

Commemorative Parades Through Perth



Every year RAAF Base Pearce personnel are involved in marches through the City of Perth. The Coral Sea March in 1959 attracted vast numbers of citizens.



The WRAAF of 1959 from Pearce brought back to WW2, WAAAF, a great deal of nostalgia, as well as to members of the public.

1977 March through the City of Perth



On this occasion it was fitting that Sir Wallace Kyle took the Salute.



Aircrew from Pearce marched as a separate group on this occasion

Air Training Corps Cadets at Pearce



ATC Squadrons first attended camps at RAAF Base Pearce in 1942 and have continued to do so ever since. AOC, AVM I.D. MacLachlan, OBE, DFC, is seen here inspecting the Cadets at Pearce in 1956.

Like the PAF, the current cadets wear the same light blue uniforms



At the conclusion of ATC camps at Pearce there is always a formal parade where the parents, friends, and Service personnel are able to witness the parade achievements of the Cadets, many of whom go on to enter the RAAF.

The Parade is modelled on the RAAF Pilot Graduating Parade.



Air Training Corps of the Western Australian Squadron



The ATC, now known as the AIRTC, has had a very long association with the RAAF Base Pearce. In mid 1941 the first group of volunteer ATC Officer Instructors selected the command the four metropolitan Squadrons (No. 75, No. 76, No 77 and No 78) commenced their induction into the Royal Australian Air Force.

During October 1941 the enrolment of Cadets, aged between 16 and 18 years commenced and shortly afterwards training commenced. Cadets had to attend two evenings each week as well as Saturday afternoon and provide their own summer uniforms. The RAAF only issued the dark blue forage cap and badge.

Within a few months Cadets began to enter the Initial Training School (ITS) Air Crew Musterings and by the end of WW2, some 12,000 ATC Cadets from throughout Australia enlisted in the RAAF, which also included Ground Staff Cadets.

Late in 1942 an ATC Camp for Cadet NCO (non commissioned officers) entered RAAF Pearce wearing the newly issued dark blue RAAF uniforms while all the Base personnel were wearing their summer uniforms.

Throughout the war years many camps for Cadets were held at Pearce that included a wide range of activities. Aircraft inspections resulted in flight familiarisation in Operational Service Aircraft. In the post war years the Cadets were transported inter-state to take part in Cadet competitions.

After the war, many of the ex Air Crew and Ground Staff volunteered to become Instructors in the Air Training Corps, a great number remained for very lengthy periods.

Their civilian holidays were usually spent conducting Annual Camps at Pearce, and this continues to the present day. Highlights of the Pearce Annual Camps would be the Passing Out Parades that emulates the Graduating Pilot Wings Parade.

Many former ATC Cadets have entered the Royal Australian Air Force and progressed through the Service Promotion Ranks to positions of Senior Rank.

Cadets of Western Australia owe their introduction to Service life to the opportunity they had at RAAF Base Pearce. **The current name for the Cadets is “Australian Air Force Cadets”**



Search & Rescue at Perth



Caribou aircraft may be used in S & R but their presence now at Pearce is predominantly in an Army Support role.



Helicopters and Crews at Pearce are now a civilian operation as the RAAF no longer has a rotary wing capability. Crews are often ex RAAF.

Search and Rescue

Ever since the establishment of RAAF Pearce, aircraft have been used to locate missing or crashed aircraft, then direct ground parties to the site.

With the introduction of jet aircraft and the availability of helicopters, a new facility was established. Using Iroquois “choppers” RAAF crews provided a service that operated for many years. Currently, civilian helicopters with civilian crews provide the emergency service.

Based at Pearce is a Caribou aircraft from RAAF Amberley in Queensland, and manned by a crew from No 38 Squadron, who can also operate in an S & R role, but their major flight time is used providing training facilities for the Army and Special Air Service Regiment exercises.

In March 1974 a Macchi, while on a low level training sortie near Gingin, spotted a woman and a small child stranded in isolated bushland, beside a bogged vehicle many miles from assistance. The Pilot contacted Pearce and described the location and a land party was dispatched. With the Macchi circling the site the land party was able to quickly find the stranded woman and accompany her to safety.

On occasions, when a pilot has had to eject from an aircraft in the flying training area, the helicopter crew is able to render assistance within a short period of time.

