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**Point Cook:
the crucible of Air Force
capability in Australia**



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Doctor of Philosophy

October 2019

Faculty of Arts

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies

**Submitted in total fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Melbourne.**

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that place can have an influence on cultural heritage. A site can have a profound effect on the cultural heritage of a community or institution through the influence it exerts on public memory and sense of community. It can infuse itself into the narratives that give a community its identity. Such influence is heightened in the military context, especially where events of significance form the basis for the origin stories of the organisation. While military forces in Australia often refer to significant places, they give little attention to investigating, documenting and interpreting the effect of these sites on their cultural heritage or, more broadly, on local communities near the site, and on the nation. This study examines the influence of place on cultural heritage through the example the National Heritage Listed military site of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base at Point Cook.

The thesis is an analytical case study that uses the site of Point Cook, and it comprises two principal components: historical enquiry and cultural heritage analysis. The approach is cross-disciplinary and places historical research into the site within a cultural heritage framework. The elements of intangible cultural heritage and site significance provide a framework for the historical enquiry into the site that, rather than comprising a single historical narrative, documents and expresses the history of the site through those two cultural heritage points of reference. The subsequent analysis interprets the site within four settings: the local community around Point Cook, the national setting, the international setting and finally the RAAF community.

This thesis finds that the RAAF base at Point Cook has significantly influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF. It pervades the public memory of the organisation, infusing itself into its birth narrative and acquiring attributed layers of meaning that act, in part, to form the identity of the present-day institution. Further, the site has helped to shape the culture of the local community, and it has played a part in the broader narrative of national development—in particular, in the roles that military and civil aviation have played in Australia's development. The research findings demonstrate that sites of significance can have an effect that is not constrained to the community associated with it and can be used to help shape local communities, as well as to provide richer detail in the national narrative.

DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

- i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy except where indicated in the Preface;
- ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used;
and
- iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps,
bibliographies and appendices.

PREFACE

I acknowledge the generous funding support provided through the Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship, which has offset the fees associated with this degree. I also gratefully acknowledge the support provided in the form of study time during the course of my employment by the Royal Australian Air Force, through the Air Power Development Centre.

With the concurrence from my research committee, I have relied on some research conducted prior to my candidature. This research was published in my 2014 book, *An Interesting Point: a history of military aviation at Point Cook, 1914–2014*.

I am married to Susan Campbell-Wright, with whom I have previously published jointly-authored works on heritage married quarters of the Australian Defence Force.

This study uses oral history interviews with RAAF members and their descendants that I conducted as part of research and publications prior to candidature. These interviews form a minor part only of the sources used.

As a serving member of the Royal Australian Air Force, I have been provided with access to unclassified documents and other materials that might not be readily-available to general researchers.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincere gratitude to my principal supervisor, Professor Kate Darian-Smith, for her guidance and unwavering support throughout my candidature. Her advice on my research and writing allowed me to develop the rigour I needed to complete this study. I could not have had a better mentor.

My assistant supervisor, Associate Professor Sara Wills, has also provided me with invaluable advice, especially for my writing. I have valued her detailed comments on my thesis, which have challenged me to express myself better than I might have. I thank the successive chairs of my research committee, Professor Antonia Finnane, Doctor Gerhard Wiesenfeldt, Professor Louise Hitchcock and Doctor Hyun Jin Kim, for their guidance and encouragement at critical points in my candidature.

I also thank the staff members and volunteers at the RAAF Museum for their support and encouragement during my research. In particular, research librarian Monica Walsh guided me through the museum's collection and helped me to find archival material not available anywhere else.

I am indebted to my colleagues at the Air Power Development Centre, especially Group Captain Andrew Gilbert, who allowed me study time during the last two years on my research and Wing Commander Lewis Frederickson PhD, who encouraged me and inculcated me with many of the attitudes required of an academic in a military environment.

My early research into Point Cook was always strongly supported by the late Wing Commander David Francis, who for nearly half a century was the champion of the site. He and aviation heritage enthusiast Mark Pilkington were the two who initially set me on the path of turning my research into writing. I acknowledge them with warm gratitude.

Above all, I am indebted to my family for their patience and understanding. My wife Susan has acted as a sounding-board and critic throughout my candidature, and I am grateful for her unstinting support.

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CHAPTER ONE –

INTRODUCTION: THE BIRTHPLACE OF AUSTRALIA’S MILITARY AVIATION

The accent of one’s birthplace persists in the mind and in the heart as in speech.

François de La Rochefoucauld (1613–80)¹

A flimsy Bristol Boxkite aircraft conducted a brief flight over Point Cook on the morning of 1 March 1914.² The flight, carried out in secret, was the culmination of many years of planning and preparation by Australia’s military forces. The flight marked the nation’s faltering entry into the select group of countries that intended to use the air as a medium for conducting warfare. The flight is now considered by the military aviation community as the defining moment that established a military aviation capability for Australia.³ Over the last century, improvements in that capability have had a significant effect on the development of civil aviation in Australia and globally, on the defence of the nation, and on the part Australia now plays in the Asia–Pacific region and further afield.

The Central Flying School—which began operations at Point Cook in 1914⁴—provided the basis for the establishment of the Australian Flying Corps, which in turn, developed into the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1921.⁵ The RAAF community recognises Point Cook as a site of immense significance to its cultural heritage and celebrates its legacy. Beyond the ranks of the RAAF and those associated with the service, Point Cook—situated twenty-five kilometres south-west of Melbourne, Victoria on the shores of Port Philip (see Figure 1)—is recognised as an important military site, worthy of preservation and national recognition.⁶

1. François de La Rochefoucauld, *Maxims*, trans. Leonard Tancock (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1959).

2. ‘Aviation: Army Airmen Fly’, *Argus*, 3 March 1914.

3. Fran Bailey, ‘RAAF Base Point Cook’, news release, 29 August 2003, <http://www.defence.gov.au/minister/14tpl.cfm?CurrentId=3081>.

4. NAA: A2023, A38/5/37

5. Commonwealth of Australia, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 28, 31 March 1921.

6. Department of the Environment, ‘Commonwealth Heritage List: Point Cook Air Base’, <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi->

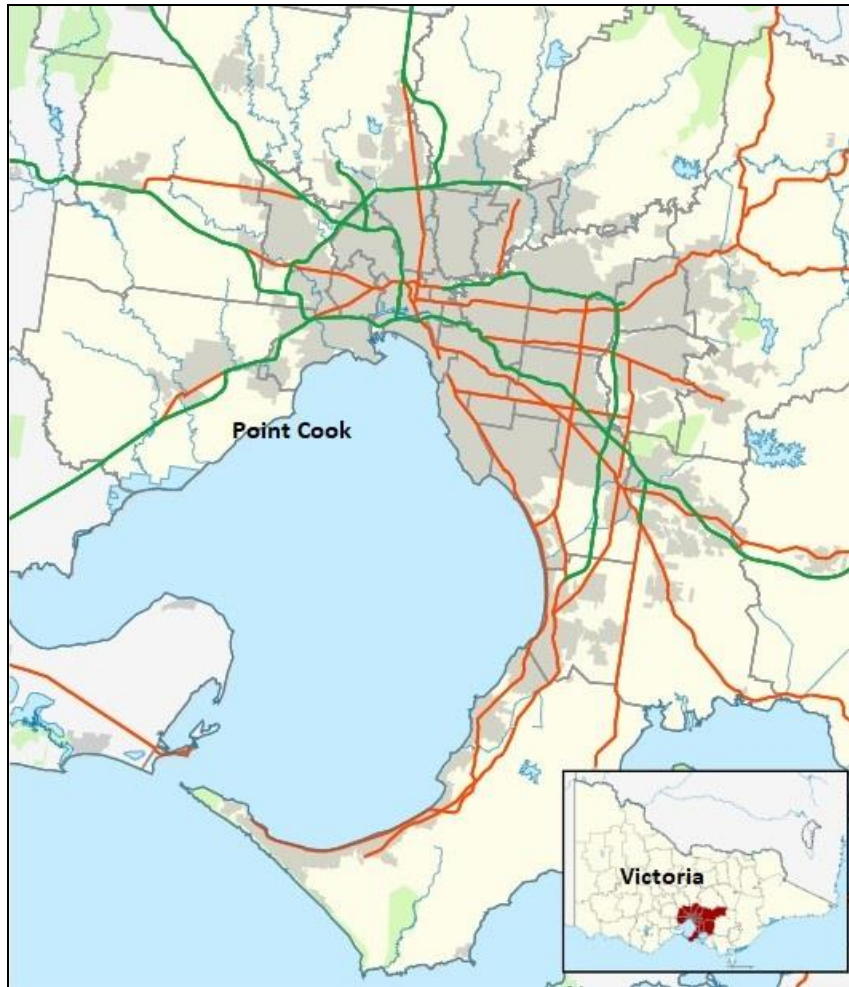


Figure 1: *Map showing Point Cook, Victoria (Copyright © Cassowary)*

Only a handful of histories of Point Cook have been written. Generally, they are brief—often an introductory chapter to a broader history or heritage assessment—and many have perpetuated long-standing misconceptions or are based on inadequate research. Much of the literature published over the last forty years concentrates on Point Cook as the founding site for the RAAF and its predecessor, the Australian Flying Corps, but gives little consideration to the enduring legacy of the site.

bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;search=state%3DVIC%3Blist_code%3DCHL%3Blegal_status%3D35%3Bkeyword_PD%3D0%3Bkeyword_SS%3D0%3Bkeyword_PH%3D0;place_id=105275.

No person who served in RAAF at its inception in 1921 remains alive, yet there is a strong sense of connection to the RAAF's earliest airmen by many who have since served Australia through its military aviation arm. At the centre of that connection is Point Cook—the often-stated 'birthplace of military aviation' in Australia.⁷ However, the RAAF has given little attention to investigating, documenting and interpreting the significance of the site; and it has not recorded Point Cook's cultural heritage or explained it to the local community and to the nation. This thesis aims, in part, to right this deficiency.

BACKGROUND

The central problem that this study seeks to address is to understand the influence of place on cultural heritage. If a site can have a profound effect on the cultural heritage of a community or institution, how can that effect be observed, understood and interpreted? It is hoped that an analysis of this problem through the case study of the influence of Point Cook on the cultural heritage of the RAAF will help, in part, to address this problem and, more broadly, to understand how a place affects military or institutional culture.

Such a case study could inform debate regarding the influence of place on cultural heritage outside of the RAAF through conclusions drawn about the influence of the site on the attitudes of the local community, as well as the wider implications of the site at a national level. Important considerations will be the effect of military sites on military culture generally and the factors related to place that affect the culture of military aviation specifically. Furthermore, international comparisons could be made regarding the influence of place on military and local communities in other nations, in each case seeking to inform the body of knowledge on the influence of place on cultural heritage.

7. Department of the Environment and Energy, 'National Heritage Places - Point Cook Air Base', <https://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/point-cook>.; Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF Museum Point Cook - The Heritage Gallery', <http://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/exhibitions/heritage.htm>.

As a discrete community within Australian society, the RAAF has a strong sense of *esprit de corps*; and its members, for the most part, hold its values, traditions, history and heritage in high regard. The words of Charles Merriam in 1931 in *The Making of Citizens* outline the situation eloquently:

All the great group victories he shares in; all the great men are his companions in the bonds of the group; all its sorrows are by construction his; all its hopes and dreams, realized and thwarted alike, are his. And thus he becomes although of humble status a great man, a member of...an illustrious group whose blood is in his veins and whose domain and reputation he proudly bears.⁸

While such an attitude might be less prevalent in wider contemporary society due, as discussed by demographer Bernard Salt,⁹ to the effects of globalisation, mass media and the growth of virtual communities, the *esprit de corps* of the RAAF continues to be reflected, to some degree, in this sentiment.

The three branches of Australia's armed services were grouped under the newly-formed construct of the Australian Defence Force in 1976.¹⁰ However, the RAAF maintains its customs and traditions separately from the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Army. The Australian Defence Force has not evolved its own overarching cultural identity with sufficient strength to rival the existing, separate identities of the three individual services. Recent increases in the frequency of joint training and exercises, and greater shared experiences on operations, have diminished the intensity of rivalry between the three arms of the Australian Defence Force, but cultural and attitudinal differences remain due to the different roles of the three services in the provision of military capabilities and their different cultural origins and evolutions.¹¹

8. Charles Edward Merriam, *The Making of Citizens: A Comparative Study of Methods of Civic Training* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1931), 166.

9. Bernard Salt, 'How to Deal with the Workforce of Tomorrow' (2016 Air Power Conference, Canberra, 16 March 2016).

10. David Horner, *Making the Australian Defence Force*, The Australian Centenary History of Defence Volume IV, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), 47.

11. Royal Australian Air Force, *The Royal Australian Air Force Leadership Companion: character, professional ethics, followership and leadership* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 2013), 14.

Since its inception in 1921, an estimated 400,000 men and women have served in the RAAF,¹² some for a professional career and others for short periods of service during times of conflict. At the peak of its membership, the RAAF was 186,000-strong during late World War II. The RAAF currently has 14,313 permanent members and 5499 reserve members.¹³ An unknown number of discharged or retired RAAF members belong to ex-serving associations, and many more reside in the Australian community without a continuing formal affiliation with the RAAF.

The site under consideration is a geographic feature of Port Phillip, originally spelled Point Cooke,¹⁴ and the matter of the omission of the ‘e’ will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. The RAAF used both spellings interchangeably until World War II, but for the sake of consistency and to align with contemporary usage, this thesis will use the (incorrect) spelling of Point Cook with one exception: the spelling for the geographic point has been retrospectively corrected and will be used in reference to it.

For much of the nineteenth century, Point Cook was known in Victoria for the breeding of highly-acclaimed racehorses.¹⁵ During the twentieth century, Point Cook was defined in the national collective consciousness by the RAAF base, and other activities in the locality were little known or discussed. That situation changed in the last decade of the twentieth century with the rapid development of urban areas to the north of the site and the adoption of the name Point Cook for suburbs ranging from close to the eponymous geographic feature to those that might have been more accurately described as Laverton South or East Werribee. To the minds of most people in the early twenty-first century, Point Cook refers to the sprawling housing estates in the western suburbs of Melbourne and no longer to the RAAF base. However, as much of this thesis deals with the period before urban encroachment,

12. RAAF Historian Martin James has calculated that 310,000 personnel have served in a permanent capacity, to which are added those who served in the various forms of the RAAF Reserve.

13. Department of Defence, *Annual Report 2017–18* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2018).

14. NAA: A705, 24/1/44

15. Jessie Serle, *Point Cooke: A History Prepared for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works* (Hawthorn: Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, 1983).

and for ease of writing, the term Point Cook will be taken to mean the RAAF base unless otherwise made clear.

The geographic Point Cooke and its coastal environs have significant natural and environmental heritage that has been examined by researchers in the fields of marine ecology and environmental sciences. Adjoining the RAAF base are the Parks Victoria-managed Point Cook Coastal Park, the Cheetham Wetlands and the Point Cooke Marine Sanctuary. The protection of the lands neighbouring the RAAF base under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, known as the Ramsar Convention, demonstrates their international natural heritage significance.¹⁶ This thesis focuses on the cultural heritage of Point Cook, and the natural heritage of the area will not fall within its scope. The Indigenous heritage of the district has been addressed by various researchers since the 1970s, and that research will be consolidated and contextualised for the site in Chapter Four.

The RAAF was officially constituted on 31 March 1921.¹⁷ However, it considers its heritage to have emerged from the Australian Flying Corps—constituted in 1913 as part of the Citizen Forces¹⁸—and the succeeding Australian Air Corps of 1919–21.¹⁹ Elements associated with the Australian Flying Corps carried out the first military flight at Point Cook in 1914,²⁰ and the centenary of that event was celebrated on 1 March 2014, only metres from the original place.²¹ Aside from that first flight, many events of historic significance for Australian military and civil aviation occurred during the subsequent century of military occupation of the site. Point Cook is still occupied by the RAAF.

After the 1914 commencement of flying, Point Cook settled into a routine of training pilots and mechanics for the Australian Flying Corps' participation in World War I. Following the post-war hiatus and the creation of the RAAF, Point Cook served as

16. The parks comprise part of Australian Ramsar Site No. 18 Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula (which includes the Werribee and Avalon Important Bird Area). The Ramsar designation for the site was listed on 15 December 1982.

(<http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/wetlands/ramsardetails.pl?refcode=18#>.)

17. Commonwealth of Australia, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, No 28, 31 March 1921.

18. Military Order 570/1912

19. Commonwealth of Australia, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, 31 December 1919.

20. 'Aviation: Army Airmen Fly'. *Argus*, 3 March 1914.

21. Royal Australian Air Force, 'Airshows', 2014, <http://www.airforce.gov.au/Interact/Displays/Air-Shows/>.

the sole operating base for military aviation and carried out the dual role of landplane airfield and seaplane base. Throughout the inter-war period, the base was host to numerous aviation ‘firsts’ and helped to establish the nation’s civil aviation system.

Point Cook entered World War II as one of only four operational military airfields in Australia,²² and it made a major contribution to the Empire Air Training Scheme through the training of flying instructors, pilots, navigators, air gunners, wireless and radar operators, linguists and many other specialised personnel.²³ The pilot and language training roles continued beyond World War II and into the jet age.²⁴ Post-war training of aircrew for the expanding role of civilian passenger services was conducted at Point Cook, and the first Government-owned airline, Trans Australia Airways, was established in the military facilities.²⁵

Professionalisation of the officer corps became a priority for the RAAF after World War II, and Point Cook took on the status of ‘Australia’s Air University’, with academic links to the University of Melbourne.²⁶ The RAAF College (later renamed the RAAF Academy), providing undergraduate education for initial development of junior officers, was complemented by the RAAF Staff College, which provided advanced training for senior officers.²⁷ The colleges operated alongside initial flying training, language training and a highly-regarded aviation medicine institute.²⁸

With the opening of the Australian Defence Force Academy in the mid-1980s and the consequent closure of the RAAF Academy, Point Cook’s role focussed on the non-tertiary-linked training of junior officers and on initial flying training.²⁹ The RAAF Museum, which began as an educational adjunct to the RAAF College in the

22. The four RAAF airfields in existence at the start of World War II were: Point Cook, Victoria (established 1914); Richmond, New South Wales (established as a RAAF base in 1925 after beginning as a civilian airfield); Laverton, Victoria (established 1926); and Pearce, Western Australia (established in 1939).

