

# Fire Board

26/11/2023

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G'day All

Not a lot to report on any front. Very much "Hurry up and wait" till March arrives next year for the Hobart Reunion. Which is when bookings will open. It's the same on the farming side of things waiting for some rain. (Which has arrived since I wrote the above.) Farmers in northern Tasmania really think their throats have been cut if it doesn't rain often enough to be complained about. We are much better practiced at making silage between showers than having a month of fine weather & little silage to make.

Common sense would say I delay the next Fire Board from late February to late March so I can inform you of the reunion details. But it's not that common these days so parts A & B it is. It will be easy to print out that way.

**Thanks to those that updated their email address.**

**Changing your email**, please let me know so we can update your contact details. Especially if you use a work email & are changing jobs. So easy to lose touch and so hard to find you again.

On page 2 you will find a link to an online list of RAAF Fire Fighters.

**"Who"** is any obvious one for without this pair we would all have been short of a job at one time. I have added other info to the story just to show how far things progressed in such a short time, along with JFK, Len Beadell and the **F-111**.

Dave Pentland has organised to have a very nice looking plaque of the RAAF Fire Logo made to donate to the reunion raffle. Very much appreciated. Thankyou Dave.

Do we have any active serving members on our mailing list? Or can someone give me the address for the active fire sections. I would like to put a notice for the reunion on the notice board. I can email or post a notice if someone can supply an address, Thanks.

The RAAF Mirage Family – is something I thought some may be interested in.

**Hobart Reunion and Touring Tas.** - while here for the reunion? Some thoughts I had while Christine and I were touring for a few days and a repeating question on Facebook. Plus, the oldest stone span bridge in Australia.

**"RAAF Firefighter exposures to hazardous chemicals."** A short paper by Bill Hutton

**Facebook sites.**

RAAF Firies,                      RAAF Fire and Rescue                      Retired RAAF Firefighters Association.

**Web**    THE R.A.A.F FIRE SERVICE [🔗] (georama.com.au) hosted by Chas Adlard. It is Chas's site where you can find back issues of "Fire Board" and back issues of Pat's Newsletter's back to 2011. There's a wealth of information there.

smokey01.net/fire/ is the page for the Adelaide Aug 2022 reunion, with lots of photos.

Info on the Hobart reunion and copies of all Fire Board issues are at [www.raaffirereunion.com](http://www.raaffirereunion.com).

Glen Anderson

0438635159

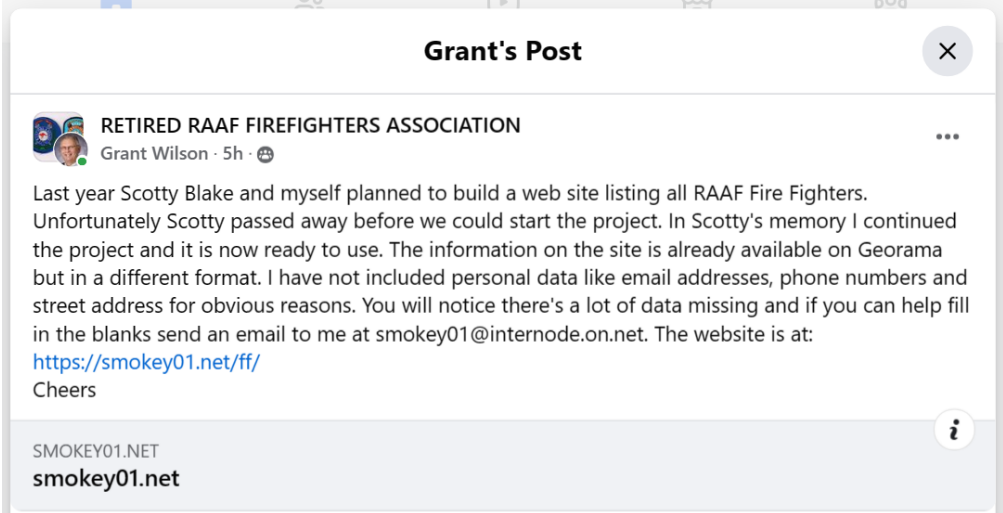
[glen@raaffirereunion.com](mailto:glen@raaffirereunion.com)

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From Facebook some weeks ago. Link under the screen shot.



