finally given the chance to effectively exercise his powers as commander-in-chief south. Now the only German commander to control units of all three fighting services, he was soon to show his mastery of the defensive battle.

Command – From Alexander the Great to Zhukov – The Greatest Commanders of World History, General Editor James Lucas, page 212.



Kesselring and Rommel in North Africa, 1942.

Realising the object of the Allied landings in French North Africa in November 1942, he airlifted German forces across the Mediterranean to create a bridgehead in Tunisia.

After the Allies had taken Tunisia and crossed to Sicily and then to Italy, the Germans fought a good defensive campaign up the Italian peninsula, superbly co-ordinated by Kesselring. By this time, Kesselring was derisively nicknamed 'Smiling Albert' by the Allies, but was known as 'Uncle Albert' by his troops.



'Smiling Albert'.

In March 1945 Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring was moved to the Western Front, to replace Rundstedt as Oberbefehlshaber West (Commander-in-Chief, West) in the hopeless task of holding back Eisenhower's Allied Expeditionary Force from the German heartland.

Captured by U.S. troops, Kesselring was tried, condemned to death and then had his sentence commuted as a result of ill-health.

Question 4

The 'Thach Weave'.

John S. 'Jimmie' Thach was born in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, on 19th April 1905. After graduation from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1927, he spent two years serving in battleships before entering flight training in 1929. Designated a Naval Aviator early in 1930, he received several flight assignments over the next decade and gained a reputation as an expert in aerial gunnery and as a test pilot and instructor.

When the U.S. Navy entered the war in the Pacific, fighter squadron aircraft strength stood at 18 planes. Operational experience, showed that more fighters were needed, to protect the carrier herself and to protect the attack groups composed of dive/scout bombers and torpedo bombers. Even when temporarily augmented to 27 planes (per carrier), there were too few fighters to adequately perform both missions.

Lieutenant Commander Thach led VF-3 ('Fighting Three') from USS *Lexington* (CV-2) in early Pacific actions, and from USS *Yorktown* (CV-5) during the June 1942 Battle of Midway.



Tactical Lessons of Midway

Since neither the USS *Enterprise's* nor the USS *Hornet's* fighters (from TF-16) accompanied their respective attack groups only *Yorktown's* experience proved instructive. First, only six Wildcat fighters accompanied the attack group and they were relatively ineffective against the Japanese combat air patrol onslaught. But even in numbers on defence, they did not do well as Japanese carrier dive bomber and torpedo plane crews fought their way through the U.S. combat air patrol of TF-17 (even though augmented by fighters from TF-16) to twice cripple *Yorktown* and, after a second attack, force her temporary abandonment.

The story of the fighter escort for the torpedo bombers and dive bombers from the carriers, with the exception of that concerning the *Yorktown's* group, was altogether dismal. Indeed, the small number of fighters from VF-3 that attempted to cover VT-3's attack on the morning of 4th June had found the Americans overwhelmed by the Zeroes. The only silver lining was the survival of most of the American fighters, a result owed in part to the successful implementation of the 'beam defence' tactic of Thach, a tactic later named the 'Thach Weave' in his honour.

'It is indeed surprising,' Thach wrote on the evening of 4th June 1942, 'that any of our pilots returned alive. Any success our fighter pilots may have against the Japanese Zero fighter is *not* due to the performance of the airplane we fly [the Grumman F4F-4 Wildcat] but is the result of

