



'By the Seat of their Pants'
Australian Airmen and their Machines 1915-1918

One Day Conference
9 am - 4.30 pm 12 November 2012
RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Victoria

BY THE SEAT OF THEIR PANTS



MILITARY HISTORY AND
HERITAGE VICTORIA INC.

**THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE
HELD AT THE RAAF MUSEUM, POINT COOK BY
MILITARY HISTORY AND HERITAGE VICTORIA**

12 NOVEMBER 2012



ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC	Australian Air Corps
AFC	Australian Flying Corps
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CFS	Central Flying School
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
KIA	Killed in Action
MC	Military Cross
MM	Military Medal
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAUK	The National Archives of the UK
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
POW	Prisoner of War
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RFC	Royal Flying Corps
RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

WING COMMANDER NICK LERAY-MEYER, AM (RETD)

RAAF Service – 1956 to 1983

Nick Leray-Meyer enlisted in the RAAF in 1956 as an engineering apprentice and was commissioned in October 1962 after completing pilot training at No 1 Basic Flying Training School and No 1 Applied Flying Training School. He flew Sabres with No 76 Squadron, conducted weapons trials at No 1 Air Trials Unit (Woomera) flying Meteor aircraft and Jindivik drones, instructed on Vampire and Macchi training aircraft at No 1 Applied Flying Training School and No 2 Flying Training School (RAAF Pearce), and trained Royal Malaysian Air Force fighter pilots on Sabres and CL41Gs 1969–1970. He converted to helicopters to fly gunships with No 9 Squadron in Vietnam 1971. He was Operations Officer with No 5 Squadron (RAAF Fairbairn) and served with the United Nations in Egypt and Israel in 1976. After attending RAAF Command and Staff College in 1977, he was promoted to Wing Commander and posted to Air Force Materiel Branch. He assumed command of No 9 Squadron in January 1979 and was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in June 1980 for outstanding leadership as Commanding Officer of No 9 Squadron. He served on the Directing Staff of RAAF Command and Staff College, January–December 1981. In January 1982, he was posted to be Air Adviser of the 13-nation Multinational Force and Observers (MFO)—a peacekeeping force monitoring the handback of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt (Camp David Accords)—having first been assigned to the formation of that force in Washington, DC.

Post-RAAF

Nick Leray-Meyer resigned from the RAAF in January 1983 to take up an appointment as Director Aviation with the MFO at its civilian headquarters in Rome, Italy. He returned to Australia in September 1987 and attended the Australian National University from 1988 to 1990. He joined the Civil Aviation Authority in 1990 and was appointed Manager of Operational Standards, based in Canberra. He transferred to Perth in 1995 and remained there until 2000, when he resigned (then a Regional Manager WA/SA/NT) to return to active flying. He then spent nine months flying S-76 and AS332L (Super Puma) helicopters for Bristow Helicopters from Karratha and Barrow Island, servicing offshore rigs. This was followed by three years flying Cessna 560 executive jet and Beechcraft 300 aircraft with Maroomba Airlines (VIP transport of WA Premier and Ministers). Nick moved to Melbourne in July 2001 and ceased active flying in 2003. He then worked as an aviation specialist consultant until 2005 when he was appointed Group Manager Aircraft Operations, Australian International Airshow at Avalon. He remained in that appointment until completion of the 2011 event. He is now fully retired from paid service!

Other Activities

Nick has been a member of the Vietnam Veterans Committee, RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association (Vic) since 2003. He was Vice President from 2005 to April 2008, President from April 2008 to April 2010, and is presently Immediate Past President. He is a member of the RAAF Association, and has been Vice President (Vic) since 2007. He is also Vice President of the Royal Park Veterans Golf Club. Model Trains – he is an active member of

the Australian Model Railway Association. Freemasonry - active member of a number of Orders.

Nick is married to Joyce (1962) and they have two sons (one in Sydney and the other in London) and two grandchildren.

DR CHRIS CLARK

Dr Chris Clark has been the RAAF Historian since 2004, and heads the Office of Air Force History within the Air Power Development Centre, Canberra. He received his PhD from the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in 1991, for a thesis on the development of Australian air power between the world wars. He has been a Visiting Fellow (Associate Professor) in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at ADFA since 2003. Over his career he has served in the Australian Army, conducted policy analysis in the Departments of Defence, Foreign Affairs, and Prime Minister and Cabinet, and worked at the Australian National University and Australian War Memorial.

Among the more than 20 books on Australian (mainly defence) history that he has published are *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39*, and a volume of the official history covering RAAF involvement in the Vietnam War. He has also written a biography of Frank McNamara, the only Victoria Cross winner of the AFC. Titled *McNamara, VC: A Hero's Dilemma*, it won the RAAF Heritage Award for Literature for 1996. For those in the audience who have not heard of it before, the book is still in print and available from the Air Power Development Centre (APDC) website. While at the APDC, he has been responsible for getting into print Peter Helson's biography of Air Marshal Sir George Jones, who apart from being a controversial chief of the RAAF in World War II (and beyond) was also a decorated ace from the AFC days in France. Published in 2010, *The Private Air Marshal* is also available from the APDC.