<https://smokey01.net/ff/>

Remembrance Day Tamboorne Mountain - from Retired RAAF Firefighters Association FB page



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I can't tell you which FB page this came from I'm sorry but the information you need to order a copy is there.



Garry Fowkes

10h · 🌐



For all you blokes who worked on Mirages I'm reposting this for Peter Taylor. I've got his first book which is a compendium of all the mirages from 001 to 116 showing the history of each aircraft. I've seen some of the articles in the new book and it's a ripper. Stories and photos about the troops from all the squadrons, maintenance and ARDU. Hopefully it'll go to print next week.

GREETINGS ALL.

The book, "THE RAAF MIRAGE FAMILY" is ready for printing.

HOWEVER, I have only received 250 paid orders to date.

In order to afford to pay the printer I need another 150 paid orders before I can proceed.

For those that don't know:

The book contains 580 pages with just under 2000 photographs of; Aircrew (Pilots- every Mirage conversion and Fighter Combat Instructor Course, there are 60 pics), other commissioned ranks; ATC, CRU, SQN OIC's etc. Tech ground crews, other groundies including Metal Bashers, SEW, Surface Finishers (painters), Equipment, Store accounting, medical, Dental (Butterworth and Williamstown) etc, and the RAAF family at Butterworth and Penang leisure and sporting activities.

There is something in it for everyone. It is a great coffee table piece that lets your visitors know what you did in the RAAF during the Mirage era.

I believe every ex Mirage member will want one. Only 500 copies are up for grabs. So be quick to order.

Sold at printing cost price of \$62 and single books at \$18 posted anywhere in OZ, with multiple copies requiring a POST CODE for postage cost. (Books over 2.5KG, so two or more exceed the 5kg limit for postage bags).

To order a copy, contact me, Peter Taylor (EX FSGT SUMPY) via PM on Facebook Messenger or by email at [pcwh@bigpond.com](mailto:pcwh@bigpond.com).

Looking forward to hearing from you, Pete



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## Who

### **JFK - Sixty Years On**

On November 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, was assassinated while riding in a presidential motorcade through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, when he was fatally shot from the nearby Texas School Book Depository by former U.S. Marine Lee Harvey Oswald. (or so the official records say. Grassy knoll anyone?) The motorcade rushed to Parkland Memorial Hospital, where Kennedy was pronounced dead about 30 minutes after the shooting. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the presidency upon Kennedy's death.

**Len Beadell** – surveyor, outback road builder

22 November 1963: Is also the date marking the end of the desert road operations by Len Beadell and the Gunbarrel Road Construction Party.

### **The Wright Brothers**

**Orville Wright** (August 19, 1871 – January 30, 1948)

**Wilbur Wright** (April 16, 1867 – May 30, 1912), -

were American aviation pioneers generally credited with inventing, building, and flying the world's first successful motor-operated airplane. They made the first controlled, sustained flight of a powered, heavier-than air aircraft with the Wright Flyer on December 17, 1903, 6 km south of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, at what is now known as Kill Devil Hills. The brothers were also the first to invent aircraft controls that made fixed wing powered flight possible.

Their first flight was 37 m in 12 seconds, at a ground speed of only 10.9 km/h, with one pilot on board.

1970 - The first Boeing 747 had a wingspan of 59.6M. 22M longer than the first flight.

1943 -The Catalina flying boats operating the Double Sunrise flights out of W.A. flew for 27 to 33 hours.

1964 - SR-71 Blackbird operated at a top speed of Mach 3.2/3816KPH

1969/70 - the C-5 Galaxy maximum take-off weigh was 249,000Kg.

