



# PROBUS CLUB OF SYDNEY INC.

[www.sydneyprobust.org](http://www.sydneyprobust.org)

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*The Bulletin*

**Number 312 – July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010**

## Club Speaker

Our retired Obstetrician Ray Hyslop entertained us with an opportunity to reflect on just how lucky those of our vintage are to have made it safely on to this planet, let alone all the perils successfully overcome since.

## YOUR SOCIAL EVENTS CALENDAR

### Important Note:

You will notice below that one of our Social Convenors, Mark Jacobs, is no longer listed for taking social bookings. Mark along with Ian has done great service to the Club since being jointly elected to this position at the start of last year. Unfortunately health issues have now caused Mark to relinquish this role. Best wishes and appreciation from us all to both you and Claudette, Mark.

Ian has agreed to continue solo for the present, however we anticipate being in a position to announce a replacement for Mark at today's meeting.

### Thursday July 15<sup>th</sup> 2010 "Christmas in July with the Army", Victoria Barracks, Oxford St, Paddington

This truly is a "Christmas in July" lunch with a difference!

*Responsible*

*Party: Ian Richards*

Self drive arrival 9.45am, then 10.00am planned to start the day with a tour of the Barracks including museum. Sadly the Band is on leave, but we are fortunate to have it confirmed that we will be given an informal presentation "A day in the life of a soldier in Afghanistan" by 2 Officers recently returned from that troubled country. Then at 12.15pm pre lunch refreshments followed at 1.00pm by a traditional 3 course Christmas luncheon in the Officers' Mess. We are hoping to have COMD Forces Command and Commanding Officer HQ Forces Command join us for lunch. Cost \$70.00 per head, and with maximum numbers 64, there are only a few places left.

Important Note: You will be directed where to park by the Oxford Street Gate staff. When booking, ensure you inform Ian of car details as well as names of those persons included in the booking – he has to provide those details one week before the outing.

Bring sunshine! (or a broly and something warm).

### Thursday August 26<sup>th</sup> 2010 Visit to Fairfax Printers, 1 Worth Street, Chullora (just off Hume Highway)

(NB: NOT "News Limited" building further southwest on Hume Highway)

*Responsible*

*Party: Ian Richards*

Come and see the fascinating organization involved in producing our daily newspaper and magazines, once the copy has been finalised. It's a huge complex, highly automated from receipt of the large rolls of paper from the Albury mill to the finished product.

A self drive outing, arrive and park on site at 9.30am in time for morning tea. Tour starts 10.00am then at 12 noon we have a light lunch in the Canteen. Cost \$40.00 per head includes morning tea, the tour and lunch.  
Maximum number – 30 so book early.

### Early Bird Note for your diary!

Make sure you keep this date clear – Tuesday December 14<sup>th</sup> – our Christmas Lunch at Parliament House, Sydney

**OUR SOCIAL DESK, MANNED BY IAN, IS OPEN AT ALL MEETINGS FOR BOOKINGS AND DETAILS OF EVENTS. DETAILS ARE ALSO IN THIS BULLETIN AND ON THE CLUB WEBSITE [www.sydneyprobus.org](http://www.sydneyprobus.org).**

**CONTACT FOR IAN, INCLUDING BOOKINGS, IS AS FOLLOWS:**

Phone 9955 7582

Email [jill.ianrichards@bigpond.com](mailto:jill.ianrichards@bigpond.com)

### JUNE GENERAL MEETING

In the absence of our President, Secretary and Treasurer, Vice President Les Anderson chaired the meeting.

Present – 62 members and 2 guests.

Membership –

A warm welcome to new member inducted Sean Wareing

Membership stands at 131

Treasurer's Report – Acting Treasurer Derrick Docherty advised net cash on hand \$20,754. Twelve subscriptions are still outstanding.

### **SPEAKERS' PROGRAM**

Today Ralph Bott is to address us on “*The Sydney Opera House*”.

In August Guy Winship is to take us on “*Adventures in Micro Finance*”.

### Summary of June Address

**Guest Speaker – John Fletcher.**  
*War 11”.*

**Subject “*Flying with Bomber Command World*”**

Mervyn Finlay's introduction clearly showed how fortunate the world of finance is that John survived the highly dangerous bombing theatre of WW11. His various post war roles include CEO of Commonwealth Development Bank, Chairman of Finance Institute of Asia/Pacific, Consultant to the World Bank and Jakarta Development Bank, Rural Assistance Authority NSW, International Trade Conference Geneva and Editor of the Corporate Newsletter of Bomber Command, Australia and Great Britain.

John painted a vivid picture of the circumstances prevailing at the time, progressively leading us through an outline of the overall bomber section of allied aviation in this theatre of the war, then the role of his own 101 squadron, and finally details of crew make-up and conditions in his own plane.