September 1983 two Iroquois departed Pearce for Ledge Point to assist in the rescue of 52 crewmembers on the oilrig “Key Biscayne.” The towlines had broken in extremely bad weather and the oilrig was in immediate danger, as was her crew. With the added help by an Okanague S76 helicopter all 52 crewmembers were hoisted off the rig in highly dangerous flying conditions. By the following morning the oilrig had sunk. If it had not been for the courageous chopper crews the men on the oilrig would probably have perished.

The RAAF Iroquois were crewed by

FLTLT Warburton, FLGOFF Eldridge and SGT Ryan in A2-1020 along with FLGOFF Joel, FLTLT Sloane and SGT Brown in A2-1024.

On another occasion an Iroquois crew was involved in the rescue of a very ill Russian ship’s Engineer in extremely high gusting winds in stormy seas off the west coast. Pearce’s Medical officer faced the daunting task of being lowered to the tossing deck, attending to the patient, then both being winched back on board the chopper. From well out to sea the Iroquois was at its extreme operating range but the patient was successfully delivered to the Fremantle Hospital. The local newspapers and television stations heaped well-deserved praise on the flying skill of the RAAF helicopter crew and the RAAF Doctor. Fortunately, rescues of this magnitude especially over the ocean are rare, but they do reflect the professionalism of the rescue crews.

Iroquois and their crews gave public displays of their versatility and exhibitions with the Army and SASR personnel being deployed in a variety of ways. On visits to schools in Western Australia the helicopters and Crews created a great deal of delight and pleasure. For in that role, and the Search and rescue, [the RAAF now has NO helicopter capability.](#)















The Bell Iroquois was a very versatile aircraft and entered the RAAF in 1972. While at Pearce this “chopper” with very skilled crews, provided a vital support team by their presence



The Pearce “Chopper” was involved with a number of Rescues of seamen from ships and an oil rig is often carried out in very dangerous weather conditions. The RAAF no longer has helicopter capability but depends upon Civil Pilots & civil aircraft.

Search & Rescue at RAAF Base Pearce

		
<p>Iroquois Crews need to practise for</p>	<p>the real emergency.</p>	<p>The current Pearce Chopper Crews</p>
		
<p>conduct regular S& R exercises.</p>	<p>Used for dropping supplies.</p>	<p>Stranded Pilot activates a beacon.</p>
		
<p>A flash from a mirror is a great help.</p>	<p>Practise winching from land or</p>	<p>from the sea, lakes or rivers.</p>
		
<p>The Crewman looks completely</p>	<p>Relaxed while the Pilot is relieved.</p>	<p>Mission accomplished.</p>

Pearce Meteorological Office

During December 1940 the Meteorological Office was established as a war time measure to facilitate RAAF and Allied operations in the south of the State. Other offices were also established at towns along our west coast.

RAAF Pearce shares the distinction of being one of only two such weather stations still operating outside the W.A. Regional Forecasting Centre in Perth.

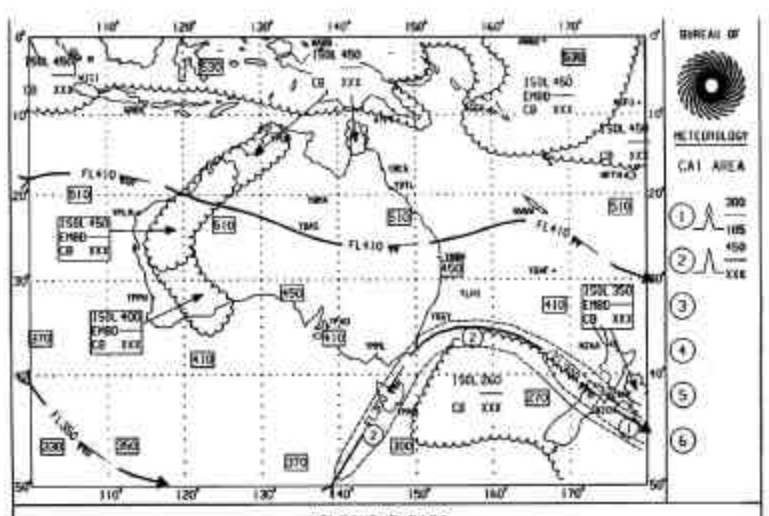
Pearce Met. Office is known as a Weather Service Office and is responsible for the preparation of forecasts for the immediate area utilizing materials provided by Perth and Melbourne Forecasting Centres. Two experienced Technical Officers, Morris Pavlinovich and Roy Langridge, carry out the bulk of the forecasting duties as well as performing routine hourly weather observations. One most important daily duty is the briefing of both Ground Staff and Air Crews.