23. Douglas Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–42* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1962), 111.

24. Steve Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point: A History of Military Aviation at Point Cook 1914–2014* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2014), 151.

25. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*, 152.

26. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*, 160.

27. Doug Hurst, *Strategy and Red Ink: A History of RAAF Staff College 1949–1999* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 2000), 20.

28. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*, 159.

29. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*, 190–91.

1950s, commenced public displays and began its steady growth into the highly-regarded organisation it is today.³⁰

The planned divestment of Point Cook from Commonwealth ownership in the mid-1990s led to a decline in maintenance of the site. The subsequent decade of lobbying by activists, and indecision by the Government, finally led to the site being ‘saved’,³¹ but it remains in many respects a ghost of its former self. Due to concerns about the possible destruction of the site through urban encroachment and development pressure, the base was nominated for heritage recognition and was subsequently included in the Commonwealth Heritage List on 26 June 2004 (see appendix A)³² and the National Heritage List on 29 August 2007 (see appendix B).³³

Often-repeated Defence Force rhetoric says that Point Cook (shown in an aerial photograph in Figure 2) is the ‘birthplace of military aviation’ and the ‘cradle of the RAAF’. Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston (retired) said in 2003 while Chief of Air Force that, ‘Point Cook is the foundation on which we have built the organisation we are today’,³⁴ and he described Point Cook as the RAAF’s ‘ancestral home’.³⁵ However, it might equally be argued that the RAAF was ‘born’ in the office of the 1910–21 Minister for Defence, Senator George Peace—who signed the instrument authorising its formation on behalf of the Governor-General—or during any number of earlier events that contributed to the establishment of a military air capability for Australia. If the RAAF’s rhetoric has basis in fact, the case has not been clearly understood and interpreted to allow for genuine appreciation by those associated with the RAAF or the wider community. The fact that the first military flight in Australia took place at Point Cook is not sufficient justification for its status, otherwise Diggers Rest, Victoria—the site of the first aircraft ever to fly in

30. Royal Australian Air Force, ‘RAAF Museum’, <https://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/research/units/museum.htm>.

31. Mark Pilkington and David Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base: Australia’s Most Significant Aviation Heritage Site* (Kyneton: Pilkington & Francis, 2008), 19–20.

32. Department of the Environment, ‘Commonwealth Heritage List: Point Cook Air Base’.

33. Department of the Environment, ‘National Heritage List: Point Cook Air Base’, 2007, <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national/point-cook/index.html> (Australian Heritage Database).

34. Bailey, ‘RAAF Base Point Cook’.

35. Rebecca Codey, ‘Point Cook sale’, *Air Force*, Vol 45, No 16, 11 September 2003.

Australia³⁶—might now be widely celebrated as the birthplace of the nation’s aviation industry, but it is not.



Figure 2: *Aerial photograph of Point Cook RAAF Base, 2011 (Defence Support Group)*

The 2004 Commonwealth Heritage List entry for ‘Point Cook Air Base’ confirms the lack of clarity in identifying and interpreting the significance of Point Cook. After detailed descriptions of the built heritage, the Summary Statement of Significance states, in part, that, [t]he Base is important as a place, which is highly valued by members, and former members, of the RAAF for its symbolic, cultural and social

36. The visiting American showman, Hungarian-born ‘Harry Houdini’, successfully flew his Voisin aircraft at Diggers Rest, Victoria on 18 March 1910 after some earlier unsuccessful attempts at the same site.

associations’, yet the ‘Official Values Criterion G (Social Value)’ of the listing merely repeats this assessment and describes the supporting attributes as ‘Not clarified’.³⁷

An attempt to clarify the significance of the social value of Point Cook was made in the 2007 National Heritage List entry, which includes the following statement under ‘Official Values Criterion G (Social Value)’:

RAAF Base Point Cook was the birthplace of the RAAF in 1921. The place has a special association with Australian RAAF personnel and veterans and as the core training complex for the Australian Flying Corps and RAAF from 1914 until 1992. As the longest continuously operating military air base in Australia, RAAF Base Point Cook has been collectively identified by the RAAF for its cultural values. In 1952 action was taken by the RAAF to establish an aviation museum at Point Cook. The museum provides research and restoration facilities for historic aircraft and is involved in commemorative events such as VP Day. Many of these functions are fostered through the services of volunteer staff, including former RAAF engineers and flight crew.³⁸

In reality, Point Cook was more than a training complex. It was the sole operational base for the Australian Flying Corps and the RAAF from 1914 to 1926. An example of the role beyond training is that of providing reconnaissance aircraft for coastal surveillance following threats from German raiders in 1918.³⁹ Point Cook’s proximity to the pre-1927 national capital of Melbourne helped to ensure that it was the focal point of many significant aviation pioneering feats, military and civil. The convenient location of Point Cook allowed politicians to be involved in marking these feats.

The validity of the statement that Point Cook’s significance lies in its role as the core training complex—especially in the current setting—might also be questioned in light of the fact that most enlisted members of the RAAF were not trained at Point Cook, which was the preserve of the comparatively fewer, and more senior, commissioned officers. Further, while recognising the valuable work of the RAAF Museum, the 2007 National Heritage List statement does not fully identify the cultural and social

37. Department of the Environment, ‘Commonwealth Heritage List: Point Cook Air Base’.

38. Department of the Environment, ‘List: Point Cook Air Base’.

39. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Air Publication 1000–H: The Australian Experience of Air Power*, 2nd ed. (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2013), 13.

values for which Point Cook was included on the list. This thesis will aim in part to address that deficiency.

For the National Heritage List to describe Point Cook as the ‘longest continuously operating military air base in Australia’ is to deny its potentially-greater significance at an international level.⁴⁰ Point Cook was marginally predated by other military air bases worldwide; however, most do not continue to operate. The RAAF, in publicly-accessible websites, also claims that Point Cook is the ‘oldest continuously operating military airfield in the world’.⁴¹ This claim requires greater scrutiny, and the examples of Britain’s Hendon, Netheravon, Upavon, Farnborough and Eastchurch aerodromes will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis, as will examples of airfields in other countries, notably the United States of America. At the national level, however, Point Cook is the longest continuously-operating air base of any type in Australia, military or civil.

Cultural and social value must be given meaning by more than claims to superlatives of primacy or longevity. The events, motives and actions of the people concerned, the outcomes of their actions and the longer-lasting consequences must all play a part in the enduring cultural heritage of any organisation. To identify and understand these historical social elements of an organisation provides the first steps to appreciating its cultural heritage. The sheer concentration of events at Point Cook—especially in the pioneering days of aviation—lends to it an elevated status as a place of significance; and the fact that many of the events were the first of their type to be undertaken in Australia further elevates that status. For example, the first south–north trans-continental crossing of the country by air commenced from Point Cook,⁴² as did the first circumnavigation of the continent by air.⁴³ Unfortunately, the first death from an aircraft accident in Australia also occurred at Point Cook.⁴⁴

40. Department of the Environment, ‘List: Point Cook Air Base’.

41. Royal Australian Air Force, ‘RAAF Base Williams’, <https://www.airforce.gov.au/RAAFBases/Victoria/RAAF-Williams/?RAAF-GKWIoXZ3eHYJpOnu0DJtc9Pbfkj+70z6>.

42. Henry Wrigley and Arthur Murphy flew from Point Cook to Darwin in 1919 as part of the preparations for the arrival of the entrants in the London to Australia air race.

43. Jimmy Goble and Ivor McIntyre flew in an anti-clockwise aerial circumnavigation of mainland Australia in 1924, departing from Point Cook and alighting at St Kilda, Melbourne.

Point Cook serves as an example of a place of recognised cultural significance that is not well understood and interpreted, despite the high regard in which it is held by many people in Australia and internationally. Point Cook, therefore, serves well as a case study that seeks to understand and address the wider problem of the importance of place and its effect on culture.

TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in the study of culture has altered, often subtly, over time. Further, some relevant terms have loosely-defined meanings when used in non-academic discourse, popular culture or the media. The terminology addressed in this introductory chapter has an overarching relevance for the thesis, while other terminology will be defined in later chapters, where relevant to those chapters alone. The terms discussed in this introduction are: culture, cultural heritage, history and the past.

Culture

Founding theorist of cultural anthropology Edward Tylor provided an enduring definition of culture in 1871. His definition, stated in *Primitive Culture*, remains widely accepted and is:

Culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.⁴⁵

Tylor's definition resonated in post-war discourse in psychology, sociology and anthropology. Cultural anthropologist Ralph Linton stated that, '[a] culture is a configuration of learned behaviors and results of behavior whose component

(Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF pair completed round-Australia flight', airpower.airforce.gov.au/HistoryRecord/HistoryRecordDetail.aspx?rid=373.)

44. Basil Watson, a civilian pioneer aviator, died after his home-constructed Sopwith-type aircraft disintegrated mid-air while performing an aerobatic manoeuvre over the Australian Flying Corps camp in 1917.

45. Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, vol. 1 (London: John Murray, 1871), 1.

elements are shared and transmitted by the members of a particular society'.⁴⁶ Of note, Tylor and Linton's definitions of culture focus more on the *behaviour* of the community and less on the mechanisms of *transmission* of behaviour inherited from the past.⁴⁷

Cultural researcher and critic Raymond Williams defined culture as comprising three components: the ideal, the documentary and the social. These three components—while inseparable—sought to identify universal human values, the body of intellectual and imaginative work, and particular ways of life, with their attendant institutions and behaviours.⁴⁸ In tracing the evolving nature of the term, Williams notes that there is a growing assertion that culture is 'a whole way of life, not only as a scale of integrity, but as a mode of interpreting all our common experience, and, in this new interpretation, changing it'.⁴⁹

As a working definition for this thesis, the following is proffered for culture: the attitudes and behaviours that are characteristic of a defined social group. In examining the culture of the various communities to be addressed, this definition places the understanding of culture within the affective domain, of either groups or individuals.

Cultural heritage

Frameworks provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have provided the basis for most academic interpretations

46. Ralph Linton, *The Cultural Background of Personality* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1945), 32.

47. This view remains consistent with that of sociologist Talcott Parsons that, 'Culture...consists in those patterns relative to behavior and the products of human action which may be inherited, that is, passed on from generation to generation independently of the biological genes.' (Talcott Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1949), 8.) Likewise, Linton's view is consistent with that of anthropologist Ward Goodenough, who proposed a working definition of culture that, 'a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members'. (Ward Goodenough, 'Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics', in *Report of the Seventh Annual Round Table Meeting on Linguistics and Language Study*, ed. Paul Garvin, Monograph Series on Language and Linguistics No. 9 (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1957), 167.)

48. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 13–18.

49. Williams, *Culture and Society*, xviii.

of the term ‘cultural heritage’. UNESCO defined cultural heritage in 1989 as, ‘the entire corpus of material signs—either artistic or symbolic—handed on by the past to each culture and, therefore, to the whole of mankind’.⁵⁰ Use of the term ‘material’ appears to deny the notion of any intangible elements of cultural heritage. Of note, this definition does not include a notion of value in what is handed on.

The apparent deficiency of neglecting intangible cultural elements was addressed in the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, which defined intangible cultural heritage—noting it as a part of cultural heritage—without stating a definition for the broader concept of cultural heritage.⁵¹ Commentary on the subject of cultural heritage by UNESCO notes that the term ‘cultural heritage’ has changed meaning over time, and that, ‘[t]he concept of heritage in our time accordingly is an open one, reflecting living culture every bit as much as that of the past’.⁵² UNESCO does not yet offer an overarching working definition of cultural heritage. Nonetheless, it does offer a definition that, encompasses what it considers as the main categories of heritage, being:

Cultural heritage:

Tangible cultural heritage:

movable cultural heritage (paintings, sculptures, coins, manuscripts)

immovable cultural heritage (monuments, archaeological sites, and so on)

underwater cultural heritage (shipwrecks, underwater ruins and cities)

Intangible cultural heritage: oral traditions, performing arts, rituals

Natural heritage: natural sites with cultural aspects such as cultural landscapes, physical, biological or geological formations.⁵³

In an Australian context, the term cultural heritage is used extensively, but it has not been defined by the principal organisations or publications responsible for terminology in the field.⁵⁴

50. UNESCO, *Draft Medium Term Plan 1990–1995* (Paris: UNESCO, 1989), 57.

51. UNESCO, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 2003), Article 2.

52. UNESCO, ‘Cultural Heritage’, http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=2185&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

53. UNESCO, ‘What is meant by ‘cultural heritage?’’, <http://unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property>.

As a working definition for this thesis, the following is proffered for cultural heritage: anything transmitted by, or acquired from, a predecessor that concerns the altered environment, tangible artefacts or intangible elements of culture. In examining the cultural heritage of the various communities to be addressed, this definition places the understanding of cultural heritage within both the affective and cognitive domains, as cultural heritage could exist without the epistemic awareness within a social group of its existence or action; that is, it might be felt rather than understood.

History and the past

The work of historians, anthropologists, ethnographers, philosophers and others contributes to a society's awareness of its cultural heritage and its means of transmission. Therefore, a definition of history relevant to this thesis is also required.

Like heritage, the term 'history' is often used imprecisely in non-academic discourse, and it is frequently conflated with 'the past'. For example, the *Oxford Dictionary* provides one definition of history—amongst others—as 'the past considered as a whole'.⁵⁵ This definition—reflective of common usage—denies the concept that history is the product of historians and lacks the precision required for academic discourse.

Turning to academic considerations of the term history, historian EH Carr famously stated:

My first answer therefore to the question 'What is history?' is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the past and the present.⁵⁶

54. The *Burra Charter* does not provide a definition of cultural heritage; and Australia ICOMOS, which is 'primarily concerned with the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques' of cultural heritage practice does not provide a definition in its many forms of written guidance. (<http://australia.icomos.org>)

55. 'History', in *Oxford Dictionaries*.
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/history>.

56. Edward Carr, *What is History?: The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge January–March 1961*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 1987), 30.

Historian Jacob Burckhardt said that history is ‘the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another’.⁵⁷ While, social historian Arthur Marwick provides a discussion and concise definition of history as:

Historians do not, as too many of my colleagues keep mindlessly repeating, "reconstruct" the past. What historians do is produce knowledge about the past, or, with respect to each individual, fallible historian, produce contributions to knowledge about the past. Thus the best and most concise definition of history is:

The bodies of knowledge about the past produced by historians, together with everything that is involved in the production, communication of, and teaching about that knowledge.⁵⁸

Marwick’s definition deliberately contrasts with the popular notion that history *is* the past, stating that,

to keep clear of all the misconceptions which abound in historical epistemology we have to make a firm distinction between history as "the bodies of knowledge about the past produced by historians", and "the past" as "everything which actually happened, whether known, or written, about by historians or not".⁵⁹

Historian Pierre Nora simply states that history ‘is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer’.⁶⁰

As a working definition for this thesis, the following is proffered for history: the production, interpretation and communication of knowledge about the past. So, in essence, history is the product of historians—including the entire range from those in the academy to those writing for popular audiences—while heritage is the product, remaining in the present, of the past.

57. Jacob Burckhardt, *Judgements on History and Historians*, trans. Harry Zohn (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 168.

58. Arthur Marwick, ‘The Fundamentals of History’, University of London, 2001, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/marwick1.html>.

59. Marwick, ‘Fundamentals of History’.

60. Pierre Nora, ‘Between memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire’, *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring, 1989): 8.

Beyond utility within this thesis, it is hoped that consideration of the terminology used in the fields of history and cultural studies will allow more-precise use of the terms in both academic and general discourse.

RESEARCH RATIONALE

The material and cultural presence of Point Cook as a site worthy of recognition as a place of national significance is devalued without clear understanding of the connection between the history and cultural heritage of the military services at the site, along with a meaningful interpretation for its associated communities. These communities include the RAAF, ex-military and kindred associations, government at all levels and the wider Australian community, including recent and long-established local residents around the site. Urban encroachment and the competing values that accompany it contribute to the devaluation. Most specifically, as fewer members of the RAAF train at Point Cook, the sense of direct connection between the RAAF and the site will gradually be lost, and the strongest champions of connection to the site will be fewer. The wider connection between Point Cook and Australia's national heritage will weaken.

The small handful of histories of Point Cook are simple, chronological narratives and do not make a clear connection to living culture. These are reviewed in Chapter Two. Readers are left to draw their own connections between the past and present. For those accustomed to such practice, this is straight-forward. However, for most members of the RAAF, serving and retired, and for those with only a general interest in Australian cultural heritage, the connections may not be so apparent. The histories that address events and actions at Point Cook focus, quite naturally, on what happened in the past, as will be evident in the literature review in Chapter Two. Knowledge of past events and actions at Point Cook will only be of passing interest without being imbued with meaning for the present.

Taking the factors outlined above into account, comprehensive research into the history of Point Cook is needed to describe the details of past events and actions at the site. In so doing, myths need to be differentiated from the facts, and misconceptions need to be dispelled, as these abound in the histories and culture of

the RAAF. The historical research, in turn, needs to be interpreted to discover the connections between the history of the RAAF and the living cultural heritage within the RAAF and in the wider community at all levels.

Aside from dispelling myths and inaccuracies—and investigating the reason for their existence—this study also highlights once-significant actions that have passed from the RAAF’s cultural heritage. Some have been eclipsed by more-significant actions, and some have lost their relevance due to political reasons or even due to fashion. These forgotten elements of Point Cook’s past are worthy of fresh appraisal and interpretation. Whether they are accepted into the realm of commonly-celebrated RAAF folklore will depend on their relevance to the present culture of the RAAF and whether they contribute to the sense of connection between the RAAF’s past and the present day.⁶¹

The rationale for conducting research into the history and cultural heritage of Point Cook therefore is to provide an accurate, consolidated history of events that have an enduring effect on the cultural heritage of the RAAF, from which connections will be drawn to the living culture of the RAAF. The outcome will provide interpretation that is relevant and meaningful to the present organisation and others with a connection to the site. The resulting interpretation seeks to understand the wider problem of understanding how place can have an effect on culture.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the significance of Point Cook to the cultural heritage of the RAAF. It seeks to find out how the site exerts an influence on the large, dispersed RAAF community and to assess the site in terms of local, national and international heritage, in order to address the wider question of how place can have an effect on

61. The example of an eighteen-year-old RAAF Gap Year cadet in 2010 anecdotally illustrates the ready connection that can be made between history and living culture. As exemplars of Generation Y, Gap Year cadets were considered by their supervisors to care little for institutional culture, and on the face of it, the perception appeared correct. However, after hearing some historical events outlined in an after-dinner speech, the cadet told the author that she had gained considerable insight into the RAAF’s culture and, therefore, felt greater pride as a member of her newly-joined organisation.

cultural heritage and, in turn, on culture. This is so, because a sense of connection with, or respect for, a place can form a strong part of community identity—even when the community is large and geographically dispersed. This research is important, because, at a time of increasing personal interconnectedness driven by technological advances and the dilution of community identity that may result, the role of place in cultural identity is less clear. This study will, in part, explain the significance of place as an important element of cultural identity and argue for its continued relevance in the future.