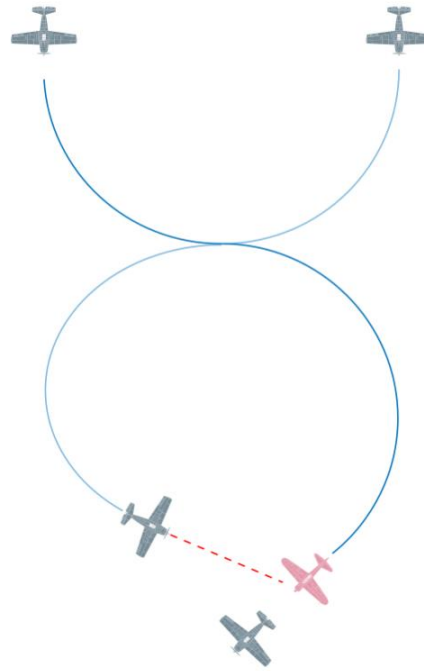
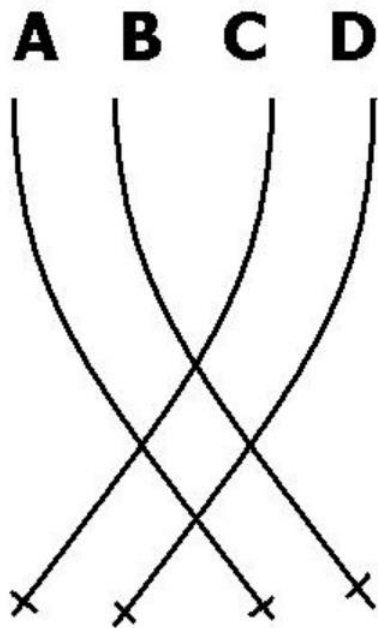
the comparatively poor marksmanship of the Japanese, stupid mistakes made by a few of their pilots and superior marksmanship and team work of some of our pilots. The only way we can ever bring our guns to bear on the Zero fighter is to trick them into recovering in front of an F4F or shoot them when they are preoccupied in firing at one of our own planes.’ Thach warned that unless the Wildcat’s performance was improved, the F4F pilots could not carry out their mission, which would have a ‘definite and alarming effect on the morale of most of our carrier based VF [fighter] pilots. If we expect to keep our carriers afloat,’ he concluded, ‘we must provide a VF airplane superior to the Japanese Zero in at least climb and speed, if not maneuverability.’

The problem was that on 4th June 1942, and for some time thereafter, there was no way to improve the performance of the F4F. The Vought F4U Corsair and the Grumman F6F Hellcat were under development, but a long time away from equipping first-line carriers. Admiral Nimitz, in reviewing Thach’s comments, noted an important distinction: in the Battle of Midway, the Japanese fighters outnumbered the American. Finding that 27 fighters (a temporary expedient) proved too few, the fighter strength was increased to 36 per carrier. ‘If the F4Fs were not equal to Zeros on a one-to-one basis,’ historian John B. Lundstrom has noted in his work *The First Team*, ‘Nimitz at least would see to it that there were more F4F-4s available to fight.’

Providentially, while Thach enjoyed 30 days leave at his home in Coronado, he met with Lieutenant Commander James Flatley, who had been the executive officer of VF-42 in *Yorktown* in the Battle of the Coral Sea and who was commanding the new VF-10, training at North Island. The two men, good friends, “freely exchanged experiences and ideas.” Flatley had, almost simultaneously with Thach, pondered fighter tactics in the wake of his own combat experience at Coral Sea.

“Our planes and our pilots, if properly handled,” Flatley declared, “are more than a match for the enemy.” He praised the F4F-4 Wildcat’s “excellent armament [six .50-caliber machine guns], protected fuel system, and greater strength...Let’s not condemn our equipment. It shoots the enemy down in flames and gets most of us back to our base...Remember the mission of the fighter plane, the enemy’s VF mission is the same as our own. Work out tactics on that basis. We should be able to out smart him...”

Thach spent some of his leave revising the section on ‘fighter tactics’ in *Current Carrier Orders and Doctrine*, U.S. Fleet Aircraft, Volume One, Carrier Aircraft USF-74 (Revised), and substituted two-plane sections and four-plane divisions in place of the old three-plane divisions. He also inserted sketches of the ‘beam defense formation’ and explained how it had proved successful at Midway. Thach’s work, Lundstrom notes, ‘offered the first steps in providing the Navy’s fighter pilots concrete tactics to counter fighters with superior speed and maneuverability.’



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Weave_plain.svg
 Author: Andy Kilroy

For those significant efforts, setting forth and describing tactics proved in the crucible of combat at Midway, Jimmy Thach would receive the Distinguished Service Medal.

After a period of instructing other pilots in combat tactics, Commander Thach became Operations Officer to Vice Admiral John S. McCain's fast carrier task forces, and was present at the Formal Japanese Surrender in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September 1945.

Thach served in several air training staff assignments during the later 1940s. He commanded USS *Sicily* (CVE-118) in action during the Korean War and USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVA-42) in 1953-54. Attaining flag rank in 1955, he held a number of important assignments, including command of the antisubmarine development unit Task Group Alpha in 1958-59, with USS *Valley Forge* (CVS-45) as his flagship. Rising to full Admiral over the next decade, Admiral Thach was Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Naval Forces, Europe, from March 1965 until shortly before his retirement in May 1967. He died on 15 April 1981.



Thach (right) teaches new pilots.

USS *Thach* (FFG-43) was named in honour of Admiral John S. Thach.