2007 – The Airbus A380 had a typical seating capacity of 525 with a max seating capacity of 853

1973 – F-111

Using technology, the Wright brothers could only dream of the first 24 General Dynamics F-111C arrived in Australia in 4 groups between June and December 1973. The aircraft had spent 5 years in storage after being handed over to the RAAF while problems with the carry-through box, part of the swing-wing mechanism were sorted out. The F-111C had the longer wings and stronger landing gear of what was later to be known as the F-111G used by the USAF Strategic Air Command. Four airframes were later converted to RF-111C' for the reconnaissance role. With many upgrades during their live the F-111C would serve for 37 years the longest- serving bomber/strike aircraft in the RAAF to date.

December 3, 2010, was the last day of F-111C flying after a display by 6 aircraft. A8-125 was the last aircraft to touch down that day. A8-125 had been the first aircraft to touch down in Australia 37 years before.

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## R.A.A.F Fire Fighter Reunion 20<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2025 Hobart, Tasmania

### **Bookings will open in late March 2024** Program

#### **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

*Welcome Drinks* -1800 to 1930 – Boardwalk Gallery.

Cost is \$40.00 per person. Food will be provided. Drinks will be available for purchase at the bar.

#### **Friday 21st March 2025**

*Peppermint Bay Cruise* - 10.30 from the Wrest Point Pier - \$170.00 per person



This return cruise on-board our catamaran is a great way to experience the city's harbour, beachside towns and wildlife on route to the Peppermint Bay Hotel.

Arriving at Peppermint Bay a short stroll will take you to our restaurant to enjoy our chef's set menu based on seasonal produce from our garden and of-course our local producers, whilst you soak up the views over the d'Entrecasteaux Channel and Bruny Island.

Unfortunately, this trip has increased in price like everything else at the moment. I am told no further increase is expected this financial year. As we can get a contract come March this should be our 2025 price.

Fellow committee member Jim Dent has done the trip twice & said he will be happy to go again as it's a great day out.

#### **Saturday 22nd March 2025**

*Dinner* – 1800 to 2200 - Boardwalk Gallery. Cost \$100.00 per person.

This will be a buffet. – Cost \$100.00 per person with a cash bar.

We are planning to have a raffle.

#### **Sunday 23 March 2025**

Will be an informal lunch at the Boardwalk Bistro, for those still around.

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## For those that may be touring while in Tas. for the reunion.

I write the following with towing a caravan in mind. In a sedan, if you like driving I'd even turn for Mole Creek at the eastern side of Cethana. Why miss out on climbing another mountain?

I noted while traveling home from the west coast (Queenstown) the turn-off to Cradle Mountain is also signed as the route to Sheffield and Devonport. **If you are NOT going to Cradle Mountain, Go TO Burnie.** It may be 17 km's shorter to Devonport via Cradle but, on the planner, I used it is 10min. longer. With a caravan on it would not be fun. Going to Sheffield, I'd still go via the coast. The road is very windy once past Cradle & drops from 590m at Moina to 130m only to go back up the other side of the Forth River valley to over 400m. The Forth Valley is only 6 Km's wide with 10K of road but takes 12 to 15 min. to drive in a car. The road to the west of Cradle MT was only completed in the 1980's so has nice flowing corners joining straights. To the east of Cradle, it's bullock tracks that have been sealed.

Travelling to Cradle from Devonport, take a look at C132 Willmot Rd. It's a steady climb with enough corners to make it interesting. This also works if you have visited Cradle and going to Devonport. Go straight ahead a Moina, don't turn into Cethana Rd.

If you are driving the Belvoir Rd. west of Cradle do stop at the Mt Black Bluff Range Look out. It's a slight uphill walk that is worth every step.