As a means of gaining insight into the wider problem of understanding the effect of place on communities, the site of Point Cook in Victoria, Australia is the centre of a case study that examines the effect of place on the RAAF. The topic of this thesis therefore is: the significance of Point Cook to the cultural heritage of the Royal Australian Air Force.

The methodology used in this study is a cross-disciplinary approach within the fields of history and cultural heritage and places the historical research into Point Cook's past within a cultural heritage framework. The elements of intangible cultural heritage and site significance provide a framework for the historical research that—rather than comprising a single historical narrative—is documented and expressed through those two cultural heritage points of reference. The result of this enterprise is then interpreted within four relevant settings—the local community around Point Cook, the national setting, the international setting and finally the RAAF community—in the hope that appropriate interpretation provides ways of explaining and maintaining the relevance of Point Cook as a site of high significance for Australia's heritage.

The thesis lends itself to treatment in two main parts. In the first part, social history research describes the elements of Point Cook's past that have an enduring effect on the cultural heritage of the RAAF, presented as historical narrative. In the second part, that research is interpreted for a range of purposes and settings within the framework of explanation subjected to interpretation and discussion.

The historical research is aimed at gathering evidence of past military and civil aviation events at Point Cook—particularly from a social and cultural history perspective—and forms the foundation for the critical appraisal of their effect on the

cultural heritage of the RAAF and affiliated communities that follows. The aim of extending beyond the historical research is to provide an assessment of the significance of the site and the events that occurred in order to reframe the historical narrative in a cultural heritage context to provide interpretation relevant to the various audiences.

While a singular narrative history research approach might be employed, it does not allow as deep an exploration of the problem of the effect on place on cultural identity as is possible by the cross-disciplinary approach adopted. Historical narrative alone would not provide sufficient sense of connection between the historical events at Point Cook and the cultural heritage of the RAAF—reinforcing any sense of detachment from current cultural practice and not providing a sense of continuity of culture.

Further, different types of connection—or appreciation of significance—may be noted at different levels: military, local, national or international, and each requires a different interpretation. In the military context, *esprit de corps* and the reinforcement of cultural difference is important, while in the local community context, a sense of local pride and differentiation from other communities may be more important. In the national and international context, claims to the significance of Australia's part in world affairs may predominate. So, history presented under cultural heritage constructs is intended to provide a direct sense of connection to the relevant cultural heritage in each case and is the most-suitable approach for this research.

As an Australian Government entity, the RAAF has maintained good record-keeping since its inception. Many of those records are archived by the National Archives of Australia in Canberra and Melbourne, the Department of Defence in Canberra, the Australian War Memorial, also in Canberra and the RAAF Museum at Point Cook itself. This thesis uses all of those rich sources of information. It also relies on media sources, such as newspaper articles and reports about Point Cook, which are numerous and provide a rich, but less reliable, source of evidence. These sources provide cultural information and perspectives that are generally not available in the archival record. A small number of interviews are used—mostly taken by the author in the 1990s prior to the writing of this thesis. The subjects are generally now-

deceased retired members of the RAAF or their adult children. This thesis also draws on existing literature.

While not aviation-related, an exemplary example of published findings based on a similar research methodology has been found in *The Rituals of Dinner* by Margaret Visser.⁶² Her approach combines historical research with a strong cultural heritage understanding as she presents the results of her research into eating practices across recorded history and in many nations and cultures. Another exemplary example of cross-cultural research used to inform this study is *Mr Bligh's Bad Language* by Greg Denning,⁶³ in which he combines the historical research into the events surrounding the mutiny on the *Bounty* with cultural and psychological considerations. In each case, a clear willingness to express well-considered opinion based on sound reasoning is evident, and the authors synthesise many sources to form a cohesive historical and cultural heritage narrative that addresses problems wider than their topic.

Scant previous research has been undertaken into the cultural heritage of the RAAF. This may be because aviation is underpinned by technology, and those attracted to it tend to think more about the future than the past and are often not consciously aware of the effects of their heritage on their own skills, attitudes and behaviours. The author of this thesis is a long-serving member of the RAAF and therefore may be subject to potential bias caused by inculturation. However, in an attempt to mitigate against bias, he draws on his long-term awareness of this potential and has been observant, and often critical, of the culture of the RAAF. This positionality aims to allow a critical and quasi-external perspective to be combined with an internal understanding of the organisation and its culture. With a paucity of previous research in this area, this thesis provides an initial study of the cultural heritage of the RAAF that may lead to further analysis in future.

62. Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, & Meaning of Table Manners* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1991).

63. Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1992).

OUTLINE OF THESIS PARTS AND CHAPTERS

This thesis is presented in two parts. Part One reviews the extant literature and then documents key elements of Point Cook's past. It focuses specifically on those elements that have an enduring effect on the cultural heritage of the RAAF. It draws on historical research that has a bearing on the cultural heritage constructs of intangible heritage and site significance. Part Two takes a cultural heritage perspective and presents an interpretation and discussion of the cultural heritage significance of Point Cook.

Within this broad schema, Part One begins with Chapter Two, which reviews the extant literature relating to Point Cook. The chapter seeks to investigate what research has already been reported, or historical literature written, about the history and cultural heritage of Point Cook. It seeks to determine whether the extant literature about Point Cook is sufficient to draw conclusions about the significance of the site, and concludes that it is not, thus showing the need for a comprehensive historical examination of the military presence at the site.

Chapter Three documents the intangible historical elements of Point Cook's past. The chapter describes the events of significance for Australian aviation—military and civil—that occurred at Point Cook during the military occupation of the site, highlighting that many events of significance in Australian aviation occurred at the site and are worthy of further examination as elements of the cultural heritage of the RAAF and wider community.

Chapter Four examines the physical site and its environmental and built heritage. The chapter describes the natural environment at Point Cook and its transformation during early human existence at the site, before examining how the built environment developed during the period of its military ownership. The chapter concludes that the various uses of the site over time were responses to the land's ability to provide for each subsequent communities' needs and that the largely-intact military built environment reflects the evolution of military aviation operations and training in Australia.

Part Two begins with Chapter Five, which discusses and interprets the preceding historical research to examine the local, national and international significance of Point Cook. The chapter seeks to investigate how Point Cook has influenced the local communities that have surrounded it since military occupation and to determine the significance Point Cook holds for Australia and internationally in the present day. It concludes that, throughout the evolution of the military uses and the changes in the demographic nature of the surrounding community, the relationship between the community and the RAAF has been mutually-supportive and beneficial.

Chapter Six discusses and interprets the intangible cultural heritage and built environment of the site for the RAAF community. The chapter seeks to determine how and to what extent Point Cook has influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF, arguing that Point Cook has pervaded the public memory of the RAAF and influenced the cultural heritage of the institution significantly.

Chapter Seven outlines the findings of the thesis, before determining its implications and placing it in the literature. The chapter concludes by identifying further possibilities for research.

CONCLUSION

Since 1921, hundreds of thousands of people have served in the RAAF, and their actions and the built heritage they have left behind continue to have an effect on the cultural heritage of the institution. Point Cook looms large in the collective memory of the RAAF; however, the inability of the RAAF to articulate the significance of Point Cook points to a lack of codifying and interpreting the history and cultural significance of the site. This, in turn, makes it an ideal subject for a case study that helps to understand the problem of the effect of place on culture.

PART ONE

**LITERATURE REVIEW
AND
A HISTORY OF POINT COOK**

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of literature is to turn blood into ink.

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888–1965)¹

This chapter seeks to answer two preliminary research questions: what research reports or literature already exist about the history or cultural heritage of Point Cook; and is the extant literature sufficient to draw conclusions about the significance of the site. Two corpuses need to be investigated: histories of Point Cook, especially those that treat military activity at the site; and writings on military or aviation cultural heritage with relevance for Point Cook.

Recent scholarly literature relating directly to the history or cultural heritage of Point Cook is scant. Many publications have coincided with significant anniversaries for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and most of these works were written for a non-academic readership. The earliest written works are most-often autobiographies and provide useful, if sometimes unsubstantiated, accounts that inform the RAAF's social and organisational history. Point Cook was a transitory place for many personnel who served there, and while cognisant of its heritage while serving there, their activities and experiences at Point Cook were usually a lesser part of a wider career.

The literature selected for this review takes the sparse amount of available histories of Point Cook into account. Some literature is more relevant and useful than others, but an attempt will be made to identify and evaluate all suitable items. The few local histories that discuss the geographical place of Point Cook usually do so in the context of the wider Wyndham region—of which Point Cook is a part—where the RAAF activity is only a minor consideration. The scope of this review does not include general literature regarding cultural heritage theory, heritage practice or memory studies, focusing instead on works that interpret the cultural heritage of

1. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the relation of criticism to poetry in England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 154.

Point Cook. General literature in the fields of cultural heritage and memory will be discussed in Chapters Five and Six.

OFFICIAL MILITARY HISTORIES

The most-recent official history of the RAAF is that of Alan Stephens, official RAAF Historian 1996–2004, in his 2001 *The Royal Australian Air Force*.² Stephens served in the RAAF and held an operational command during the Vietnam War. The work is typical of official histories, in that it is comprehensive and highly-detailed, acting as more of a reference source of official information about the RAAF's past than a narrative history. The first two chapters of his history cover the Australian Flying Corps and 'The Flying Club', as Point Cook in the inter-war years has occasionally been dubbed, and provide excellent, broad coverage of the formation and operations of the Australian Flying Corps and the early RAAF with relevance to Point Cook. Despite his extensive experience as a researcher and historian, Stephens—prepared to point out the errors of others—makes at least one error regarding Point Cook, when he deals with the arrival of the first aircraft at the base. Chapter Four of this thesis will address the matter in detail.

The deeds of military aviators in wartime attract greater attention than those in peacetime; and while participation in the two world wars has been written about frequently, the post– World War II demobilisation, the subsequent lull and the ensuing engagements in Berlin, Malta, Japan, Korea and other parts of Southeast Asia were not addressed comprehensively in academic history until Stephens wrote his first official history, *Going Solo*, in 1995.³ This historical study of the post-war RAAF considers most aspects of the service, and the sections on the RAAF College, the RAAF Academy and the system of flying training are particularly relevant to Point Cook. These two official histories are complementary works that cover the early and late activities at Point Cook; however, activities at the site during World War II are not addressed.

2. Alan Stephens, *The Royal Australian Air Force*, The Australian Centenary History of Defence. Vol. II, (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001).

3. Alan Stephens, *Going Solo: the Royal Australian Air Force 1946–1971* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1995).

The unattributed *The Golden Years* was the official 1971 publication to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the RAAF.⁴ The work provides a condensed, popular history of the Australian Flying Corps and the RAAF, culminating in an account of the RAAF as it stood in its fiftieth year. The publication was written by, but not credited to, George Odgers and followed the historical narrative form of his 1965 *The Royal Australian Air Force: An Illustrated History*.⁵ That work was revised and republished in 1985 under the same title and proved to be the most-readily-available source documenting early events at Point Cook and the development of the RAAF.⁶ Odgers was a trained historian (with a Master of Arts degree majoring in history from the University of Melbourne) and presented these three works in what was later described in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* as a style designed to appeal to a popular audience ‘without sacrificing either detail or rigour’.⁷ As a result, and probably influenced by the views of his publishers, the works provide scant reference to sources and no bibliographies to demonstrate the extensive research undertaken. This is unfortunate for later scholars who wish to confirm Odgers’ assertions or engage in detailed research. Of greater concern is that some errors made by Odgers have become part of RAAF folklore. In a notable example, Odgers appears to be responsible for the myth that the military land at Point Cook ‘was purchased from George Chirnside’.⁸

Odgers, originally a journalist, carried the epithet of ‘an official RAAF historian’ on the title page of his 1985 history, having served as a member of the RAAF War History Section after World War II and having contributed to the official history of Australia in the war. The general editor of the official war history, Gavin Long, chose Odgers to write the volume on the air war against Japan.⁹ In contrast to his later popular histories, Odgers applied rigorous referencing standards in the wartime

4. Department of Air, *The Golden Years: Royal Australian Air Force 1921–1971* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1971).

5. George Odgers, *The Royal Australian Air Force: An Illustrated History* (Sydney: Ure Smith, 1965).

6. George Odgers, *The Royal Australian Air Force: An Illustrated History* (Brookvale: Child & Henry, 1984).

7. Peter Dennis et al., eds., *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, 2nd ed. (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008), 441.

8. Odgers, *Royal Australian Air Force*, 14.

9. George Odgers, *Air War against Japan 1943–45* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1957).

official history. The volume sits among three companion volumes on RAAF involvement in the war. John Herington wrote the two volumes on the air war in Europe,¹⁰ while Douglas Gillison wrote the first volume on the air war against Japan, which incorporated a history of Australia's air war preparations, with some relevance to Point Cook.¹¹

Gillison, also a journalist, felt that it was not possible to tell the story of the RAAF's entry into World War II without starting at the beginning, and for him that meant 1919. He also felt it necessary to include the background from 1909 to encompass the formation of the Central Flying School at Point Cook and the Australian Flying Corps. Gillison wrote a rigorously-researched historical narrative based on archival research and reference to literature, and he frequently referred to Point Cook. Prime amongst his secondary sources for the pre-war history chapters were Stanley Brogden's 1960 *History of Australian Aviation* and Frederic Cutlack's 1923 *Australian Flying Corps*, the official history of Australia's air component during World War I.¹²

As the earliest official history on military aviation in Australia, Cutlack's 1923 work is disappointing for its scant reference to Point Cook. Cutlack was a journalist and assistant official war correspondent under Charles Bean, and his brief was to write a war history, so the lack of attention to domestic training and development is perhaps understandable. Official war histories—as much as seeking to counter the perceived inaccuracies of unofficial and popular histories—were written to be studied to improve wartime military performance.¹³

After noting their contribution to the Australian Flying Corps' wider wartime operations, 'Tommy' White (later Sir Thomas) and 'Dickie' Williams (later Sir Richard)—two of the first four flying students at Point Cook—were acknowledged by Cutlack as significant among the handful of people on whose notes he had relied

10. John Herington, *Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939–1943* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1954); John Herington, *Air Power Over Europe 1944–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1963).

11. Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–42*.

12. Stanley Brogden, *The History of Australian Aviation* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1960).; Frederic Cutlack, *The Australian Flying Corps in the Western and Eastern Theatres of War 1914–1918*, 11th ed. (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1941).

13. Jenny McLeod, *Reconsidering Gallipoli* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 57–58. McLeod noted that the first British official military histories were written after the Crimean War and copied the Prussian model 'that aimed to improve the national army.'

in writing his history.¹⁴ Those same notes formed the basis for the later-published autobiographies of both early aviators.

As an aid to highlighting official histories and encouraging RAAF members to read them, the RAAF publishes the *Chief of Air Force Reading List* annually.¹⁵ The list also identifies long-standing works on air power and new publications worthy of reading within the year. A section on enduring history publications identifies many of the official histories identified in this section of the literature review and lends them credence and relevance in the present day.

Official histories that relate to Point Cook, therefore, are valuable, in that they outline the site as the setting for the activities that took place there. However, they do not directly address the role of the site as a place with cultural heritage significance. Further, due to their elevated ‘official’ status, some errors that relate to Point Cook have been passed on by subsequent writers without the perceived need for verification.

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS

The early military occupation of Point Cook coincided with the era of what might loosely be called the soldier-author. Fuelled by a public appetite for the details of non-fictitious war adventure that followed World War I, the memoirs of early military aviators were ripe pickings for eager publishers, and many fliers—and they were pilots almost to a man—were keen to tell their stories. Collectively, their published writings display a concern to record events that were significant in the authors’ lives, knowing that they had experienced events not likely ever to be experienced by many.

The early authors were usually commissioned officers and all had a well-rounded education, often including a basis in classical literature and history. Their published firsthand accounts of wartime experiences generally only mention Point Cook in

14. Cutlack, *Australian Flying Corps*, vii.

15. For example: Royal Australian Air Force, *Chief of Air Force's Reading List 2015* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2015).

passing, and most were written many years after the events described. Most are in autobiographic form. These two factors limit their value as historical sources, but their value as social history evidence is not diminished. Many of these works are not academic in approach, and it is difficult to compare and criticise them, as they are products of their time and circumstances. However, some later writers took a more-disciplined approach.

Published writings by those influential in the founding of the military establishment at Point Cook in the 1909–14 period are the logical starting point to investigate the literature by those who participated in events at Point Cook. The most significant amongst these personalities were Minister for Defence George (later Sir George) Pearce, Chief of the General Staff Brigadier Josef Gordon and Director of Operations and Intelligence Major Cyril ‘Brudenell’ (later Sir Brudenell) White and his successor, Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Reynolds. Pearce’s 1951 autobiography, *Carpenter to Cabinet*,¹⁶ makes a brief but useful reference to the beginnings of military aviation in Australia, as does Gordon’s 1921 autobiography, *The Chronicles of a Gay Gordon*.¹⁷ Both sources are frustrating for their lack of expansiveness on the subject of military aviation, but this is understandable considering the books’ scopes of entire lives. Unfortunately, neither White nor Reynolds left a written account of their lives. Stanley ‘Jimmy’ Goble must also be mentioned while discussing those with an early administration role, as the Royal Australian Navy’s first representative on aviation. However, he did not publish either.