MR MICHAEL MOLKENTIN

Michael is a PhD candidate at the University of New South Wales where he is writing a thesis titled 'Australia, the Empire and the Great War in the Air'. His research will form the basis of a volume in the Australian Army's Centenary History of the Great War series that Oxford University Press will publish in 2014. Michael is a qualified history teacher and battlefield tour guide and has worked as a consultant for programs screened on the ABC and Chanel 9. Michael has contributed articles to the *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, *Teaching History*, *Wartime*, *Cross & Cockade*, *Over the Front* and *Flightpath*, and is the author of two books: *Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War* (Allen & Unwin, 2010) and *Flying the Southern Cross: Aviators Charles Ulm and Charles Kingsford Smith* (National Library of Australia, 2012).

AIR COMMODORE MARK LAX, OAM, CSM

Air Commodore Mark Lax joined the Royal Australian Air Force Academy in January 1974 and graduated dux of his class. After navigator training, he had operational, flight test and instructional tours before completing a number of staff positions. During his career, he was Base Commander of RAAF Base East Sale in Victoria and later, in 1997, RAAF Base Richmond in NSW. In the following years, Air Commodore Lax held appointments at Glenbrook as Director in charge of plans and future development. He went on to hold a number of posts in Canberra developing higher level policy and defence strategy. In 2006 he

was appointed to his final position—Director General Strategic Policy in the Strategy Division—responsible for strategic assessments, the strategic plans function for the whole of Defence and a wide range of high-level strategy and long-term planning documents.

Air Commodore Lax retired from the Permanent Air Force in January 2007 and for two years was managing editor of the *Australian Defence Force Journal*. In 2008, he was appointed to the Defence Honours and Awards Appeals Tribunal where he acts as RAAF specialist advisor for reviews into veterans' medal claims. Air Commodore Lax also facilitates planning and exercise activities for Customs and Border Protection Command and the Defence College. In 2011, he completed his PhD and was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia in the General Division for his work on military history and support for various veterans' organisations. He has published nine books on RAAF and aviation history.

Air Commodore Lax is a graduate of the RAAF Academy, RAAF School of Air Navigation, Royal Air Force Cranwell, RAAF Staff College, and USAF Air War College. He is also an alumni of the University of Melbourne, the University of NSW and the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He enjoys cricket, reading, writing and publishing on military aviation. He is also Vice-President of Canberra Legacy.

MR AARON PEGRAM

Aaron Pegram is a historian in the Military History Section at the Australian War Memorial, where he is Managing Editor of the quarterly magazine, *Wartime*. A recipient of an Australian Army History Research Grant in 2010–11, he is the editor of William Cull's wartime memoir, *Both Sides of the Wire: The Memoir of an Australian Officer Captured During the Great War* (2011), and author of numerous articles on the AIF's campaign on the Western Front. He is also completing a PhD thesis on Australians in German captivity during the Great War at the Australian National University.

MR GARETH MORGAN

Gareth Morgan served for over 35 years in civil aviation-related Commonwealth Government Departments, including 25 years in Aviation Security, where he was involved in the implementation of policies to prevent acts of unlawful interference to air services. From 1988 until his retirement in 2003 he was the NSW Regional Manager of the (then) Department of Transport responsible for the oversight of airline and airport security at major airports in NSW and Norfolk Island. In addition, he developed an aviation security program for the Republic of Vanuatu, lectured at International Civil Aviation Organisation courses and represented Australia at international counterterrorism conferences. Gareth is President of the Australian Society of World War I Aero Historians. He has been interested in the air aspects of the Great War since reading Biggles books in the 1950s, and since retirement he has written a number of articles on air operations during the war for the annual Journal of the Australian Society of World War I Aero Historians.

AIR COMMODORE TRACY SMART, AM

Air Commodore (Dr) Tracy Smart AM, BMBS, Dip Avmed, MPH, MA, FRACMA, FACASM, FAsMA, FCDSS, AFACHSM, joined the RAAF as a medical undergraduate in 1985. She has served as Medical Officer (MO)/Senior MO at bases around Australia, has undertaken overseas postings with the RAF and USAF, was Chief Instructor and Commanding Officer of the Institute of Aviation Medicine (AVMED), and Officer

Commanding Health Services Wing. She has had operational experience in Rwanda, Timor Leste, the Middle East and Lebanon, and was awarded a CAF Commendation for her role in a fatal air accident investigation in Malaysia. She attended the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies as a student in 2008 and was promoted to Air Commodore and posted into the dual roles of Director General Corporate Health Management and Air Force Health Services within Joint Health Command in February 2009. Air Commodore Smart assumed the role of Director General Garrison Health Operations in February 2010, and in this position manages health care at over 70 locations on Defence bases throughout Australia. She was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2012. Air Commodore Smart has authored 14 published articles, and over 70 papers for presentation at scientific meetings, primarily in the areas of aviation medicine, aeromedical evacuation, and military medicine. She is the author of 'Remembering Lieutenant Merz: Australia's military aviation medical officer pioneer', a study of the short life of Dr George Merz, dux of the first military flying course at Point Cook and the first Australian airman to die on military operations.