SYSTEM OF THE MONTH!

Brodie landing system

[With thanks to ACT Branch Member Graham Rayner.]

In the August 2022 issue of *LE GROGNARD!* we saw the smallest aircraft carriers in the Second World War. They were converted from Landing Ship, Tanks (LSTs) and could carry up to ten L-4 Piper Cubs, used for reconnaissance, to direct offshore naval gunfire, to help spot and correct the fall of artillery shells over enemy lines and otherwise help coordinate troops.

The L-4 Piper Cubs would take off once and land ashore at a location that had been captured and designated. However, they could not return and land on these mini carriers.

This limited the usefulness of these small aircraft carriers.

The solution

In late 1943, a U.S. Army Transportation Corps Captain by the name of James H. Brodie came up with a solution. Stationed in New Orleans and detailed to work supervising the loading of cargo ships with war materials, he sketched out a design for a boom and line system with a release that could hold a small aircraft fitted with a corresponding hook along the top of the wing roots.



Captain Brodie is on the left.

The Brodie system consisted of two booms suspended clear of the ship's side and 40 feet above the water. A reinforced cable was stretched between the booms. A hoist and sling device lifted the aircraft and its pilot onto a trolley attached to the wire, then a special winch pulled the aircraft back to the aft end of the cable. The pilot gunned the engine, and a clutch released the trolley. The aircraft rolled along the cable, picking up speed. As the aircraft accelerated, the pilot pulled on a lanyard. This detached the aircraft from the sling and it (hopefully) kept flying. For recovery the aircraft would fly parallel to the ship, hook onto a trapeze loop on the trolley, and be braked to a stop as it slid along the cable. Both take-offs and landings needed only 600 feet of cable and often less with strong headwinds. The rig's hardware weighed less than 4 tons, light enough for two trucks to carry.

This meant that by using the Brodie system, L-4 Piper Cubs and L-5 Stinson Sentinels could be launched and recovered in a very small area, without a landing strip, allowing it to operate from a clearing, a small field, or even the deck of a medium-sized ship.

Shipborne tests of the Brodie system were conducted on the merchant ship *City of Dalhart* in the Gulf of Mexico. Army service pilot Lieutenant C. C. Wheeler made the first take-off in late August 1943, and the first round trip was made on 3rd September 1943.

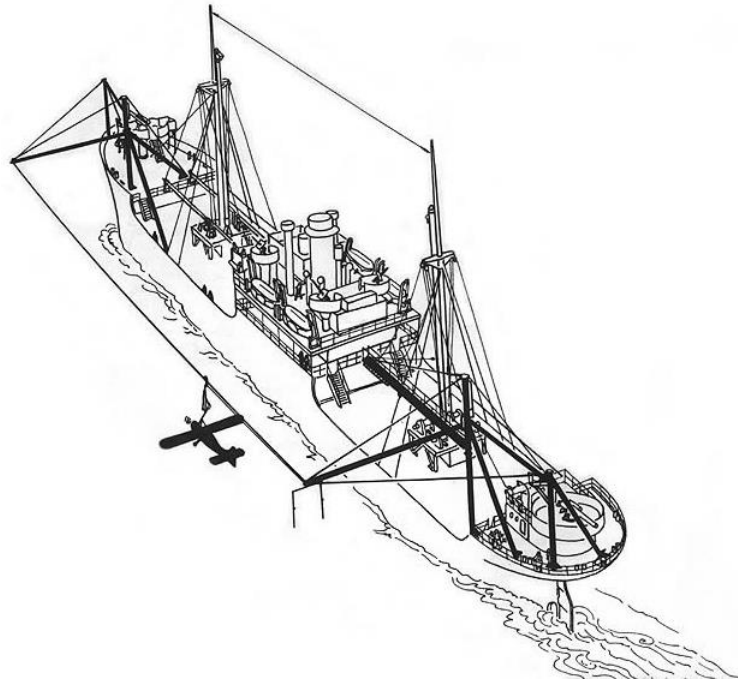


Image Credit: National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution NASM-9A001183

During 1944, *LST-776* evaluated an experimental catapult for launching light planes, as well as Brodie gear. In this system, a cable was stretched between booms to one side of the ship, and planes were launched from a quick-release trolley.