Pioneer aviator Horrie Miller’s memoir, *Early Birds*,¹⁸ is exemplary amongst the small corpus of literature by participants at Point Cook. Miller experimented with aviation before joining the military, and his subsequent career led him to play a significant part in the development of civil aviation in Australia. His horizon was broader than the strictly-military writers. Miller was fortunate to have met the two leading protagonists in the physical establishment of the military presence at Point Cook—Henry Petre and Eric Harrison—and his firsthand account of his dealings with them is valuable. *Early Birds* was published in 1968 and covers a career spanning more than

16. George Pearce, *Carpenter to Cabinet: Thirty-seven Years of Parliament* (London: Hutchinson, 1951).

17. Josef Gordon, *The Chronicles of a Gay Gordon* (London: Cassell & Co., 1921).

18. Horace Miller, *Early Birds* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1968).

fifty years, so the accuracy of the details of the events at the start of that period may be in doubt. Miller's book has become a regular source for later academic writers.¹⁹

As the two officers charged with establishing the military's physical presence at Point Cook and conducting the first training, Petre and Harrison would have held the greatest insight into the establishment of the site. However, they unfortunately left no published legacy, and their firsthand accounts are sorely missed. However, Petre was interviewed while on a visit to Australia from his home in England in 1960, and his account is a useful primary source for research.²⁰

After Petre and Harrison, the students on the first pilots' course of late 1914 must rank as the voices most eagerly sought. Thomas White and Richard Williams published autobiographies, while George Merz and David Manwell did not publish any record of their achievements. Merz—a medical graduate of the University of Melbourne—was dux of the course and died in 1915 in Mesopotamia at the hands of Arab forces, while Manwell—ranked lowest on the course—led a lacklustre career as a military aviator.

Of the two students to write, Thomas White provided the first work with relevance to Point Cook's early military history. His book, largely an account of his captivity and subsequent escape from Turkish captors, was published under the title of *Guests of the Unspeakable* in 1928.²¹ White held realised political ambitions; and the timing of his publication, a decade after the events described, coincided with his attempts to raise his public profile. In marked contrast, the autobiography of Richard Williams was published in 1977, towards the end of his days as a record of his long and eventful life. The title of Williams' tome, *These are Facts*, is reputed to be reflective of his strong personality and self-belief.²² Williams was primarily an administrator—despite being one of the first four Australian students to qualify as pilots—and rose rapidly to head the RAAF at the time of its creation in 1921. Without him, the RAAF may not have been formed as a separate armed service until decades later, if at all.

19. Coulthard-Clark, for example, cites Miller in *The Third Brother*.

20. 'Interview with Henry Petre', *RAAF News*, February 1961.

21. Thomas White, *Guests of the Unspeakable: The Odyssey of an Australian Airman* (London: John Hamilton, 1928).

22. Richard Williams, *These Are Facts: The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams KBE, CB, DSO* (Canberra: Australian Government, 1977).

The works by White and Williams are seminal in field of Australia's military aviation history and heritage, and each offers valuable information and views that must be considered in light of the motives for their creation. White had a true adventure—a veritable 'ripping yarn'—while Williams sought recognition for a life of public service, led methodically and purposefully. Each is a valuable source for Point Cook's heritage, and Williams' work has been relied on heavily by many authors as a source of historical detail and cultural heritage. Williams made few friends throughout his life, and his aloof, often apparently self-righteous, manner contributed to this. His autobiography might be interpreted as the culmination of a lifetime of self-publicity opportunities, and he is comprehensive in his attempt to set the central narrative for the 'facts' of Australia's military and civil aviation.

Completing the few early accounts that have relevance to Point Cook is the 1973 unpublished manuscript by William Dobney entitled 'The Story of the Half Flight'.²³ Dobney's little-known work is rare in that it is an account by an enlisted man, rather than a commissioned officer. The incomplete manuscript tells the circumstances surrounding the deployment of the Half Flight of the Australian Flying Corps sent from Point Cook to Mesopotamia in 1915. The account lacks the classical education evident in White's writing, but it compensates through the inclusion of many personal details of participants that White appears loath to include: White mentions very few enlisted men by name.

Many of Point Cook's early aviators went on to careers of some significance. The biographies and autobiographies of the students on the World War I flying courses shed light on historical events at Point Cook. The most notable are Arthur Cobby's 1942 *High Adventure*,²⁴ and Sir George Jones' 1988 *From Private to Air Marshal*.²⁵ These two books make an interesting comparison, as both writers were controversial figures during World War II. The latter book was written well after the retirement of its author from public life and at some distance from the events described, while the former book was written while its author was still very much in the public eye. Jones' work—despite its subtitle claiming to be an autobiography—appears to be

23. W E Dobney, 'The Story of the First Half Flight', 1973, RAAF Museum.

24. Arthur Cobby, *High Adventure* (Melbourne: Robertson & Mullens, 1942).

25. George Jones, *From Private to Air Marshal: the Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir George Jones KBE CB DFC* (Melbourne: Greenhouse, 1988).

statements diligently collected from the elderly Jones not long before his death in 1992; while Cobby's richly-illustrated coffee-table book attempts, and succeeds, to convey the excitement of a life of adventure.

The autobiography of Eric Roberts, a student on the 1915 third pilots' course, entitled *Boxkites and Beyond*, provides an entirely different approach from Jones and Cobby.²⁶ The work provides details of life at Point Cook during World War I and early World War II and takes a refreshing self-reflective stance, despite an overtone of religious polemic. Raymond Brownell's 1978 autobiography, *From Khaki to Blue*, provides a picture of flying duties and the life of an officer in the newly-formed RAAF at Point Cook in the early 1920s.²⁷ Sir Valston Hancock's 1990 autobiography, *Challenge*, adds some later history covering flying training in the later 1920s and early 1930s.²⁸ Hancock returned to Point Cook after World War II to command the RAAF College, which he mentioned briefly in his closing chapters.

Later participants in events at Point Cook have also contributed to the corpus of literature under review. The majority of later writers, perhaps as a result of receiving a tertiary-level education, tend to take a wider view and place their own experiences, often without mentioning them directly, in a broader narrative of a unit's history. Roy Frost's 1991 *RAAF College and Academy 1949–86*²⁹ and Doug Hurst's 2000 *Strategy and Red Ink*³⁰ are works written with the academic rigour instilled in graduates of the RAAF's Academy and Staff College, albeit not in humanities disciplines in the case of these two authors. Both histories chart the establishment and development of the RAAF's two principal officer training units that existed prior to the formation of the Australian Defence Force Academy and the higher-level Australian Defence College.

At this point in the review of the literature, it begins to appear that all historical accounts of the RAAF at Point Cook were written from within the organisation—

26. Eric Roberts, *Box Kites and Beyond* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1976).

27. Raymond Brownell, *From Khaki to Blue* (Lyneham: Military Historical Society of Australia, 1978).

28. Valston Hancock, *Challenge* (Northbridge: Access Press, 1990).

29. Roy Frost, *RAAF College and Academy 1949–86* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1991).

30. Hurst, *Strategy and Red Ink*.

officially or unofficially—and this is largely correct. Nearly all authors discussed thus far spent at least some of their aviation career in the Australian Flying Corps or RAAF, and most served significant periods of time at Point Cook; but none of the literature covered thus far discusses Point Cook in the depth required to address the concerns of this thesis. Fortunately, this corpus of official histories and firsthand accounts is complemented by works written with an external standpoint towards the historical events at Point Cook.

NON-MILITARY LITERATURE

The different standpoint provided by those writing as non-participants in the military is prevalent in more-recent writings. This literature falls into two broad categories: academic literature, such as books, articles, theses and conference proceedings, and popular histories.³¹ Significant anniversaries provide the impetus for the publication of both types of work. In the case of the popular histories, earlier works often inform successive publications, and this in turn perpetuates some of the now-widely-held misconceptions about early military aviation in Australia and Point Cook in particular.

The centenary of the first flight by a military aircraft in Australia in 2014 gave rise to a flurry of publications. These included the recounting of the story of building the replica Bristol Boxkite aircraft—the type of aircraft that made the 1914 flight—that flew on the day of the centenary in *Bristol Boxkites at Point Cook* by Ron Gretton and Geoff Matthews, the builders of the aircraft.³² Various journal articles were also published at the time in *Aerogram*, the official organ of the Friends of the RAAF Museum, many members of which have not served in the RAAF. These include Rex

31. South African historian André Wessels addresses the prevalence of popular histories of air forces and cites the case of the South African Air Force, the histories of which are authored by ‘so-called “amateur” historians and aviation enthusiasts – an indication that much serious scholarly work still needs to be done in this regard.’; (André Wessels, ‘The South African Air Force, 1920–2012: A Review of its History and an Indication of its Cultural Heritage’, *Scientia Militaria* Vol. 40, no. 3 (2012): 223.)

32. Ron Gretton, Geoff Matthews, and James Kightly, *Bristol Boxkites at Point Cook: Project 2014: Commemorating the Centenary of Australian Military Aviation 1914–2014* (Werribee: Project 2014, 2014).

Hobson's article on Thomas White,³³ Alf Batchelder's article on the selection of aircraft and aviators to found Point Cook,³⁴ and Jean Roberts and Andrew Willcox's article on Samuel F Cody.³⁵ These writings represent a welcome trend to revisit original sources and make fresh appraisals of historical events of significance to Point Cook. Their social history approach that focuses on the lives of the people concerned is in marked contrast to most of the earlier writings.

More associated with the centenary of the start of World War I than the almost contemporaneous first military flight, Michael Mol Kentin made his contribution to the Centenary History of Australia and the Great War series with *Australia and the War in the Air*.³⁶ The work builds on Mol Kentin's 2010 publication *Fire in the Sky*, which included a chapter on early aviation at Point Cook.³⁷ Both works use a methodology of historical enquiry based on archival research and written or oral history interviews. Mol Kentin has written extensively on military history, and some of his other publications will be discussed in the later section on cultural heritage.

Mol Kentin is part of a refreshing recent trend that seeks to interpret military aviation history in a more-objective light, less prone to unsubstantiated claims of undue significance by Australian fighting services, units or even individuals. His writing is therefore akin to that of John McCarthy, whose 2011 paper 'An Air Force Fit for Air Displays?: The RAAF 1921–1939' questioned the effectiveness and efficiency of the RAAF in the inter-war period.³⁸

Also in a spirit of renewal of thinking on military aviation—and reflecting the trend for more-specialised and less-general historical publications—Peter Helson, in the introduction to his 2010 biography of Sir George Jones, laments that Jones' autobiography is disappointing in its brevity, and Helson's biography tells the story

33. Rex Hobson, 'Sir Thomas White KBE DFC', *Aerogram* (December 2014).

34. Alf Batchelder, 'Two Competent Mechanists and Aviators', *Aerogram* (December 2014).

35. Jean Roberts and Andrew Willcox, 'Samuel Franklin Cody and Point Cook', *Aerogram* (March 2014).

36. Michael Mol Kentin, *Australia and the War in the Air*, vol. 1, The Centenary History of Australia and the Great War, (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2014).

37. Michael Mol Kentin, *Fire in the Sky: The Australian Flying Corps in the First World War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010).

38. John McCarthy, 'An Air Force fit for Air Displays? The RAAF 1921–1939' (paper presented at the 90 Years of RAAF History, Canberra, 2012).

more completely.³⁹ The biography is based on Helson's 1996 PhD thesis, which examines the role of Jones as the controversial leader of the RAAF during World War II and the early Cold War years.⁴⁰

In a similar case to Helson's biography of Jones, Fred and Elizabeth Brenchly's *White's Flight* sought to expand on an earlier work.⁴¹ In 2004, these familial relatives of Thomas White took his autobiographical *Guests of the Unspeakable* (discussed above) and provided additional family information. While using a range of additional sources, the work was roundly criticised by Peter Stanley for relying too heavily on transcription of White's original writing and for being 'sloppy over details'.⁴² The early chapter that addresses White's time under training at Point Cook adds little to the existing knowledge of events at the site. The sources for the few tantalising snippets of additional information are not cited, and there is difficulty in determining research from opinion and literary licence. Nonetheless, the writers point to the rift that existed between White and Williams and, while always defending White, contrast their accounts of historical events much for the benefit of researchers.

The use of literary devices in any works with relevance to Point Cook is, in fact, rare. However, Francis Chappell's 2004 biography of Donald Saville—who learnt to fly at Point Cook in the 1920s—is one such example. Entitled *Bomber Commander*, it is a refreshing account of life in the RAAF, and especially at Point Cook in the 1920s.⁴³ Chappell devotes a chapter to the trials and excitement of learning to fly in 1927 in a piece of non-academic, but well-researched, writing. The use of primary sources, such as flying training log books, is evident in the blend of facts and literary devices.

39. Peter Helson, *The Private Air Marshal: A Biography of Sir George Jones, KBE, CB, DFC* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2010), 1.

40. Peter Helson, 'Ten Years at the Top: An Analysis of the role of Air Marshal Sir George Jones as Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force, 1942–1952' (PhD University of New South Wales, 1996).

41. Fred & Elizabeth Brenchly, *White's Flight: An Australian Pilot's Epic Escape from Turkish Prison camp to Russia's Revolution* (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 2004).

42. Peter Stanley, 'Stirring Read Worthy of a Tepid Shower', review, *Canberra Times*, 15 January 2005, 19.

43. Francis Chappell, *Bomber Command: A Biography of Wing Commander Donald Teale Saville, DSO DFC* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2004).

In complete contrast, is the 2008 publication, *Billy Stutt and the Richmond Flyboys*.⁴⁴ The work is not a history as such, but is the collected research of Neville Hayes, who died before being able to write a history based on his findings. The publication, funded by Hayes' family, concerns one of the most interesting aspects of Point Cook's past, the rivalry between Point Cook and Ham Common (now RAAF Base Richmond)—in effect a rivalry between the Australian Government and the New South Wales Government—that played out in the pre- World War I era. The central personality caught up in the events was William 'Billy' Stutt, who later joined the military and served at Point Cook. He and Sergeant Abner Dalzell disappeared in Australia's first attempted air-sea rescue in 1920, which was launched from Point Cook.

The range spanned by Chappell's polished, semi-dramatised approach and Hayes' collection of research material demonstrates the prevalence of Point Cook as a point of reference in much of the writing about the people involved in early aviation in Australia. Another example is Chris Coulthard-Clark's 1997 work on the only Australia aviator to be awarded the Victoria Cross during World War I.⁴⁵ As the war's only Australian recipient for action in the air, Frank McNamara received special attention; and due to being an early student at Point Cook, his biographies shed light on the early days at the site. Coulthard-Clark's *McNamara, VC: A Hero's Dilemma* describes some details of the lives of early military aviators in Australia in his broader discussion of McNamara's life.⁴⁶

Turning towards the aircraft used at Point Cook, John Bennett—a serving officer in the RAAF—produced his 1996 *The Imperial Gift* in the RAAF's seventy-fifth year.⁴⁷ The work systematically records details of the 128 aircraft and extensive associated equipment that the British Government provided after World War I in an attempt to seed dominion air forces in an era of uncertainty about the continued need to maintain national air power resources. The excellently-researched publication includes a potted history of Point Cook in its first three chapters with sound political

44. Neville Hayes, *Billy Stutt and the Richmond Flyboys* (Coves: Pacific Downunder, 2008).

45. Doctor Chris Clark was the RAAF Historian from 2004 to 2013 and has written on a broad range of military topics.

46. Chris Coulthard-Clark, *McNamara, VC: A Hero's Dilemma* (Canberra: Air Power Studies Centre, 1997).

47. John Bennett, *The Imperial Gift: British Aeroplanes which Formed the RAAF in 1921* (Maryborough: Banner, 1996).

and social background. Refreshingly, Bennett used a range of primary and secondary sources not used by his predecessors to provide the most-comprehensive study of this previously-neglected aspect of the RAAF's past. In this regard, the work has much in common with Chris Coulthard-Clark's *The Third Brother*.

The Third Brother was published in 1991 on the seventieth anniversary of the formation of the RAAF; and like Alan Stephens' *Going Solo* that followed, the work sought to complete a gap in the RAAF's history, by documenting the inter-war years of 1921–39.⁴⁸ The publication addressed a neglected period for the RAAF, as most preceding works focussed on wartime exploits. *The Third Brother* has become a seminal text on the formation and early development of the RAAF. Like Molkenin and Helson's publications, the methodology is historical enquiry based on archival research and oral history. The writing is, at times, critical of the RAAF and points out many of its early systemic failings, but its publication, nonetheless, was funded by the RAAF. In fact, the 1991 Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Ray Funnel, said: 'While this book is controversial in parts, the author has served a useful purpose in bringing these matters forward.'⁴⁹ Notably, the work covers very little of the precursors to the RAAF, the Australian Flying Corps and the Australian Air Corps, due to its scope to cover the RAAF alone from 1921. However, the introductory material provides a condensed history of those preceding organisations and therefore discusses some elements of Point Cook's early past. Rather than a chronological approach, *The Third Brother* employs a thematic approach, which makes it difficult to find discrete information about Point Cook, but the search is rewarded by the additional information discovered. The early chapters on the decision to raise the RAAF and the initial work in doing so provide excellent coverage of the topics, and the chapters on base infrastructure, aircraft, equipment and training are comprehensive. *The Third Brother* has become the most-reliable secondary source for RAAF history of the inter-war years and is cited frequently.

Coulthard-Clark's book broke a drought of publishing on RAAF history by observers of Point Cook that prevailed thorough the 1980s and the latter half of the

48. Chris Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother: The Royal Australian Air Force 1921–39* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).

49. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, back cover.

1970s. That drought had only been punctuated by Neville Parnell and Clive Lynch's *Australian Air Force since 1911*, which devotes only a few pages to Point Cook, despite its all-encompassing title.⁵⁰ The book, published in 1976, was written by two long-standing members of the Aviation Historical Society of Australia and traces the history of military aviation in Australia from its beginnings to the Vietnam War. Despite the academic tenor of the Aviation Historic Society of Australia, the work lies in the realm of popular history due to its lack of citation of sources.