The Officer in Charge, Mr Bob Mauer, is also responsible for teaching the meteorological course to the trainee pilots of No.2 Flying Training School.

Forecasts are prepared daily for flying operations within 50 nautical miles of Pearce for the Squadrons operating from the Base. Forecasts are prepared for flights across our continent or overseas together with emergency search and rescue missions.

A valuable asset to the farming communities is the forecasting and information service available from the Pearce Met Office.

Being able to access the data information available from satellites and Australian Forecasting Centres, the Pearce Met Office is able to provide the service that a busy RAAF Base needs, and has done for the past fifty four years.



Each day a variety of weather charts are provided by the "Met" Office. This example is a "SIGWX" (significant weather prognosis) used by aircraft operating above 20,000 feet and is computer drawn.

Major Structural & Facilities Additions



RAAF Base Pearce, Australia's Pilot Training facility has had many structural additions since the original concept was opened.



The original impressive entrance was closed in 1987, but it still can be used on special occasions when a Guard of honour is mounted. The original tall water tower no longer exists. The Base Headquarters is behind the tower.

Major Structural & Facilities Additions at RAAF Pearce

At the outbreak of WW2 there was an immediate need to create a rapid building programme to provide living quarters and classrooms for the influx of Air Crew trainees and Ground Staff personnel. When women enlisted in the WAAAF more accommodation and facilities had to be provided.

Post war era utilized the wartime temporary buildings but they were soon sold or demolished. With the proposed Advanced Training School, for Trainee Pilots, at Pearce, created the need for new brick accommodation buildings as well as permanent training school buildings. These had to be in place at Pearce before the first trainees moved in from RAAF Point Cook in 1958.

With expansion to the Base by the A.T.S. also came the need to provide more buildings for the expansion of the Ground Staff in a wide variety of musterings. Housing for the married personnel had to be also provided. Fortunately there was land directly opposite the Base available. This had to be further supplemented in future years, by providing bus transportation for members of the Base to take them to housing in the northern suburbs of Perth. This was to integrate RAAF families into the wider community.

Currently (1994) more new accommodation facilities for 60 Trainee Pilots is to be provided, and is nearing completion, while the existing rooms will be refurbished.

The Republic of Singapore Air Force has also embarked on a new Training and Accommodation facility together with storage and aircraft shelter structures to meet the need for a permanent base. The Singapore Defence Minister, Lee Boon Yang, opened this magnificent complex on 5 November 1994.

Two large hangers were constructed in 1938 and one is used by No.2 Flying Training School PC9 aircraft, and the other by No.25 Squadron Macchi aircraft.

During the late 1960's the Base was provided with large cantilever shelters for the training aircraft. During the same period a Satellite aerodrome, with a 6000 foot runway, and all facilities was constructed to maximise flying training for Trainee Pilots.

The original but impressive entrance gate to the Base was closed in 1987 and a more flexible entry/exit was provided to facilitate the newly expanded section of the Base. Two bends in the highway had also caused a traffic hazard.



After the outbreak of war against the Japanese in December 1941 the need for runways was apparent so construction was soon underway. This aerial was taken in 1942 and shows the layout as well as the slit trenches and aircraft revetments.



By 1962 the old war time runways have largely disappeared and replaced by another layout that removed the danger of the nearby Darling Ranges during landing and take off.

A new and larger Sergeants Mess was built and opened on 26 May 1972 by AIRCDRE S.W.Dallywater OBE. No.25 Squadron now uses the original Sergeants Mess building as its Head Quarters and training facilities.

In the southeastern section of the Base a large Air Movements facility was constructed in 1988/89 to provide facilities for large transport aircraft that regularly link Pearce with the rest of the eastern states Bases.