He stated from the outset that views expressed in his presentation were his own, also that there was no intention to glorify war.

During the war there were so many airfields throughout Britain that it was commonly referred to as a land based aircraft carrier. Early on, the British bombers were mainly twin engined such as the Bristol Blenheim, Handley Page Hamden, AW.38 Whitley and Vickers Wellington, subsequently the 4 engined Short Stirling, Handley Page Halifax, Avro

### **Committee Telephone Numbers**

Vice President and Welfare - Les Anderson 9489 5368; Membership – Russell Stewart 9660 8324;

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Lancaster and others. He also mentioned the 2 crew de Havilland Mosquito, a fine light bomber which served in many roles.

During the war, Bomber Command flew 1,481 night operations, and 1089 daylight operations which included 307,213 night sorties and 80,163 daylight sorties (*For any of us uninitiated earthbound lads a sortie is "an operational flight by one aircraft"*). He indicated that they had to contend with Murphy's Law that "All that could go wrong did go wrong" - borne out by losses in March 1944 when 697 crew were killed.

Bomber Command was comprised of approx 125,000 crew of which approx 110,000 flew. Some 47,252 were killed on operations, 8,232 in accidents and 75 from other causes. The Command had airmen from the RAF, RAAF, RNZAF, RCAF (Canadian) and others of which 50% were Polish.

Recalling why he volunteered, he reminded us that in 1939 Australia's 7 million population was predominantly Anglo Celtic, partaking of the loyalty/flag school service each Monday, and when Mother England was at war, so too were we.

His training commenced in 1943 and included 8 months as a cadet, 3 months full time, a further 7 months specialised training then attached to a squadron. Training time varied depending on different type of roles, in John's case a wireless operator. He touched on the many hazards encountered during training – and that there was no time for support such as counselling as applies today. The system for crew selection resulted in great camaraderie with strong skills spirit.

101 Squadron's Bomber Station was based adjoining the small village of Ludford Magna from 1943 to 1945. Its motto is "Mens agitat molem" (Mind over matter). There were 30 crews on strength at all times. The routine provided a break after a tour of 30 operations. In October 1943 the squadron used for the first time equipment called Airborne Cigar or ABC to search out and jam enemy radio frequencies. This involved a German speaking operator accompanying the crew.

Enemy aircraft were not the only hazards encountered. An example is the equipment used for fog lifting in bad weather – the heat caused considerable difficulty in landing.

John outlined the various tactics used to evade searchlights and flak, including hazardous speed variations. 101 had the second highest loss of any squadron.

He used a slide to show the interior of a Lancaster and the relative positions of pilot, bomb aimer, navigator and wireless operator. He as wireless operator used to stand which proved beneficial on one occasion when a piece of shrapnel went right through the plane including the back of his seat. On another occasion standing he was able to look out of the astrodome and saw planet Venus which proved they were on a wrong course. This was simply conveyed to the navigator with no harsh words – team spirit was very high. On another occasion they were off course heading out over the North Sea and by the time they corrected and made land low on fuel they opted for the first strip they saw – a grassy light fighter runway. Fuel ran out just as they touched down with a pommie crewman saying "Its alright for you Aussies, but I can't swim!"

He considers Air Marshall "Bomber" Harris (known as "Butch" to the crews) a very effective operator. Harris believed that heavy bombing by both RAF and US was the only way to defeat the enemy. John is critical of how Churchill allowed Harris to take the blame for the much publicised Dresden raids – it was a legitimate target – also how the US heavy involvement was kept out of the publicity. An early estimate of civilian losses in that raid was 250,000 subsequently reduced to 25,000 – still high, but don't forget the 80,000 lost in Britain.

He had great respect for ground crew and showed slides of them in action finalising preparation of craft in the open in freezing snowbound conditions. They were such an essential part of the team.

In February 1945 they were required to take photographs of Kleve for Field Marshall Montgomery who had troops waiting to cross the river and a similar need at Cologne in

March. After a 3 minute level bombing raid, to be required to remain for a further 30 seconds taking photos seemed like an eternity.

John provided interesting comments on a number of raids including the above mentioned Kleve, Cologne and Dresden also Nuremberg, Pforzheim, and Helgoland. The squadron chalked up their 100<sup>th</sup> operation 6<sup>th</sup>/7th January 1945.

In closing he mentioned the Memorial to Bomber Command in Canberra, in remembrance particularly of those Australians who gave their lives in this conflict.

A fitting vote of thanks to John was proposed by David Barnett, soundly supported by all present.

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> AUGUST 2010 AT 2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR, UNION, UNIVERSITY & SCHOOLS CLUB, 25 BENT STREET, SYDNEY**

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