The Brodie system took some time for a pilot to master. The L-4 Piper Cubs were tail-heavy planes, which meant pilots had to routinely pull back on their yoke when landing. But doing this during a Brodie landing might cause the propeller to hit the cable, and over-correcting might send the plane crashing into the sea. Another problem was the moving waves. The masts and cable could swing around in arcs of 30 feet or more when the ship rode a swell. Also, sudden

strong crosswinds could slam the light plane into the side of the LST. During training, three Marine planes were lost in the LST-Brodie experiments, but fortunately there were no pilot casualties. Five pilots did qualify.

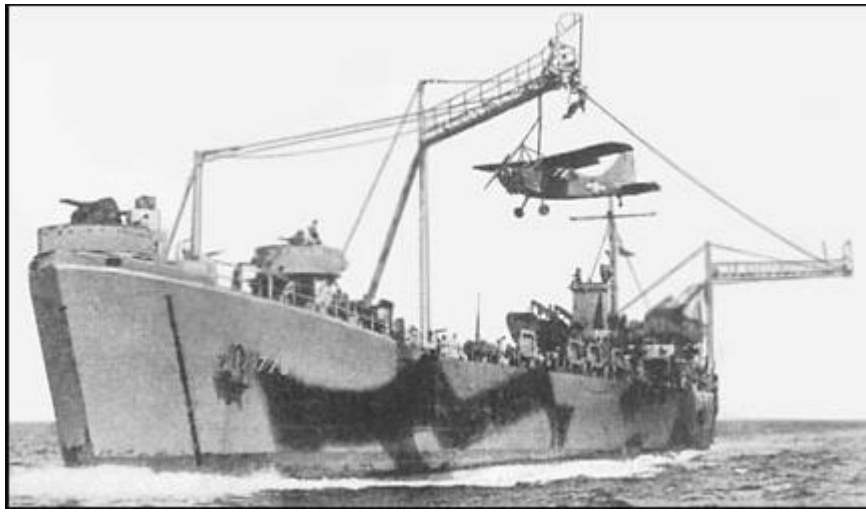


LST-776 during trials off San Diego when fitted with a light catapult amidships (which was removed before the ship entered combat) and the Brodie system.

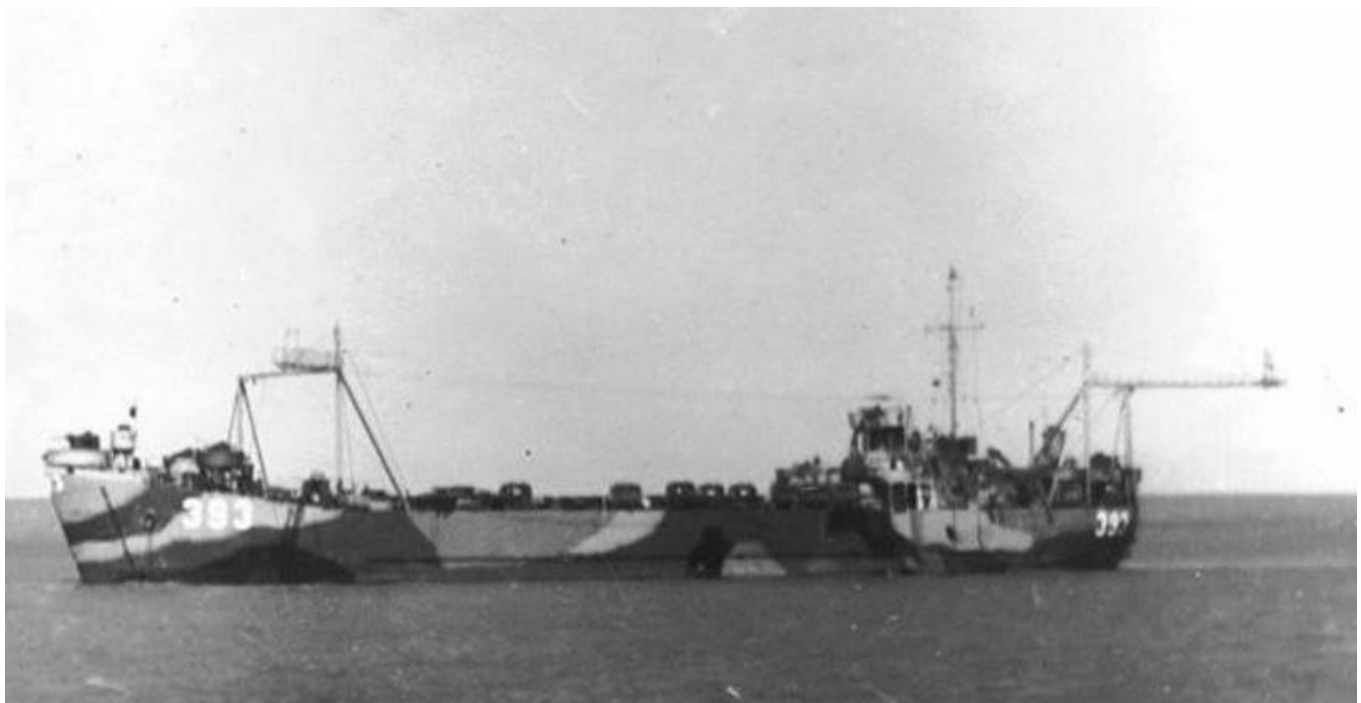
The Brodie landing system was fitted to *LST-776*, *LST-393*, and *LST-325* but only *LST-776* saw actual combat in 1945.