**The Western Explorer Road** from Circular Head area to Corinna, some of you may have heard about. It is the most asked about road on "West Coast Road Conditions" FB page. No, it's not sealed. We recently drove it in an AWD Outlander, the Lancer would have made it with no problems. Having said that there were potholes that could rip the wheel off any vehicle if hit at speed. We putted along at 40kph and climbed in and out of the holes at walking pace. Between Arthur River and Corinna there is nothing & no phone signal. The southern end is **very** narrow with a couple of very steep sections. So steep that just the hill is sealed. I can't tell you how long we took to drive the Western Explorer, but it was longer than the 2.5 hours to Corinna on the sign at the start of the Western Explorer. From Smithton to Corinna took us 5 hours including detours and stops. **Your vehicle/caravan combos may NOT fit on the "Fatman"\*\*\* barge at Corinna, so this is not the short way from Circular Head to the West coast, when towing anyway.** We met 6 other vehicles on the Western Explorer one was towing a caravan. So don't expect quick help if you need any. Calling on Ch's 18/40 on the UHF may be an idea to see if there is traffic around.

\*\* [Barge Access | At Home In The Wilderness \(corinna.com.au\)](http://corinna.com.au)

The "Fatman" Barge allows vehicles to travel from north or south, across the Pieman River. It is the only cable driven vehicular barge remaining in Tasmania.

The barge operates between 9am and 7pm in the summer (*daylight savings time*) and 9am and 5pm in winter (*outside daylight saving hours*). It operates 7 days a week. There is no need to book for this service. Charges apply and can be viewed below.

The crossing takes about five minutes and the **carrying capacity is 6.0 tonnes**, with maximum vehicle measurements of 2.46m wheel base and 2.50m body width. The **maximum combination wheelbase is 9.0m** and the minimum caravan under body clearance 0.2m. Please measure your vehicle/s to avoid disappointment.

Don't forget your van/motor home can be parked at Wrest Point if you are staying there for the reunion.

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**Richmond Bridge** – at Richmond, east of Hobart turns 200 on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 2023. It is convict built and still in use today, by a secondary road. The Campbell Town bridge on the other hand built in 1838 forms a vital link in the Midlands Highway, the main north/south road in Tasmania.

**TT-Line** have launched the first of two new ferries. Sprit of Tasmania IV is now at the fit-out dock with Sprit of Tasmania V taking shape in the vacated drydock. So there may be two new ferries on the run in time for the reunion.

[Spirit of Tasmania | Be a Spirited Traveller](#)

[Spirit of Tasmania IV & V - New Ships](#)

If you are thinking of traveling via the ferries with a caravan or motor home now is the time to make the booking so you can have maxim choice of travel dates.

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The following was written by Bill Hutton in early in 2021. The photo at the end I have added is from Google Earth. I placed the pin on the fire ground using the historical images and then forward to the most recent image.

## RAAF Firefighter exposures to hazardous chemicals.

Whilst there have been many reports and studies presented on the subject of 'Cancers and serious medical conditions suffered by RAAF firefighters as a consequence of their service and exposure to hazardous chemicals,' formal recognition of same has been an on going battle for many years. Note the efforts of Pat Mildren to seek justice for firefighters who are currently suffering and for the families of those who have passed away as a consequence of cancers and other debilitating medical conditions. Defence appears to be procrastinating on an out come with some reports on same being flawed in their scope resulting in non-realistic outcomes.

As a consequence of a study undertaken by Defence circa late 80's and early 90's, samples were taken from the fire training ground at RAAF Base Point Cook. A list of 132 + dangerous chemicals were found, a report tabled and a list of the chemicals provided. All the chemicals listed were deemed hazardous in nature with many being deemed carcinogenic and mutagenic. Safety Data sheets are available for these chemicals depicting a risk of serious medical conditions suffered as a consequence of exposure to same.

Whilst the same chemicals would have been found at the fire training ground at RAAF Laverton, \*samples were not taken nor an environmental impact statement presented prior to the site being sold for real estate purposes with houses being built on that site since (\*not to my knowledge). \***A survey was done attached.** Whilst a *clean up* of the site was undertaken, rumour has it that it was only superficial. This is of concern as the site contained the same chemicals as Point Cook as well as PCB's and electro plating waste chemicals. That fire ground was in operation circa 15 + years so there would have been some serious and on going contamination at that site. Occupied facilities have since been built on that very site.....