The fiftieth anniversary of the RAAF in 1971 provided an opportunity for historical review of Australia's military aviation. As forerunners to John Bennett's 1996 approach to military aviation history through a technological perspective, Keith Isaacs and Charles Schaedel wrote in a similar vein on the RAAF's fiftieth birthday. Isaacs' *Military Aircraft of Australia 1909–1918*⁵¹ and Schaedel's *Men and Machines of the Australian Flying Corps 1914–19*⁵² mark the anniversary with technical descriptions of Australian Flying Corps aircraft supported by discussion of their use and the people who flew and maintained them. Isaacs' work, which was published by the Australian War Memorial, contains much detailed technical information on the aircraft in question, and both works have chapters on the early events and people at Point Cook, primarily focussing on the pre– World War I period. Typical of their time and style of presentation, the works contain few references to primary sources, with Isaacs only providing citations for verbatim quotes and Schaedel providing none. From the evidence presented, it appears likely that Isaacs interviewed Eric Harrison in the preparation of his book, but disappointingly, it may not be possible to know for certain.

Isaacs' and Schaedel's seminal works followed one of the most cogent and comprehensive historical enquiries into the beginnings of Australian military aviation in Alfred Argent's *Australian Army Journal* article, 'The Army, its Men and its Flying Machines'.⁵³ Argent—a serving Army officer and graduate of the Army's staff

50. Neville Parnell and Clive Lynch, *Australian Air Force since 1911* (Sydney: Reed, 1976).

51. Keith Isaacs, *Military Aircraft of Australia 1909–1918* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1971).

52. Charles Schaedel, *Men & Machines of the Australian Flying Corps 1914-19* (Dandenong: Kookaburra Technical Publications, 1972).

53. Alfred Argent, 'The Army, Its Men and Its Flying Machines', *Australian Army Journal* 228 (May 1968): 3-21.

college—applied considerable scholarly rigor in his search for primary sources and explaining many of the finer details of the events leading to the establishment of Point Cook.

This small clutch of works coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of the RAAF was preceded by a significant publication by journalist Stanley Brogden. He was considered Australia's foremost writer on aviation matters, civil and military, at the time and was one-time adviser to politician Thomas White—one of the first four pilot students at Point Cook in 1914. Brogden was appointed head of public relations for the RAAF under Air Marshal George Jones.⁵⁴ His 1960 *History of Australian Aviation* is still considered one of the most authoritative works on early aviation in Australia, and it provides many details of the beginnings of military aviation.

The literature by those who have viewed Point Cook from the outside—as opposed to those who have written and served there—provides a different perspective of the events that took place at the site and draws different conclusions from the official histories. As a corpus, these works are generally based on historical enquiry, with less emphasis on biography. The shift in recent times to a more-scholarly approach is a noted feature; but, like the literature in the two previous sections, none discusses the significance of Point Cook in sustained argument. Rather, Point Cook forms the backdrop for many of the events and actions discussed, often argued to be significant in their own right.

LOCAL HISTORIES

There are relatively few local histories that are of direct relevance to this thesis. Nonetheless, a brief survey of those that do exist is necessary. The earliest and most-relevant local history of Point Cook is a publication prepared by Jessie Serle for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works in 1983, entitled *Point Cooke*.⁵⁵ Despite

54. Macarthur Job and Gerry Carman, 'Kick-started the Kangaroo National Emblem with the RAAF', *Age*, 30 September 2008, <http://www.theage.com.au/national/kickstarted-the-kangaroo-national-emblem-with-the-raaf-20080929-4qf4.html>.

55. Jessie Serle, *Point Cooke: A History Prepared for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works* (Hawthorn: Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, 1983).

publication and sale to a general audience, the work is more a research report than a popular history. Focussing on the period 1857–87, the period specified in the brief by the Board, Serle makes the observation that the pastoral property of Point Cook ‘is inevitably very much an account of Werribee Park’, owned by the Chirnside family.⁵⁶ Extending her brief beyond the specified period to provide greater context, Serle addresses Point Cook in the post-1887 period and erroneously says that a portion of the Point Cook pastoral holding was ‘sold to the RAAF in 1907’ by George Chirnside,⁵⁷ marring an otherwise well-researched report. Noting the pedantic point that the RAAF was not formed until 1921, more complete details of the land transactions regarding the acquisition of the land for defence purposes at Point Cook will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

In marked contrast to Serle’s report, and published very soon after, is Ken Pritchard’s 1985 *Werribee: The First One Hundred Years*.⁵⁸ The book, revised in a second edition in 2008,⁵⁹ is a popular history with the stated aim of providing local history education for school children and adult residents of the area. Footnotes are scarce, and sources are not evident; but a list of further reading is provided in the second edition. A chapter entitled ‘Home of the Royal Australian Air Force’ provides an abbreviated history of military aviation at Point Cook. Again, the work perpetuates the error that the land was purchased from George Chirnside,⁶⁰ as does the most recent local history of the City of Wyndham, published in 2013 and written by historian Geoff Hocking.⁶¹ Lamentably, *Wyndham: Our Story* also makes other errors and may contribute to the continued transmission of misconceptions about the RAAF presence at Point Cook. The reconfiguration of the book to a web-based local history will only compound this situation.⁶²

56. Serle, *Point Cooke*, v.

57. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 52.

58. Ken James, *Werribee: The First One Hundred Years* (Werribee: The Werribee District Historical Society, 1985).

59. Ken James and Lance Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 2nd ed. (Werribee: Werribee District Historical Society, 2008).

60. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 84.

61. Geoff Hocking, *Wyndham: Our Story* (Werribee: Wyndham, 2013), 137.

62. Geoff Hocking, ‘Point Cook, Wyndham History’, <http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1049>.

Collectively, these few local histories do little more than restate previous research and, in some cases, perpetuate historical errors. Nonetheless, the inclusion of the military presence at Point Cook in the literature in each case recognises its importance in the telling, and retelling, of the local historical narrative.

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF POINT COOK

Interpretations of the cultural heritage of Point Cook is scarce, and no dedicated literature presents itself. Nonetheless, a few sources do canvas the issue of cultural heritage at Point Cook, if obliquely, and insight is also provided by reference to the wider range of sources relating to cultural heritage in the military context.

Coulthard-Clark's *The Third Brother*, discussed above, is one of the rare secondary sources that directly addressed the matter of wider RAAF cultural heritage. The chapter on connections between the Australian and British air forces in the 1920s discusses the transmission of traditions from Britain in detail. In his foreword, the then Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Ray Funnell, wrote:

For me, so many of the beliefs and attitudes of members of the RAAF of that period with whom I came in contact in my own career are now more explicable—and many of the effects of those beliefs and attitudes are with us to this day.⁶³

Funnell—born in 1935 and serving as the RAAF's most-senior officer at the time of his retirement in 1992—was well-placed to observe the transmission of cultural heritage from the founders of the RAAF to younger generations. Coulthard-Clark captures many aspects of broad RAAF cultural heritage, relying extensively on interviews with ex-serving senior officers and their descendants.

Expanding on Coulthard-Clark's work, Michael Molquentin has written and presented a range of articles and papers and a thesis that discuss, at least in part, RAAF cultural heritage. These include his 2004 honours thesis, styled a social-military history and

63. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, xii.

entitled 'Culture, Class and Experience in the Australian Flying Corps'.⁶⁴ The thesis considers the backgrounds of members of the Australian Flying Corps who served in World War I and compares these backgrounds and their wartime experiences with those of other elements of the Australian Imperial Force to show that the force was not a single holistic social entity and should not be considered as such in research, wider discourse and, by inference, interpretation and heritage value. The thesis only discusses Point Cook briefly, but it provides a wealth of useful background information on the social profile of many who served there. Molkentin followed his thesis with a 2006 journal article entitled 'Unconscious of Any Distinction?',⁶⁵ which questions that assertion by war historian Charles Bean's and repeats much of his 2004 thesis. Similarly, his 2005 journal article entitled 'That Dreadful Flying Corps' provides useful cultural information on some of those who served at Point Cook,⁶⁶ as does his 2011 paper presented at the RAAF History Conference entitled 'The Australian Flying Corps' Legacy to the RAAF'.⁶⁷ Molkentin's work implicitly challenges any 'easy' or celebratory interpretation of heritage passed on from the Australian Flying Corps to the early RAAF.

The only other published work to deal with RAAF cultural heritage in any depth is Sir Richard Williams' autobiography, mentioned above.⁶⁸ After the formation of the RAAF in 1921, Williams tried to establish a set of cultural practices different from those of the Australian navy and army, and his autobiography touches briefly on the subject, notably in the references to uniforms, badges and symbolism. His writing is just as informative for what it leaves out as what it includes. For example, his attempts to devise a unique RAAF funeral practice were reported in the press, but he fails to mention them in his autobiography. Perhaps, the criticism he received after one notable funeral in 1922 led him not to discuss the matter in later years. The work

64. Michael Molkentin, 'Culture, Class and Experience in the Australian Flying Corps' (BA Honours University of Wollongong, 2004).

65. Michael Molkentin, 'Unconscious of any Distinction'? Social and vocational quality in the Australian Flying Corps, 1914–1918', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* 40 (2006).

66. Michael Molkentin, 'That Dreadful Flying Corps: Responses to Life and Death in the Australian Flying Corps, 1914–1918', *Cross & Cockade* 35, no. 4 (2005).

67. Michael Molkentin, 'The Australian Flying Corps' Legacy to the RAAF' (2011 RAAF History Conference, Canberra, Air Power Development Centre, 2011).

68. Williams, *These Are Facts*.

is valuable in providing an account of the thoughts of a senior leader in a position to exert a strong influence on the culture of nascent RAAF.

Gillison, in his official history addressed above, briefly ventured into the realm of cultural heritage when he discussed the disbandment of the Australian Flying Corps after World War I and the formation of the RAAF, saying, ‘we find ourselves concerned with names, events and newer concepts that became woven into the fabric of an air force that was to go to war more than eighteen years later’.⁶⁹ This work is important for providing a view, albeit briefly, of how the RAAF of World War II was influenced by its predecessors, in the Australian Flying Corps and early RAAF.

With such a paucity of literature on the cultural heritage of the RAAF, comparisons must be made with literature regarding foreign air forces. There are no seminal texts or salient examples in this very narrow field of literature, and more often than not, the writings on cultural heritage are an aside within the histories, as in Gillison’s example. A useful starting point regarding foreign air forces is Chas Bowyer’s history of Britain’s Royal Air Force.⁷⁰ Within the methodology of historical narrative, Bowyer describes many of the cultural elements of the Royal Flying Corps and the early Royal Air Force. In a broader military context, Martin Brown discusses the British Army’s cultural practices, ceremonial events and dress customs and how they reinforce the cultural identity of its members in the article ‘Whose Heritage? Archaeology, Heritage and the Military’.⁷¹ Brown makes the point that a sense of connection between place and cultural identity is less clear for naval and air forces, due to many of their operations taking place at sea or in the air. He argues, nevertheless, that the strength of connection with the past for navies and air forces is very strong.

Beyond the intangible elements of Point Cook’s cultural heritage, the cultural identity of the RAAF is informed by the built heritage of the site. A small body of important works addresses this matter. The unpublished site reports of Span and Neal in

69. Gillison, *Royal Australian Air Force 1939–42*, xi.

70. Chas Bowyer, *History of the RAF* (London: Hamlyn, 1977).

71. Martin Brown, ‘Whose Heritage? Archaeology, Heritage and the Military’, in *Cultural Heritage, Ethics and the Military*, ed. Peter Stone (Woodridge: Boydell Press, 2011), 131.

1984,⁷² and Allom Lovell and Associates in 1992,⁷³ were commissioned by the Commonwealth and address the significance of the built heritage of Point Cook. The reports touch on the site's wider cultural heritage, but only tangentially. They are based on archival research and draw some insightful deductions about the built heritage of Point Cook. The reports informed decisions about the retention or disposal of the site as Commonwealth land. The latter report included detailed building remediation costs and was used to support the decision for disposal of the site (which was later reversed). Between these two reports falls Frank Doak's 1988 book *Australian Defence Heritage*, which is a broad-ranging survey of Defence sites of national significance, including Point Cook presented in a form suitable for public interest.⁷⁴

DJ Lancaster's 1999 RAAF History Conference paper on the social dimensions of the RAAF in the interwar years is based on research of primary and secondary sources and provides rare, if all too brief, insight into early RAAF culture.⁷⁵ A short 2008 publication entitled *Point Cook RAAF Base* by Mark Pilkington and David Francis was the first concerted attempt to explain the significance of the site for a wide audience.⁷⁶ Published privately, the thirty-two-page booklet was distributed free to anyone who might help champion the retention of the site and the recognition of its significance, highlighting many of the aviation 'firsts' for Australia.

More-general texts on military customs are readily available, and some have relevance for research in relation to Point Cook. *Customs of the Royal Australian Air Force*,⁷⁷ updated regularly through the 1980s and 1990s, provides some information, while texts relating to the customs of overseas military forces provide a good point of

72. W Span and A Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study* (1984).

73. Allom Lovell & Associates, *RAAF Williams Point Cook: An Appraisal of the Heritage Significance* (1992).

74. Frank Doak, *Australian Defence Heritage: The Buildings, Establishments and Sites that Have Become Part of the National Estate* (Sydney: Fairfax, 1988).

75. DJ Lancaster, 'The Social Dimension 1921–1939' (1999 RAAF History Conference, Canberra, Air Power Studies Centre, 1999).

76. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

77. Royal Australian Air Force, *Customs of the Royal Australian Air Force* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1981). Royal Australian Air Force, *Customs of the Royal Australian Air Force*, Third ed. (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1987). Royal Australian Air Force, *Customs of the Royal Australian Air Force*, Fourth ed. (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1996).

comparison. These include Thomas Edwards' *Military Customs* from 1952,⁷⁸ Alfred Stradling's *Customs of the Services* from 1966,⁷⁹ and Richard Dickinson's *The Officers' Mess* from 1977,⁸⁰ all of which are dated and not written from a cultural heritage perspective. The most useful in this small collection of texts is the 1962 *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Air Force* by Peter Hering.⁸¹

CONCLUSION

In summary, this literature review—in seeking to determine what extant research addresses the history and cultural heritage of Point Cook—demonstrates that literature sources relevant to the history and cultural heritage of Point Cook are scant. Literature exists in the form of biographies and autobiographies of those who served at Point Cook, but most of these only make passing reference to the site. Official histories, when they refer to Point Cook, tend to repeat the work (and occasional errors) of earlier authors. Aside from two officially-sponsored heritage site reports, there has been little scholarly research into the cultural heritage of the RAAF generally, and Point Cook's influence on it more particularly. More broadly, very little has been researched and published in the area of early Australian military aviation over the last decade.

The extant literature about Point Cook, therefore, is not sufficient to draw conclusions about the significance of the site. Consequently, determination of the significance of Point Cook requires a singular, comprehensive historical examination of the military presence at the site that focusses on the built environment and the events that occurred there that have an enduring effect on the cultural heritage of the RAAF and wider associated communities.

78. Thomas Edwards, *Military Customs* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1952).

79. Alfred Stradling, *Customs of the Services* (Aldershot: Gale & Polden, 1966).

80. Richard Dickinson, *The Officers' Mess: Life and Customs in the Regiments*, rev. ed. (Tunbridge Wells: Midas, 1977).

81. Peter Hering, *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Air Force* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden, 1962).

CHAPTER THREE – A HISTORY OF POINT COOK THROUGH EXAMINATION OF ITS CULTURAL HERITAGE

The flight of a military aircraft that took place at Point Cook on 1 March 1914 was the seminal founding event of military aviation in Australia. Viewed through the framework of heritage studies, the event contains the intertwined elements of cultural heritage—tangible and intangible—and site significance. This delineation allows for a systematic approach to describing and explaining the cultural heritage elements of the history of Point Cook that continue to have an influence on the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

This chapter seeks to answer the research question: What events and practices of significance for Australian aviation, military and civil, occurred at Point Cook during the military occupation of the site? It presents the results of research into the history of Point Cook through an exploration of its intangible cultural heritage. As a methodological framework, the internationally-adopted 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* is used, and the chapter identifies flying skills and aviation innovation, rituals, festive events and social practices as key aspects of cultural heritage relevant to Point Cook.

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL HERITAGE

The understanding of cultural heritage in this context has its basis in the evolution of cultural studies over the past forty years. The discussion of a definition for ‘cultural heritage’ in Chapter One of this thesis notes that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) does not provide an all-inclusive definition of the term. Rather, the 1972 UNESCO *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* defines cultural heritage in a three-part

definition that includes monuments, groups of buildings and sites.¹ The Convention is site-centred and recognises value primarily in terms of contribution to history, art or science; and it only recognises ethnological or anthropological value with direct relevance to sites. The definition places cultural heritage very much in the tangible realm and reinforces somewhat-detached, Western values of culture.

Heritage lawyer Janet Blake identifies this problem when she notes that, by 2001,

the cultural heritage protection paradigm was one that prioritized monumental ‘European’ cultural forms over local and Indigenous ones and that, when it addressed ‘traditional culture’, did so from a position that favored the interests of the research community over those of culture bearers.²

Recognising the intangible elements of culture, World Bank President James Wolfensohn invoked the World Commission on Culture and Development to provide a more-inclusive definition at the 1999 Culture Counts conference:

Culture is a whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise the society or societal group. It includes creative expression, oral history, language, literature, performing arts, fine arts and crafts, community practice, traditional healing methods, traditional natural resource management, celebrations and patterns of social-interaction that contribute to group and individual welfare and material or built forms such as sites, buildings, historic city centers, landscape, arts and objects.³

In an attempt to be comprehensive, the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defines intangible cultural heritage as:

1. UNESCO, *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural Heritage and Natural Heritage* (Paris: UNESCO, 1972), 2.

2. Janet Blake, “Development of UNESCO’s 2003 Convention: creating a new heritage protection paradigm?,” in Michelle L Stefano and Peter Davis, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage* (London: Routledge 2017), 2.

3. James Wolfensohn, *Voice for the World’s Poor: Selected Speeches and Writings of World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn, 1995–2005* (Washington: The World Bank, 2005), 171. Wolfensohn claims that the definition was stated in the 1995 World Commission on Culture and Development report, *Our Creative Diversity*. However, it does not appear in UNESCO, *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development*, 2nd ed (Paris: UNESCO, 1996).

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.⁴

Educator Sérgio Lira and architect Rogerio Amoêda note that the recognition of intangible cultural heritage has become a central emphasis within heritage studies and professional practice, and that intangible elements may now be considered separate entities from their related material objects as ‘an independent cultural good’.⁵ While understanding of a cultural practice will be diminished by a lack of extant objects used in that practice, a surviving object divorced from its intangible information and significance is almost meaningless.