Refurbishing of the original Head Quarters building was recently completed, and the Officer Commanding and Staff have re-occupied the building that the very first Commanding Officer SQNLDR R.J.Brownell used in 1937/38.

The original runway was constructed with six inches of gravel and sealed with bitumen/sand. Three new runways were constructed by 1942, and during WW2 were enlarged and strengthened. In the post war period (1950's) the original runways were partially used as taxi-ways or removed, and a large runway was incorporated (180/360) to cater for the increasing size of transport aircraft. Runway 050/230 was also constructed during that period.

Major maintenance on Vampire aircraft had to be initially carried out in N.S.W. until Hawker De Havilland Ltd. here in W.A., won the contract. With the arrival of the Macchi aircraft a servicing facility had to be established in this state. Hawker De Havilland, at Perth Airport won the contract in 1966 as well as being commissioned to carry out the dismantling of Vampires for disposal.

In a new policy decision by the Commonwealth Government, a private Company, "Airflite" Pty Ltd, won the contract to service the Pilatus PC9 aircraft at Pearce Base using their own staff. RAAF personnel, who had been servicing the PC9 aircraft, were offered positions with the Company if they left the RAAF. A number accepted this offer. Airflite has fifty nine PC9 aircraft to maintain, which also includes those that are in Victoria. This trend of utilising private companies is likely to expand, but is believed, will not include combat aircraft.

Since Pearce was first opened in 1938 the Base has doubled its area to 767.7825 hectares and there has been a gradual expansion of facilities to meet the demand of the changing role of RAAF Base Pearce in the 1990's.

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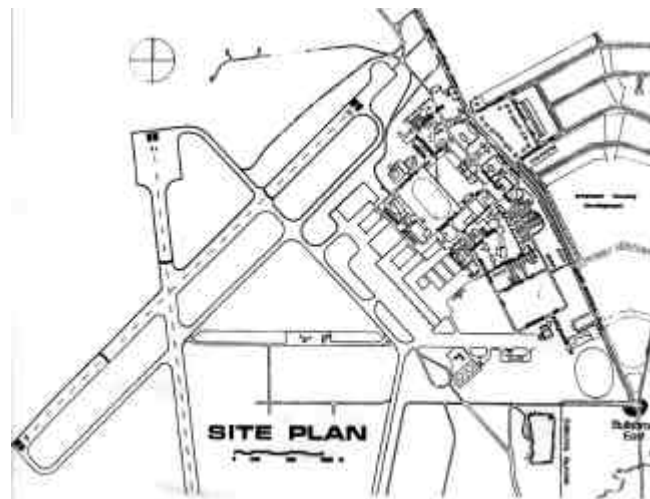
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**An old Plan of the
Base.**



Disappearance of HMAS Sydney

On 19 October 1941, but un-known to the Naval Headquarters in Fremantle, HMAS Sydney was engaged in a sea battle with the German Raider "Kormoran" off the coast of Western Australia.

When the "Sydney" did not return to the Port of Fremantle by 21 October as it originally intended, two more days were to pass before a radio search was instigated.

RAAF Station Pearce became involved on Monday 24 October 1941 by dispatching six aircraft on a sweeping search up along our coastal waters. The following day aircraft from No.14 and No.25 Squadrons were deployed to Carnarvon to conduct searches out to sea and along the coast. A number of life boats with men on board were found on the shore and some still out to sea, but unknown to the Air Crews at the time, the survivors were German sailors.

For a time the authorities believed the "Sydney" was damaged and could therefore be heading to Singapore or Java (Indonesia) for repairs.

Air searches continued until 30 November using Ansons and Wirraway aircraft from Pearce, with the assistance of three Hudsons from Darwin operating out of Port Hedland, together with Catalinas from Port Moresby and Townsville. No sign of the "Sydney", nor any crew member, was ever found and the circumstances of the battle are still uncertain today (1994).

So ended the very first intensive air operation by the aircraft from No.14 and No.25 Squadrons of RAAF Pearce whose Ground Staff also went with their Air Crews.

Within a few days of the end of the air searches the War with Japan commenced on 7 December 1941. One writer has in recent times, claimed that Japanese submarines did on occasions, visit sections of the coastline in W.A. during WW2.

H.M.A.S. SYDNEY (ex "Phaeton" a modified Leander Class Cruiser)