A colleague informed me that a question was raised by 'Defence' on the source of chemicals at RAAF point Cook. Most chemicals for the fire training ground at RAAF Point Cook were sourced from local petro chemical plants at Laverton and Altona *Nylex* being one such company (maker of plastics) who were only too keen to dispose of waste chemicals to the RAAF for fire training purposes. I was one of the firefighters who went to the sites to pick up waste material in 44 gallon drums (for Laverton, Point Cook bases and Fiskville on occasions). The chemicals were pungent and had the capacity to burn holes in one's overalls and cause blisters on the skin.

If one inhaled too much of the vapours, dizziness and nausea followed. Indeed, often post practice fire drills involving these chemicals, one suffered severe retching coughing up black sputum and blowing black mucous from the nose. Note, at that time 'we' did not wear breathing apparatus (60's and very early 70's). At times members presented to medical section as a consequence of the coughing etc but were advised to just 'breathe deeply it will clear shortly.' In other words "suck it up." Further (again) these were not recorded on our medical documents.

Please note that the fire practice grounds (PCK and Lav) were used as dumps for all sorts of waste including paints, herbicides, pesticides, hydrocarbons (various), AVTUR/AVGAS, electroplating wastes, PCB's and a myriad of waste chemicals from the RAAF Point Cook Academy – for example..

It was the same at most other RAAF flying bases but the main source of burning (training) fuel was waste AVTUR and AVGAS (benzene being a carcinogen).

Further, my colleague and I were discussing an incident wherein we were both exposed to Otto Fuel (google it). This left us severely nauseated, fatigued and with blinding headaches. We were advised by medical section to drink plenty of black coffee and take panadeine. The result of this was I had elevated LFT's for over 10 years. **Trying to explain this to doctors**



was difficult as there was no evidence of this in my medical documents. A claim was not successful as 'nobody' knew what Otto Fuel was which further exacerbated the issue. Ironically, you can google Otto Fuel now.

Defence is now being challenged by civilians as a consequence of damage caused to the environment and contracted health problems (various) due to AFFF (PFOS/PFAS) contamination to local water ways and properties. See a 2002/2003 report on the impact of fire fighting foams (AFFF) on the environment raised by Defence.

[https://wwwthe last link\).google.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwix6D4rafQAUMjQKH9V9VCFIQfggsMAM&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aph.gov.au%2FDocumentStore.ashx%3Fid%3D9772f52c-cf10-49db-bf86-5940f11dcccfd%26subld%3D407364&usg=AFQjCNFzuWill7D5yl\\_4\\_hzyr8ezCMIWEA&bvm=bv.138493631,d.dGo](https://www.the-link.com.au/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=4&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwix6D4rafQAUMjQKH9V9VCFIQfggsMAM&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.aph.gov.au%2FDocumentStore.ashx%3Fid%3D9772f52c-cf10-49db-bf86-5940f11dcccfd%26subld%3D407364&usg=AFQjCNFzuWill7D5yl_4_hzyr8ezCMIWEA&bvm=bv.138493631,d.dGo)

<http://www.defence.gov.au/id/Master/docs/Williamtown/RAAFWilliamtownStage2FactSheet14Sep15.pdf>

Those of us who worked with AFFF suffered dermatitis and 'other' health issues can now be attributed to AFF exposure. Indeed, the contamination at civilian sites (off base) can now be attributed to cancer clusters and other metabolic health issues – massive compensation is due with Defence accepting liability for the damage caused to the environment and people's health. (what about us?)

I recall being sprayed in the eyes with AFFF and I ingested same. This caused ulceration to one eye and swelling in the other. I had also had diarrhea for two days..... I now suffer dry eye syndrome as a consequence. This incident is in my medical docs'.

Please be aware that I was heavily involved in the Point Cook Fire Ground Survey and contributed to the 2002/2003 AFFF contamination report.

Just a short brief of events as requested.

William Hutton

Warrant Officer (retired)



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Vale

Rick Green	29/08/2023	1968 Course 18
Max Pahl	03/09/2023	1959 Course 06

**ADF Mental Health All-hours  
Support Line**

**1800 628 036**