Regarding intangible cultural heritage and place, heritage advisor Chris Johnston expressed the relationship in the 1992 Australian Heritage Commission’s discussion paper *What is Social Value?* as:

Our surroundings are more than their physical form and their history. Places can be embodiments of our ideas and ideals. We attach meanings to places – meanings known to individuals and meanings shared by communities.⁶

This notion of social value is captured in more-definitive terms in *The Burra Charter: The Australia Icomos Charter for Places of Cultural Significance, 2013* through its definition of cultural significance:

Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present and future generations. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places and

4. UNESCO, *Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 2.

5. Sérgio Lira and Rogerio Amoêda, eds., *Constructing Intangible Heritage* (Barcelos: Green Lines Institute, 2010), 4.

6. Commonwealth of Australia, *What is Social Value?: A Discussion Paper* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992), iii.

related objects. Places may have a range of values for different individuals or groups. [italics removed]⁷

These definitions reflect the appreciation that cultural heritage comprises more than the sites and objects associated with a culture or group—an appreciation that gradually emerged in academic and political discourse in the last decade of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. The view has changed to one where significance of sites and objects includes unquantified social and spiritual aspects, rather than purely aesthetic, artistic, scientific or economic value. Nonetheless, most definitions of intangible cultural heritage constrained it to being held by groups or communities. Ethnomusicologist and folklorist Bradley Hanson argues that such an approach to the intangible aspects of cultural heritage is concerned for the inherent notion of power embedded in heritage, and he suggests that the salient matter is ‘not what heritage *is*, but what heritage *does*, and for whom and to it does it’.⁸ Further, Hanson argues that ‘[t]he things designated as heritage, whether tangible or intangible, are just prompts, part of broader process and performance of meaning making’.⁹ That notion of power inherent in cultural heritage plays into concerns about perspectives, in fact standpoints, of cultural heritage—where the standpoints of the observer and those with lived experience in the culture differ. This chapter deals with intangible cultural heritage within the lived experience of those in a distinct community, the RAAF as a military service.

Military personnel identify themselves as being part of a distinct community, and their views vary in differently contexts, depending on the environment in which they serve. They may feel part of the wider ‘profession of arms’ when serving, for example, as part of an international coalition operating in a foreign country, while they may feel part of a closer, more-tribal community when operating in solely-military situations.

7. Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 2013 (Burwood: Australia ICOMOS, 2013), 2.

8. Hanson, ‘Aging Musically’, in Stefano and Davis, *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 135.

9. Hanson, ‘Aging Musically’ in Stefano and Davis, *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 135.

In the context of the British Army—upon which many elements of Australia’s military structures and traditions are based—historian Martin Brown notes that, over time and through the experiences of conflict, ‘regiments have built up strong identities and traditions which underpin them’.¹⁰ He provides examples of cultural practices, ceremonial events and dress customs that reinforce collective identity within the British Army and adds that modern-day battlefield tours are also used to reinforce the connection between soldiers and their unit’s history and to build kinship within the group. He also notes the ritual element that often attends such tours, with the laying of wreaths or other ceremonial activities at sites being common.¹¹

Brown argues that the case is less clear for naval and air forces, because many of their past actions are not linked to territorial sites—with combat actions taking place at sea or in the air—while noting that ‘the imperative to preserve elements of their heritage is equally strong’. He cites the examples of the Royal Air Force’s Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, which flies historic aircraft of the types used in the Battle, and that of the base at RAF Scampton, which takes pride in being the home of the Number 617 Squadron, known as ‘The Dambusters’, commemorating the famous raids that took place in Germany during World War II. For Brown, the nature of military cultural heritage is one of taking part in a kin group and being aware of its traditions and history, which is an experience exclusive to those who have served in the armed forces.¹²

In the context of the RAAF, there is an awareness of history as an element that informs the culture of the organisation. Air Marshal Geoff Brown, Chief of Air Force during 2011–15, wrote in the foreword to *The Australian Experience of Air Power* that ‘[o]ur current and future Air Force is informed by our past experiences’ and that ‘[a]lthough our past is enduring, our understanding of our past experiences continue [sic] to evolve, just as the RAAF itself is constantly evolving’.¹³ The RAAF takes an outwards, as well as an inwards-looking, approach to cultural heritage. Its members

10. Brown, ‘Whose Heritage?’, 130.

11. Brown, ‘Whose Heritage?’, 131.

12. Brown, ‘Whose Heritage?’, 132.

13. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Experience of Air Power*, iii.

are well aware of the destructive power of the weapons at their disposal and the likelihood of collateral damage that could destroy cultural heritage sites. RAAF doctrine recognises the bombing of Dresden, Germany by the Royal Air Force in 1945 as a seminal event in the subsequent recognition of cultural heritage by military authorities. RAAF commentary on its policies goes as far as to state, ‘if there must be conflict, then protecting cultural heritage and having an understanding of the culture of the adversary reduces the potential for future war’.¹⁴

Beyond official doctrine, however, the RAAF behaves as a discreet community with its own cultural heritage that is apart from its closest-related communities in the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army and the armed services of the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and New Zealand. Intangible cultural heritage helps to bind the RAAF community, which comprises over twenty-thousand people in current employment based in many parts of Australia and in numerous international war zones. The commonality of their training is one of many contributing factors to the cohesion of the community, along with the interpersonal connections that are made, broken and often remade, through the processes of frequent postings and deployments of personnel.

Point Cook runs as an enduring theme in the training of RAAF personnel. For example, post-initial training in air power at all rank levels includes *The Australian Experience of Air Power* as a study text, and this publication explains the significance of Point Cook as ‘the home of the RAAF and the birthplace of Australian military aviation’, along with making many other references to the place.¹⁵ The *Chief of Air Force’s Reading List 2015*—the officially-sanctioned annual list of publications suggested for reading by all members of the RAAF—includes a history of Point Cook in the section entitled ‘Enduring Works for Professional Mastery’.¹⁶

The relevance of Point Cook remains despite the fact that its days as the main training base of the RAAF are over and the inculcation of officers no longer takes

14. Air Power Development Centre, *Pathfinder Issue 238: Air Power’s Contribution to Preserving Cultural Heritage*, (Canberra: 2015).

15. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Experience of Air Power*, 8.

16. Royal Australian Air Force, *Reading List 2015*. The list includes *An Interesting Point: A History of Military Aviation at Point Cook 1914–2014* by Steve Campbell-Wright.

place there. By contrast, Duntroon in the Australian Capital Territory is highly-significant for the Australian Army and retains its role as a key Army officer training establishment. Even after graduating from the more-recently-formed Australian Defence Force Academy, undergraduate Army officers proceed to Duntroon for further training. However, the resilience of Point Cook as an element firmly within the culture of the RAAF's cultural heritage is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of recent RAAF personnel have not trained or served there, but they are aware of its significance.

Turning to the identification of cultural heritage at Point Cook, it is helpful to underline that the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* proposes five domains in which the intangible aspects of cultural heritage are manifested. These are: oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship.¹⁷ As a development in theorising intangible cultural heritage, the domains allow a framework for approaching the intangible in heritage studies and discourse.

Scholarly criticism suggests that the separation of cultural heritage into tangible and intangible components can be problematic. Cultural anthropologist Richard Kurin argues that the 2003 Convention 'operationally makes the intangible tangible', pointing out by way of example that: 'Tools are tangible, but plans, if thought are not, but if drawn are'.¹⁸ Hanson, recognising the work of heritage researcher Laurajane Smith and others,¹⁹ describes this approach in terms of heritage as process, which portrays a relationship between people, values and experiences.²⁰ However, such an overarching approach allows for the entwinement of intangible heritage, tangible heritage and the site in which the culture of a community is vested. It allows

17. UNESCO, *Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 2.

18. Richard Kurin, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal', *Museum International*, no. 221–2 (2004): 70.

19. Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, eds., *Intangible Heritage* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009).

20. Hanson, 'Aging Musically', in Stefano and Davis, *The Routledge Companion to Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 136.

that the tangible is not possible to fully comprehend without knowledge of its intangible aspects and the sites where it is used or valued. Likewise, intangible aspects of culture are better appreciated when the objects associated with them, where relevant, and environment in which they occur are understood.

In fact, criticism has been levelled at the 2003 Convention, questioning the entire notion of intangible cultural heritage as a legitimate category for conceptualisation. Reflecting Kurin's view, del Marmol, Roigé and Estrada note that intangible cultural heritage is a 'global concept which is assimilated and reshaped in each local context in a process which reveals underlying contradictions'.²¹ They pose the question that, to what extent is it possible to isolate intangible cultural heritage elements from their associated tangible elements, as intangible elements are in a state of constant change.²² Their discussion is within the context of the call by the Convention for inventories to identify and document intangible cultural heritage, noting that such an approach is liable to ossify the intangible, rather than consider it from the anthropological stance as living practices.²³

Nonetheless, the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage provides a useful methodological framework for research and has been adopted by many countries that have adopted the 2003 Convention. However, the five domains of the Convention cause problems for cultural heritage researchers and anthropologists through their lack of clarity in some cases and their lack of direct appropriateness to the project at hand in others. Examples from projects in Nicaragua, Buenos Aires and Cambodia indicate a common practice of focussing on a single domain or defining new categories that do not coincide with those of the Convention.²⁴

Using the UNESCO model of domains as a basis for considering intangible cultural heritage—but noting the prevalence in professional practice and academic cultural heritage to adapt the domains to reflect immediate needs—this chapter examines the

21. Camila del Marmol, Xavier Roigé, and Ferran Estrada, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage? A critical perspective on the inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Catalonia', in *Sharing Cultures 2011*, ed. Sérgio Lira, Rogerio Amoêda, and Cristina Pinheiro (Barcelos: Green Lines Institute, 2011), 482.

22. Marmol, Roigé, and Estrada, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage?', 483.

23. Marmol, Roigé, and Estrada, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage?', 483.

24. Marmol, Roigé, and Estrada, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage?', 485.

intangible cultural heritage elements of Point Cook's history under two domains only: 'social practices, rituals and festive events' and 'traditional craftsmanship'. These two domains are the most-relevant for examination of, and allow for a sharper focus on, the RAAF at Point Cook. While the domain of community practices, rituals and festive events requires no further defining to be relevant to the RAAF, traditional craftsmanship will be understood to be the core skill of the RAAF, those of flying aircraft for military purposes and their associated skills. This understanding of traditional craftsmanship appropriates the 2003 Convention's inclusion of skills in its definition of intangible cultural heritage.²⁵

One further note of clarification is required. This chapter deals with those elements of RAAF heritage that have their origin or early development at Point Cook—or have been affected by the place—and that have a significantly influence on the intangible elements of wider RAAF cultural heritage. The chapter is not concerned with the sustainability of cultural practices remnant at Point Cook, noting that, as expressed by del Mármol, Roigé and Estrada, 'practices cannot be preserved or conserved for their own sake if they don't have a social use or if they don't adapt to new social realities' and that cultural institutions can only research culture, and not conserve it.²⁶

What follows is a form of inventory, but one that seeks to capture the intangible cultural heritage of Point Cook as descriptive research with the intent of documentation in preparation for further discussion in Chapters Five and Six regarding interpretation. Therefore, the cultural heritage elements will not be subjected to analysis in this chapter. Regarding sources, this chapter uses archival documents wherever possible; however, newspaper reports are also used to elicit social and cultural relevance, noting that many of these are likely to have been based on information provided by the military through press releases or invited interviews. As noted above, and detailed below, the chapter highlights flying skills, aviation innovation, rituals, festive events and social practices as key elements of Point Cook's cultural heritage.

25. UNESCO, *Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, Article 2.

26. Mármol, Roigé, and Estrada, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage?', 483.

FLYING SKILLS AND AVIATION INNOVATION

The RAAF holds a set of unique skills in Australian society. These skills contribute to the RAAF's ability to provide air power for the Australian Government to assist in meeting national security objectives. This has been so since the introduction of a military flying capability over the period 1909–14. The RAAF takes pride in the skills it holds and draws a sense of connection with its cultural heritage through knowledge of the inauguration of those skills—often marked by single events. This section is arranged thematically and briefly documents those inauguration events under the categories of: flying; aviation training; military aviation operations; air–sea rescue; parachuting; aviation technical innovation; aircraft preservation, restoration and replication; aviation medicine; and influence on civil aviation.

Flying

Flying is the core skill of any military aviation service, and the first flight by a military aircraft in Australia took place on Sunday 1 March 1914. Under a shroud of secrecy, the only two airworthy military aircraft—a Bristol Boxkite aircraft, shown in Figure 3, and a Deperdussin aircraft—were test flown on the day after they arrived at Point Cook on trucks from Victoria Barracks, Melbourne. Pilot Lieutenant Eric Harrison took the Boxkite for a short flight around the aerodrome, and then he took fellow pilot Lieutenant Henry Petre for a flight as his passenger.²⁷ The flights lasted for about fifteen minutes each, reaching a height of about one-thousand feet.²⁸ Petre flew the Deperdussin aircraft later that afternoon.

27. 'Aviation: Army Airmen Fly'. *Argus*, 3 March 1914

28. 'Aviation: First Flights of the Defence Machines', *Leader*, 7 March 1914.

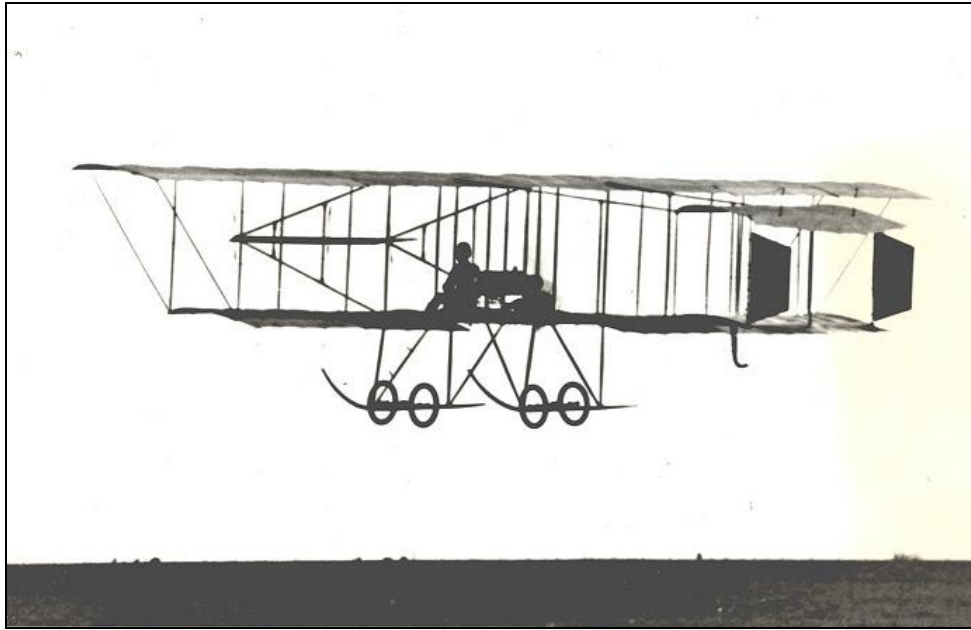


Figure 3: *Bristol Boxkite aircraft in flight at Point Cook, March 1914*
(Australian War Memorial, Canberra, AO4758)

Further flying of the Boxkite on 1 March was curtailed by the first military flying accident, when the spinning propeller was damaged beyond repair by Petre's dog running into it.²⁹ Harrison flew the Boxkite again the next day after a new propeller was fitted. Three days later, on 4 March, he flew a circuit over Werribee, Laverton, Williamstown and Newport several times in a two-hour flight in the Boxkite.³⁰ Petre flew the Deperdussin along the coast to Williamstown and back on the same day.³¹ Figure 4 shows the Deperdussin aircraft in the hands of Petre in early March 1914 at Point Cook. These two flights were the final preparation for the first 'official' flight, due to take place the following day.

29. NAA: CRS2023, A38/3/106.

30. 'Risky Flying: Army Airmen Ascend', *Argus*, 6 March 1914.

31. 'The Aviation Corps: First Official Flights', *Leader*, 7 March 1914.



Figure 4: *Deperdussin aircraft in flight at Point Cook, March 1914* (Office of Air Force History, Canberra)

The honour of the first 'official' flight, held on 5 March 1914, fell to the Chief of the General Staff, Brigadier-General Josef Gordon. The flight, in contrast with the earlier test flights, was set to mark the official commencement of military aviation.

Newspaper reports stated that, the plan was to carry out the flight in the morning, but the wind was too gusty, and flying was postponed to the afternoon. However, the wind dropped straight after the morning postponement, and the calm of the day was only interrupted by the return of thirty-knot winds when Gordon and his party arrived at Point Cook mid-afternoon. Nonetheless, Gordon insisted on being taken for the flight, and the moment was captured in the photograph shown in Figure 5. He had flown in a Boxkite aircraft with Bristol Aircraft Company demonstration pilot JJ Hammond in 1911 while New South Wales military commandant, so he felt confident in his demand. Harrison took him on board the Boxkite, which almost overturned during start-up due to the wind gusts. The low power of the aircraft and the weight of two people, combined with the thirty-degree air temperature and gusty wind, made it impossible for the Boxkite to gain any height. During the long take-off

roll, the aircraft only lifted from the ground a few times to a height of about thirty feet (ten metres).³²



Figure 5: Eric Harrison (front) with Chief of the General Staff Josef Gordon on the Boxkite aircraft for the first 'official' flight by a military aircraft in Australia, 5 March 1914 (Office of Air Force History, Canberra)

To the horror of the small official party of onlookers, the Boxkite just managed to clear the three-rail timber fence that divided two paddocks, and Harrison was launched momentarily from his seat. Harrison gave up his attempt to take Gordon on the flight. He shut the engine down and asked Gordon to alight into a thistle patch. The mechanics came by car to swing the propeller for Harrison to take off solo and to rescue the general, who was described as 'somewhat weather-beaten and sunburnt, but quite collected'.³³ Harrison proceeded to give a solo flying demonstration; and on the approach to land, a gust of wind caused the aircraft to drop so that he could not feel the seat beneath him. He corrected and landed safely.

32. 'Risky Flying'.

33. 'Risky Flying'.