At Iwo Jima in early 1945, from D+1 to D+8, Marine artillery on Iwo Jima used carrier-based aircraft to spot and correct their fire. On the last day, 27th February, the Marines began using a captured airfield on Iwo Jima for observation aircraft. Six of the escort carriers offshore each had two Marine Corps Convair OY-1 Sentinels stored in the hangar; six more were on *LST-776*. One aircraft was successfully launched from *LST-776* on the 27th but a second plane was lost overboard before it engaged the launching cable. On the 29th improved safety precautions allowed launches to continue, and three more OY-1s headed for Iwo Jima. The other OY-1s were flown off the escort carriers without difficulty.

LST-776 again served as a Brodie carrier at Okinawa in April 1945, this time carrying U.S. Army L-4/L-5 observation aircraft. Army records indicate that 25 take-offs and landings were carried out before runways were available ashore; the only casualties in the Army's Brodie operations were two broken propellers.



Brodie filed several patents detailing a more robust, enclosed raceway for the trolley instead of a cable and other upgrades to accommodate heavier aircraft. After the war, he tried to sell his system in the civilian market. He envisioned rigs mounted on building rooftops for 'air commuters.' Aircraft could use the system for carrying mail and passengers from ship to shore. Forest rangers could have a simple way to launch small aircraft in remote mountainous regions and the system could be useful for emergency winter operations when airports were snowed in. But with the advent of the helicopter, Brodie's system never took off for post war military or civilian use.



If you have any ideas or items for *LE GROGNARD!* please contact the Editor.



Military Historical Society of Australia

Australian Business Number (ABN) 97 764 781 363

ACT Branch

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION [1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023]

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION FORM - Ordinary Membership: \$40

Surname: Title:
 Given Name[s]: Date of joining the Society:
 Postal Address:
 Postcode:
 Telephone: [H] [W] [Mobile]
 Email Address:
 Military History Interests:

I understand that the Constitution of the Society requires that the Federal Secretary of the Society shall keep and maintain a register of members which shall contain the name and address of each member and the date of becoming a member. I further understand that my details, as provided, will only be used by the Federal Secretary and by the elected office-bearers of the ACT Branch in order to maintain accurate records of my membership and for related general administrative purposes, and by the Society's Membership Officer and/or the Editor of the Society's Journal Sabretache for the purpose of enabling distribution of the Journal. In addition to information kept for these purposes:

I agree to my details being included on any electronic contact list set up [and maintained by the ACT Branch, and/or the Society's Federal Secretary, and/or the Society's Membership Officer] to disseminate information relating to the Society's activities at the Branch and/or Federal Council level, and to pass on items of possible general interest [including members' notices]: **YES or NO**

I agree to my details being included on any members' interests register [set up and maintained by the ACT Branch, and/or the Society's Federal Secretary, and/or the Society's Membership Officer] including my particular military history interests. **YES or NO**

I understand that I can revoke, at any time, any permission hereby given for inclusion on any electronic contact list and/or any members' interests register.

Signature: **Date:**

Please send the completed membership subscription form, together with Cheque/Money Order to:

ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia, c/o 165 Belconnen Way, HAWKER ACT 2614

OR: Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712. [Reference details should include full name, suburb/town and postcode.]

AND: Forward the completed membership subscription form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to: ACT Branch Secretary, Military Historical Society of Australia, c/o 165 Belconnen Way, HAWKER ACT 2614

OR: Pay by direct deposit to MHSA ACT Branch Account: BSB Number 633-000, Account Number 144-324-712 [with appropriate reference details, as above],

AND: Email a copy of the completed membership subscription form, together with a copy of the direct deposit receipt to: actsec@mhsa.org.au