After landing, he said to a newspaper reporter at the scene, 'I tell you, it took me all my time to scramble back and get control'. Further flying was cancelled.³⁴

The first air crash of an Australian military aircraft (see Figure 6) occurred on 9 March 1914, four days after the first official flight, when Petre was 'volplaning' the Deperdussin to land at Point Cook.³⁵ He only noticed the telephone wire to Point Cook when it was too late to avoid. He turned sharply close to the ground and stalled. The right wing struck the ground, and the propeller smashed into the ground causing it to shatter. The engine was bent, as was the fuselage; and the aircraft was beyond repair. Petre only sustained bruising. As a result, the Boxkite remained the only serviceable military aircraft.³⁶



Figure 6: *Deperdussin aircraft being recovered after crash, 9 March 1914 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook)*

In a feat of considerable flying skill, Point Cook was also the point of departure for the first aircraft to land on the Yarra River in Melbourne. On 16 June 1920,

34. 'The Aviation Corps'.

35. Volplaning involved gliding the aircraft with the engine off and was the most-common method of landing aircraft at the time, due to the inability to throttle aircraft engines, and thereby effectively reduce their power.

36. The other Deperdussin was a 'taxi model' for ground training only; and the BE2a aircraft were not suitable as an initial trainer due to only one person being able to reach the controls. Regardless, they had not been assembled by March 1914.

Hippolyte de la Rue flew an AVRO 504K aircraft, converted to a 504N floatplane, to land on the river and deliver it to the exhibition of war relics held in the Melbourne Exhibition Buildings (see Figure 7). Further demonstrating skill in the air, pilots at Point Cook formed an informal aerobatic display team that took part in public displays,³⁷ including the RAAF's first aerial pageant that was held at Flemington racecourse near Melbourne in December 1924. The flying displays at the pageant included formation flying, aerobatics, picking up and dropping messages, bombing and mock air combat.



Figure 7: First aircraft to land on the Yarra River, AVRO 504N, 16 June 1920 (Office of Air Force History, Canberra)

In an Australian first, an interstate night flight took place on 2 March 1934, when three Gypsy Moth aircraft took off from Point Cook bound for Parafield aerodrome near Adelaide. The flight, commencing at 7.40pm, arrived at its destination at 12.40am and landed with the aid of 'grass flares', which were grass heaps in a two-hundred-metre circular formation set alight to mark the landing point.³⁸ Later, the first helicopter to arrive in Australia and was assembled at Point Cook in September

37. Bennett, *Imperial Gift*, 23.

38. 'R.A.A.F. Planes: on Night Flight', *Advertiser*, 3 March 1934.

1947. The Sikorski S51 helicopter was imported from the United States and was planned to be used for bushfire spotting, air–sea rescue and jungle rescue.³⁹

Much of the RAAF post-war assistance to Australia's Antarctic activities was staged from Point Cook. In March 1947, three flights were made into the Antarctic Circle.⁴⁰ The first two flights, in Liberator bombers from Pearce and Laverton, were to check on weather conditions, aircraft performance and crew conditions. The third flight, in a Lincoln bomber from Point Cook, flew as far as Macquarie Island, taking aerial photographs in preparation for establishing the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition's (ANARE) permanent base. The flight took over fourteen hours,⁴¹ and it was the furthest south that any aircraft had travelled from Australian soil at the time.⁴² In July 1948, a Catalina amphibious aircraft flew from Point Cook to Macquarie Island via Hobart to resupply the newly-established ANARE outpost,⁴³ and in 1954, an Auster floatplane of RAAF Antarctic Flight trained at Point Cook for flights in connection with the icebreaker *Kista Dan* and its ill-fated trip to establish Mawson Station in 1954–55.⁴⁴

Aviation training

The transmission of aviation skills is essential to sustaining military air power capabilities. The first training courses for Australian pilots and aviation mechanics commenced at Point Cook on 17 August 1914.⁴⁵ Three flying students were selected from applicants already serving in the militia, and one was chosen from the Permanent Forces.⁴⁶ They were trained in a semi-formal course of instruction. Six aviation mechanic students were also chosen. The mechanic students were instructed

39. 'Airport News Round-up', *West Australian*, 4 September 1947. The helicopter was test flown in November by Australia's only helicopter pilot, Squadron Leader Ken Robertson, who had earlier made a mark for himself as the test pilot assisting Professor Frank Cotton—known as the 'father of sports science in Australia'—with the development of the anti-G suit.

40. 'Macquarie Island Air Survey: Lincoln Bomber's Long Flight', *Argus*, 17 March 1947.

41. David Wilson, *Alfresco Flight* (Point Cook: RAAF Museum, 1991), 19.

42. 'Antarctic Bomber Battles Against Gales and Hail', *Daily News*, 15 March 1947.

43. 'Heavily-Laden Catalina Leaves for South', *Daily News*, 22 July 1948.

44. Wilson, *Alfresco Flight*, 32 passim.

45. The date of 17 August 1914 was two years to the day after the Royal Flying Corps' first course for pilots commenced.

46. Williams, *These Are Facts*, 23.

on the job, and they prepared the Bristol Boxkite aircraft for flying as well as keeping it clean and ‘attending to it in the field’, which often meant retrieving it after distant landings. They also repaired or rebuilt the Boxkite after crashes from the supply of spare parts.⁴⁷ Figure 8 shows the staff and students of the Central Flying School posed in front of one of the two BE2a aircraft at Point Cook.



Figure 8: *Staff and students of the Central Flying School, 1914* (RAAF Museum, Point Cook)

The first course for Australian military aerial observers was held at Point Cook in February 1915. Over a fortnight of training, the students—all serving artillery and staff officers—were taken on a number of flights and learnt to recognise terrain and spot enemy manoeuvres. To add realism to the training, troops were placed in the countryside and ordered to attempt concealment. In a curious twist, the aircraft were

47. NAA: CRS2023, A38/7/339.

marked to identify them as Australian so that ground troops unaware of the training would not attempt to shoot them down, as required by standing orders.⁴⁸

Protection of scarce military aviation assets is a critical function of any air force, and the RAAF Fire Service has its origins at Point Cook in 1956. The first four members of the fireman mustering were selected after applications were called in January 1956. They completed their training at the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade Headquarters at Eastern Hill, Melbourne. The first course of the RAAF Fire Service Training School—No 1 Basic Fireman Course—was conducted at Point Cook by two of those first four members of the mustering in early 1957, with fifteen students. Another five courses followed before the end of the decade.⁴⁹

Military aviation operations

RAAF doctrine states that, as part of the broader Australian Defence Force, the RAAF must be able to ‘shape the environment in which its interests lay, deter potential adversaries and, where necessary, respond adequately to defeat emerging threats.’⁵⁰ Military air services, therefore, exist primarily to provide governments with options to exert their will. When these options are exercised, they are most-often in the form of military aviation operations. The first such wartime deployment of an Australian aviation force was carried out in November 1914, when a small party from Point Cook left for German New Guinea at short notice. The six-man party was led by Lieutenant Eric Harrison and left Australia with two aircraft packed in crates.⁵¹ The aircraft were intended to be used for observation and intelligence gathering. In anticipation of more-robust operations, Harrison and the mechanics fitted fixed propellers to the back of a number of artillery shells to convert them into bombs. The aviation contingent was to assist in the task of ousting a reported German wireless station remaining on the Sepik River near Madang. However, the German

48. ‘Training of Airmen: Point Cook School Observation Course’, *Ballarat Courier*, 13 February 1915.

49. ‘The R.A.A.F. Fire Service’, http://www.georama.com.au/RAAFFireService/HOME_PAGE.html.

50. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Air Publication 1000–D: The Air Power Manual*, 6th ed. (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2013), 27.

51. The two aircraft were one of the BE2a aircraft and Horden’s Farman hydroplane, which he had donated to the war effort.

wireless station was captured without the need of aircraft, and the contingent returned to Australia in January 1915.⁵² The aircraft had not been unpacked, and the aviation deployment was kept a secret until the personnel returned.⁵³

Australia's first military aviation operation actually carried out against an enemy occurred in early 1915, when the Indian Government made a request for Australia to provide 'trained aviators for service in the Tigris' along with the necessary aircraft, transport, spares and personnel. In his request, the Viceroy of India explained that 'all our trained officers are in Egypt and England' and suggested that, if aircraft were not available, they could be provided from England. The Australian Government replied, offering a 'half flight' for service in Mesopotamia of four pilots and complementary support, as opposed to a full flight of eight pilots.⁵⁴ The contingent was known as the Mesopotamian Half Flight and trained at Point Cook. They are shown posed in front of their mess tent in Figure 9.



**Figure 9: *Mesopotamian Half Flight at Point Cook prior to departure*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Half Flight box file)**

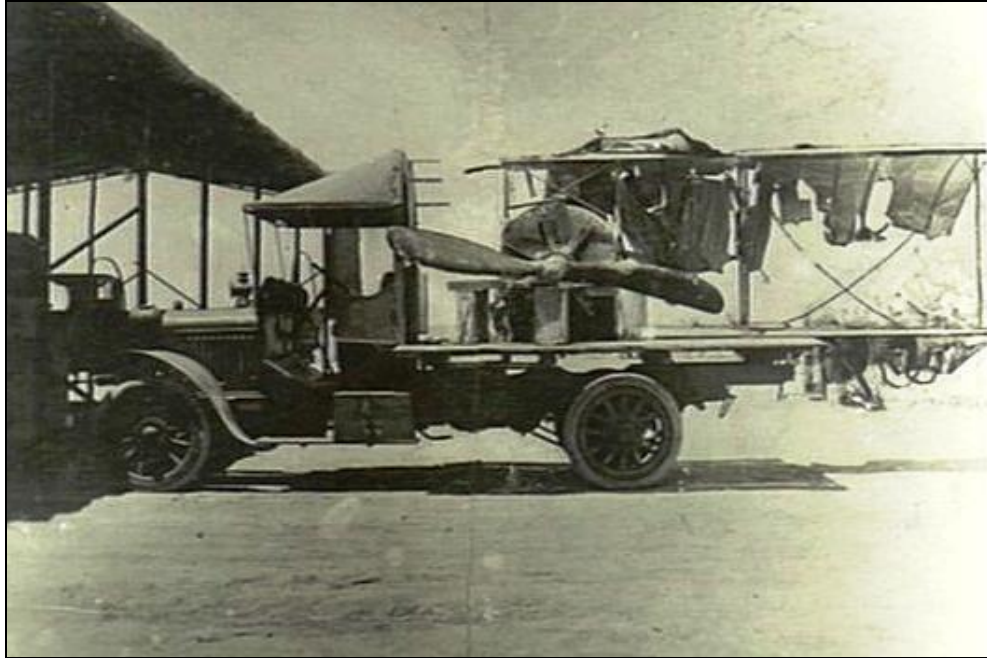
At Basra in Mesopotamia, the Half Flight joined with British and Indian Army personnel and a New Zealand pilot, Lieutenant William Burn. They went into action

52. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, xvi.

53. 'Airmen at Rabaul', *Argus*, 22 January 1915.

54. Cutlack, *Australian Flying Corps*, 422.

at Basra in May 1915. In July 1915, in the first wartime deaths of Australian and New Zealand airmen, Australian Lieutenant George Merz and Lieutenant William Burn were killed during a running gun battle with local Arabs after a forced landing of their Caudron aircraft due to engine trouble—shown after retrieval by truck in Figure 10. Armed only with revolvers and running and shooting for about eight kilometres, one of them was wounded, and the other died fighting beside him.⁵⁵



**Figure 10: Retrieved wreckage of Caudron aircraft flown by Merz and Burn
(Australian War Memorial, Canberra, AO2264)**

A group of fresh reinforcements was sent from Point Cook to join the Australians at Basra, arriving in September 1915. They were selected from the military camp at Seymour, Victoria and completed two weeks of training at Point Cook on aircraft and vehicles.⁵⁶ This group of ten mechanics was led by Sergeant George Mackinolty from the first course of mechanics to be trained at Point Cook in 1914.⁵⁷ In April 1916, the British and Australian forces surrendered at Kut, Mesopotamia under overwhelming enemy numbers, and forty-four Australians were among the thirteen-

55. Cutlack, *Australian Flying Corps*, 10.

56. Dobney, *Story of the First Half Flight*.

57. Cutlack, *Australian Flying Corps*, 25.

thousand prisoners marched over one-thousand kilometres to build a railway in the Taurus Mountains. Many died during the march and many more died in the construction camps.⁵⁸

Point Cook subsequently raised and trained three squadrons of the Australian Flying Corps and their reinforcements, which occupied much of 1916. No 1 Squadron was established under canvas in January 1916 and deployed to Egypt in May, shown prior to departure in Figure 11. The squadron's relative lack of training, due in part to the low performance of the Boxkite aircraft, was apparent when the squadron arrived in Egypt. They were sent to England for the advanced training that was not available in Australia then returned to Egypt to take part in military aviation operations. A second squadron, later to be known as No 3 Squadron, was formed at Point Cook in September 1916 and embarked for advanced training in England in October. The squadron went on to serve in France. A third squadron, known as No 4 Squadron, was formed in October 1916 and departed in January 1917 for training in England and entered operations in France and Germany.



Figure 11: *No 1 Squadron Australian Flying Corps, Point Cook prior to deployment to Egypt (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, 1SQN AFC box file)*

58. Cutlack, *Australian Flying Corps*, 26.

The first warlike aviation operations from the Australian mainland were conducted in 1918, after news broke that the German raider *Wolf* had laid sea mines in the shipping lanes off the south-eastern coast of Australia. A mine had sunk an Australian coastal freighter in July 1917, although its source was not known at the time.⁵⁹ Claims were made that the ship had operated its seaplanes over Sydney in March 1918, and this led to numerous alleged sightings with the assumption that another German raider was also present. Two detachments from Point Cook deployed to carry out coastal flying patrols and possible interception missions. Captain Frank McNamara with an FE2b aircraft and a ground party deployed to Gippsland in April, and Warrant Officer Hendy manned a Lewis gun from the observer's seat.⁶⁰ Lieutenant Raymond Galloway with a Maurice Farman Shorthorn aircraft deployed to Bega on the New South Wales south coast.⁶¹ The operations concluded in mid-May without finding any sign of enemy forces.

In 1939, Australia purchased a small fleet of Short Sunderland Flying Boats to equip a squadron for reconnaissance of the Australian coastline. No 10 General Reconnaissance Squadron was formed at Point Cook on 1 July 1939 to operate the Sunderland aircraft, and an advance detachment left later that month for conversion training onto the aircraft in England. Rather than return to Australia, the Australian Government offered the squadron to the British war effort, and that squadron, formed at Point Cook, became the first Australian air unit to see combat action in World War II.

Air–sea rescue

Due to the skills and assets required, a nation's air–sea rescue capability is often vested in its military aviation service. Australia made its first air–sea search and rescue attempt from Point Cook in September 1920. The mission ended in the loss of two military personnel. Captain Billy Stutt, who ran the New South Wales Aviation School for last two years of the war, and Sergeant Abner Dalzell, an experienced rigger and ex-merchant and navy seaman, departed in convoy with Point Cook's

59. Coulthard-Clark, *McNamara, VC*, 52.

60. Hayes, *Billy Stutt*, 208.

61. NAA: 2021/1/64.

commander, Major Bill Anderson, and Sergeant Herbert Chester in two DH9A aircraft. They were sent in search of a missing coastal coal freighter, the three-mast schooner *Amelia J. Stutt* and Dalzell lost contact with Anderson and Chester around Cape Barren Island, between Flinders Island and the Tasmanian coast. Anderson and Chester flew on to Hobart, and Stutt and Dalzell were never seen again. For some time, hope was held that they had made a successful forced landing,⁶² and Anderson and others searched the route by air, ground and sea without success, finally calling the search off almost a month later.⁶³ During the search, Anderson set an Australian flying endurance record of six hours and ten minutes.⁶⁴

A Gypsy Moth floatplane and a Wapiti aircraft converted to a floatplane left Point Cook in December 1935 and took part in the international rescue mission for airmen Lincoln Ellsworth and Herbert Hollick-Kenyon. They were overdue from an American trans-Antarctic flight and were assumed missing. The Moth and a Wapiti aircraft were fitted with optional skis and floats and, after disassembly, were loaded on board the British Royal Research Ship *Discovery II*. The Moth, modified by the mechanics of Point Cook and strengthened for Antarctic conditions, discovered the missing men safe on its first flight.

Parachuting

Parachutes provide an important adjunct to aviation, as an emergency means of survival and as a method for dropping equipment. Parachutes were tested for use in the RAAF at Point Cook in January 1926. The tests were supervised by Flight Lieutenant Ellis Wackett, who had trained in parachute procedures in Britain. The Irving parachutes made in the United States of America were attached to wooden torso-shaped dummies and released from the bomb rack under the wing of a DH9 aircraft (see Figure 12).⁶⁵ The first live parachute jump from a military aircraft in Australia was carried out by Ellis Wackett on 26 May 1926 at Richmond, New South

62. 'Airman Disappears: Forced Landing Probable', *Argus*, 25 September 1920.

63. NAA: 856/2/53.

64. 'Over Six Hours Aloft: Major Anderson's Feat', *Examiner*, 2 October 1920.

65. 'Parachutes for Aviators: Tests at Point Cook', *Argus*, 26 January 1926.

Wales.⁶⁶ Further tests were conducted in June 1926 with wooden dummies at Point Cook, and Wackett took the first jump at the station on 23 June, along with students of the 1926 pilots' course.



Figure 12: *Parachute test dummy, Point Cook 1920s* (Office of Air Force History, Canberra)

Adopting parachutes in the late 1920s paid dividends on 15 May 1930 when the wings of a Bristol Bulldog aircraft, piloted by Pilot Officer William Gordon Rae, collapsed while attempting an outside loop manoeuvre at Point Cook. His life was saved in the first emergency use of a parachute from a powered aircraft in Australia.⁶⁷ From a height of four-thousand feet, he entered the manoeuvre, and while inverted, he heard a loud crack, and the aircraft entered an inverted spin. As he jumped from

66. The first descent from any aircraft in Australia was by Captain G.C. Wilson, MC, AFC, DFM of the Australian Flying Corps from a Sopwith Gnu with a Spencer Salvus parachute at Epsom racecourse, Mordialloc, Victoria on 26 December 1919. (F Mines, A Draft History of Parachuting in Australia up to the Foundation of Sport Parachuting in 1958.; Alan Stephens, 'Wackett, Ellis Charles ('Wack') (1901–1984).' <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wackett-ellis-charles-wack-15886/text27087>.)

67. The first emergency parachute jump from any airborne vehicle in Australia was undertaken by Henri L'Estrange on 14 April 1879 from a balloon near St Kilda Road, Melbourne. (Mines, Draft History of Parachuting.)

the aircraft, the upper wing separated from the aircraft.⁶⁸ Rae became the first Australian member to join the exclusive thirty-strong Caterpillar Club, whose members wear a small gold silkworm badge presented by the Irving Parachute Company.⁶⁹ The second Australian member of the Caterpillar Club took up his membership on 24 April 1936. He was Aircraftsman Leslie Clisby, who was flying a Moth aircraft near Point Cook when he lost control and jumped from two-thousand feet.⁷⁰

Aviation technical innovation

In the twenty-first century, few countries are able to sustain a viable military aviation manufacturing capability. However, in the twentieth century, that capability was more-readily attainable, and Australia made considerable advances in military aviation innovation, design and manufacture. The first Australian-made military aircraft was taken for its maiden flight at Point Cook by Eric Harrison on 10 August 1915.⁷¹ The Boxkite-pattern aircraft was assembled from spares held at Point Cook and parts made in its workshops (see Figure 13).

68. 'Bristol Bulldog: Plane Crashes', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 May 1930.

69. 'Parachuting from an Aeroplane: the Exclusive Caterpillar Club', *Argus*, 24 May 1930.

70. 'Airman's Leap from 'Plane: Saved by Parachute', *Argus*, 25 April 1936.

71. Neville Parnell and Trevor Boughton, *Flypast: A Record of Aviation in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1988), 23.



Figure 13: *First Australian-made military aircraft, Point Cook 1915*
(Australian War Memorial, Canberra, VIC1693)

The first Australian-made aircraft engines were tested at Point Cook. In February 1915, the Department of Defence called for Australian manufacturers to make Renault-pattern V-eight aircraft engines for use in Point Cook's BE-type aircraft. Two manufacturers met the challenge, providing three samples each. The first of these Australian-made engines was fitted to an airframe at Point Cook in September 1915.⁷² These two technical innovations laid the basis for an indigenous aircraft industry that came to the fore during the 1930s and World War II.

The technical skills and innovation of aircraft mechanics from Point Cook were tested in April 1934 after a Southampton flying boat heading from Metung, Victoria, to Point Cook made a forced landing on Lake Reeve with engine trouble. The huge flying boat landed in water less than half a metre deep. The crew was forced to camp in a hut by the lake and walked along the bush track to the nearby town of Seaspray

72. 'The War: Australian Aerial Fleet', *Advertiser*, 19 February 1915.

for provisions.⁷³ Within days, a team of about twenty mechanics sent from Point Cook began dismantling the seaplane ready for transporting it over land to Lake Wellington, about five kilometres away. A large motor lorry was dispatched from Point Cook for the purpose, but the ground was too soft to drive all the way to the stranded aircraft. Instead, a corduroy track was cut and laid to the waterside to allow the aircraft parts to be carried by horse-drawn dray to the lorry (see Figure 14).⁷⁴ The Southampton aircraft was reassembled on Lake Wellington and arrived back at Point Cook under its own power thirty-eight days after its forced landing thanks to the efforts of the Point Cook mechanics.⁷⁵



Figure 14: Southampton aircraft being towed between Lake Reeve and Lake Wellington, Victoria (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, album file)

Later, during World War II, Point Cook became the venue for secret weapons experiments, when Group Captain Pool of the Royal Air Force carried out skip-bomb tests using Beaufort and Lightning aircraft in early 1943. Wing Commander Lambert also used Mustang aircraft for tests with rocket projectiles in 1944. Some of

73. 'Flying-Boats's Forced Landing on Lake', *Argus*, 9 April 1934. 'Plane has Forced Landing: On Lake Reeves', *Gippsland Times*, 9 April 1934.

74. 'Seaplane Southampton at Seaspray: Dismantling Operations', *Gippsland Times*, 16 April 1934.

75. 'Items of Interest: Flying-Boat back at Point Cooke', *Argus*, 19 May 1934.

Pool's skip-bombs failed to explode, and a public warning needed to be issued for people not to tamper with the 'flares' if found on the shores of Port Phillip.⁷⁶

Soon after the war, No 1 Aircraft Performance Unit moved its operations from Laverton to Point Cook in 1947; and trials of the first jet aircraft in Australia, the Gloucester Meteor, took place at Point Cook before it was sent to Darwin for tropical trials.⁷⁷ No 1 Aircraft Performance Unit also tested the Australian-made CA-15 Kangaroo at Point Cook. In February 1947, personnel at the unit also carried out tests in conjunction with the Forestry Commission of Victoria into the possibility of using Mustang fighters as chemical dive bombers to extinguish bushfires or to exfoliate firebreaks.⁷⁸

Australia's second jet aircraft, a de Havilland Vampire, was assembled at Laverton and test flown there on 21 May 1947, and further trials were carried out at Point Cook. The second Vampire aircraft arrived in February 1948 and also was trialed at Point Cook.⁷⁹ Also in May 1947, a Mosquito aircraft and a Lincoln aircraft flew to Pearce, Western Australia to test the efficiency of these aircraft flying at different altitudes. On the return flight to Point Cook, the Mosquito aircraft broke the transcontinental record time with a flight time of five hours, beating the record set nine months earlier by a civilian DC4 Skymaster aircraft of six hours and one minute.⁸⁰

In June 1947, the No 1 Aircraft Performance Unit carried out trials with a troop-carrying glider loaned by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. The glider was towed by a DC3 Dakota aircraft.⁸¹ No 1 Aircraft Performance Unit was responsible for a number of other innovations, including rain seeding experiments and testing of civil experimental aircraft, such as the unsuccessful three-engine de

76. 'Strange Objects on Beach May be Dangerous: RAAF Warning', *Argus*, 4 May 1943.; 'Search for R.A.A.F. Flares', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 May 1943.

77. 'Aviation Safety Network', <http://aviation-safety.net/wikibase/wiki.php?id=153986>.

78. 'Air Bombs for Bushfires in Victorian Tests', *Farmer and Settler*, 21 February 1947.

79. 'Jet-Propelled Plane Damaged', *Advocate*, 13 June 1947.; 'Jet Plane has Near Shave', *Daily News*, 13 June 1947.; 'Another RAAF Jet Plane', *Daily News*, 9 February 1948.

80. 'Planes on Fast Trip from East', *Daily News*, 14 May 1947.; 'Flight for Record', *West Australian*, 2 June 1947.

81. 'R.A.A.F. Tests Big Glider', *Daily News*, 21 June 1947.

Havilland Drover.⁸² One of the most notable experiments was the successful 1948 jet-assisted-take-off trial on a Catalina flying boat in the bay off Point Cook (see Figure 15).⁸³ In the 1950s, the unit also trialled floating survival suits for aircrew forced down into sub-zero temperature waters.⁸⁴



Figure 15: *Technicians at Point Cook fitting Jet-Assisted-Take-Off units to a Catalina aircraft, 1948* (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Catalina box file)

Aircraft preservation, restoration and replication

Collection, storage, preservation and display of the RAAF's tangible cultural heritage requires highly-specialised skills, and museum staff at Point Cook form the RAAF's

82. 'Plane's First Tests Fail', *Mail*, 19 March 1949.

83. 'Rockets to Aid Take-offs', *Recorder*, 29 November 1948.

84. 'R.A.A.F. Tests "Exposure Suit"', *Examiner*, 23 February 1952.; 'New "safety suits" for R.A.A.F.', *Advocate*, 22 February 1952.

repository of technical restoration skills for obsolete military aircraft. The museum's workshops allow permanent technicians and volunteer restorers and researchers to collaborate on restoration projects that use skills that are rare in Australia and, in some cases, are carried out by the only remaining practitioners in the country—many of whom learnt their skills as members of the RAAF.

The RAAF established the museum at Point Cook in 1952 as an educational institution for officer trainees but opened for public admission in 1971, and it embarked on its first major aircraft restoration in 1979. The aircraft was Hawker Demon A1-8 that had crashed in February 1937 and was recovered from near the town of Wynyard, Tasmania in 1977. A team led by the Commanding Officer of No 1 Aircraft Depot, Wing Commander Ron Gretton—utilising technical staff from various units and his father, retired Warrant Officer Ern Gretton—spent eight years in the restoration of what is one of only two surviving Hawker Demon aircraft (see Figure 16).⁸⁵



Figure 16: A8-1 Hawker Demon aircraft, restored at Point Cook (BAE Systems, Melbourne)

Following the successful completion of the Hawker Demon restoration, the RAAF Museum carried out further major restoration projects, including the 1993

85. 'Demon, Albert Medal to Museum', *RAAF News*, March 1987.

restoration of a Maurice Farman Shorthorn aircraft—a partial reconstruction of a 1917 Australian Flying Corps aircraft from Point Cook. This was followed by the 2002 restoration of an ex-RAAF Antarctic Flight yellow ‘Snow Goose’ Supermarine Walrus aircraft that was wrecked at Heard Island in 1947.⁸⁶ Other restorations included a Mustang fighter aircraft brought to flying condition between 1991 and 1999 and a Vampire jet trainer aircraft in 2000.⁸⁷

Museum volunteers constructed a static-display replica of a pre– World War I BE2a biplane between 2012 and 2014, using original drawings and the RAAF Museum’s extensive archive of photos and documents. To commemorate the centenary of military aviation in Australia, volunteers built a flying replica of the 1914 Bristol Boxkite aircraft, illustrated in Figure 17, that flew at Point Cook on 1 March 1914.⁸⁸ The project entailed devising a flight-test program for an aircraft that is a century old in design and flying characteristics.



Figure 17: *Replica Bristol Boxkite aircraft built at RAAF Museum, Point Cook*
(Defence Image Library, Canberra)

In a sign that the RAAF Museum at Point Cook is highly-regarded as a skills repository for aircraft preservation, the Australian Government presented the facility with a crashed Spitfire fighter aircraft found in northwest France in November 2010.

86. ‘Old Walrus had only a brief career’, *RAAF News*, January–February 1986.

87. RAAF Museum, ‘CAC CA-18 Mustang Mk 23 A68-170’, <http://www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/exhibitions/interactive/mustang.htm>.

88. ‘Project 2014’, <http://www.boxkite2014.org/plan/plan.htm>.

The wreck proved to have been that of Flight Lieutenant Henry ‘Lacy’ Smith, who was shot down by German forces on 11 June 1944, five days after the D-Day landings at Normandy during World War II.⁸⁹ After the recovery of the pilot’s remains, the aircraft was placed in the hands of the Australian Government, and Prime Minister Julia Gillard—who was also Point Cook’s local Federal Member of Parliament—ensured that the aircraft was placed in the care of the RAAF Museum.⁹⁰ French Ministry of Culture archaeologist Olivia Hulot was concerned to ensure the conservation of the wreck⁹¹—which required expert processes of resubmission into an environment similar to that in which it was found, followed by gradual replacement of the liquid and, finally, mechanical cleaning—to provide a stable artefact.⁹² The RAAF Museum was the first Australian facility considered by the Australian Government for this project.

Aviation medicine

Understanding the physiological aspects of aviation is important in ensuring the safety of aircrew, passengers and aircraft, and the RAAF at Point Cook has been responsible for some early advances in the field of aviation medicine. On 16 June 1920, the Australian altitude record was broken by two pilots at Point Cook in a DH9A aircraft at an altitude of twenty-seven thousand feet. They only stopped at that altitude for fear of fainting.⁹³ Both pilots showed signs of hypoxia afterwards and were unwell for a few days. They were treated by the medical officer at Point Cook, Captain Arthur Lawrence, who took an interest in their condition and requested further experiments. His actions were the beginnings of aviation medicine in Australia.⁹⁴

In February 1943, Professor Douglas Wright of the Flying Personnel Research Committee (and Professor of Physiology at, and later Chancellor of, the University of

89. ‘WWII Spitfire lost in France headed for Australia’, *Age*, 11 February 2011.

90. ‘WWII Spitfire lost’.

91. ‘Spitfire Australia-bound following quarrel’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 February 2011.

92. Alf Batchelder, *On Laughter-Silvered Wings: A Biography of Henry Lacy Smith* (Canberra: Air Power Development Centre, 2015), 74.

93. ‘Record Australian Flight: altitude of 27,000 ft reached’, *Argus*, 21 June 1920.

94. A S Walker, *Medical Services of the R.A.A.F.*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945, (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), 173.

Melbourne) carried out experiments at Point Cook with anti-glare goggles and windscreens.⁹⁵ The tests sought to reduce the glare experienced by pilots and watch personnel of maritime patrols.⁹⁶ Wright had also been responsible for developing an apparatus that predicted a student's likelihood of success in flying training by testing reactions.⁹⁷

Aviation medicine employed some of the most-advanced technology in Australia at Point Cook, when the Aviation Medicine Flight of Central Flying School acquired a hypobaric chamber in the late 1940s. In April 1949, the first session for RAAF Nursing Service sisters was conducted; and by 1953, RAAF and Navy medical officers, including at least one from New Zealand, underwent similar training. A training session for nurses is depicted in Figure 18—a rare moment during which women played an important part in military aviation in the early days of the RAAF.



Figure 18: RAAF nurses in the hypobaric chamber, Point Cook
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, AVMED box file)

95. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 43.

96. Walker, *Medical Services of the R.A.A.F.*, 330.

97. Walker, *Medical Services of the R.A.A.F.*, 326.

In February 1956, Aviation Medicine Section and Medical Training Section merged to form the RAAF School of Aviation Medicine. A press announcement regarding the formation of the unit claimed it to be the first aviation medicine school in the southern hemisphere and the fourth of its kind in the world.⁹⁸ The school became the RAAF Institute of Aviation Medicine on 1 July 1960 and continued to offer hypobaric training to aircrew and medical officers while also conducting research into aviation medicine.

Extending beyond ordinary aviation physiology, three officers from the RAAF Institute of Aviation Medicine gave lectures on space physiology and engineering at the 1961 Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS) conference in Brisbane, Queensland. Flight Lieutenant Campbell-Burns delivered a paper at the conference entitled ‘The Impact of Space on Air Power’, and Squadron Leader Warren Bishop delivered a paper at the Institute of Defence Science Symposium entitled ‘Project Mercury – Medical Aspects’ that discussed the United States of America’s ‘Man in Space’ project.⁹⁹ Bishop went on to be one of the two medical monitors in the important role played by Australia as astronaut Scott Carpenter carried out his three-orbit mission in the Mercury-Atlas 7 rocket on 24 May 1962.¹⁰⁰ In 1964, the institute assisted in the National Air and Space Administration’s space program, when Doctor John Colvin—a RAAF Reserve officer and Melbourne optician—designing sunglasses for wear by Astronauts Pete Conrad and Richard Gordon on the Gemini V mission. Also, medical officers Bill Walsh and John Lane acted as medical monitors on the Gemini program in 1965–66. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, civilians with debilitating low blood pressure conditions were fitted with anti-G style pants suits designed at Point Cook that helped them to regain mobility.¹⁰¹

98. ‘Jet doctors’ for R.A.A.F.’, *Argus*, 21 November 1955.; ‘R.A.A.F. doctors will put jet pilots to the test’, *Argus*, 15 February 1956.

99. AVMED file: ‘Project Mercury, Institute of Defence Science (All Correspondence on Research)’

100. ‘Project Mercury, Institute of Defence Science’.

101. ‘Aerobatics suit aids pensioner’, *Canberra Times*, 20 January 1977.; ‘AVMED G-Suit is a Miracle’, *RAAF News*, October 1985.

Influence on civil aviation

The development of civil aviation in Australia has relied heavily on military aviation, and the connection between them began very early. The Australian Aero Club began on 28 October 1914 when a meeting of the military officers based at Point Cook formed a club to advance the cause of aviation in Australia and to act as a controlling body and social club.¹⁰² Branching away from its military roots, state sections of the club began in 1919, and the Victorian section moved to the Commonwealth aerodrome at Essendon, adopting the name Victorian Aero Club.¹⁰³

In an effort to establish civil air routes, two pilots from Point Cook surveyed the route between Melbourne and Sydney to identify suitable aerodromes in December 1918. Aerodromes at the time required no infrastructure, and almost any piece of land of the minimum size that was flat and had good air approaches could be considered. They identified an aerodrome approximately every thirty kilometres.¹⁰⁴

To encourage international air travel, the Australian Government announced details of a competition for the first Australians to fly from England to Australia in March 1919. The prize was £10,000 and, among other conditions, competitors had to arrive in Australia by 31 December 1920. The finishing line was at Port Darwin, but competitors were expected to continue to the interim national capital of Melbourne for a ceremonial welcome and then on to Sydney. Such an enterprise was not possible without Government assistance, and much of the work fell to airmen at Point Cook. With the air route from Melbourne to Sydney already mapped, the route from Darwin to Melbourne required attention. Lieutenants Hudson Fysh and Paul McGinness surveyed the route by motor vehicle from Darwin to Longreach, Queensland, while Major Rolf Brown and Lieutenant Roly McComb surveyed from Cootamundra, New South Wales on the Melbourne to Sydney route, to Longreach.¹⁰⁵

102. 'Australian Aero Club: inaugural meeting', *Argus*, 13 April 1915.

103. Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia, 'Royal Federation of Aero Clubs of Australia', <http://www.rfaca.com.au>.

104. Miller, *Early Birds*, 69.

105. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 14.

Race competitors prepared over the months after the March 1919 announcement, and word reached Australia that a team led by Captain Ross Smith had departed on 12 November in a Vickers Vimy bomber aircraft. Smith was accompanied by his brother Lieutenant Keith Smith and Sergeants Wally Shiers and Jim Bennett.¹⁰⁶ They were expected in Darwin within the month. The air route from Darwin to Melbourne had been surveyed on the ground, but it had not been tested by air. Furthermore, race authorities decided to position an aircraft at Darwin to carry out coastal patrols in search of contestants making landfall and to drop them food by parachute if they were found in distress.¹⁰⁷ So, the RAAF sent a BE2c aircraft from Point Cook to Darwin alongside the Vickers Vimy (see Figure 19).



Figure 19: *Vickers Vimy (left) and BE2c after the first transcontinental crossing of Australia by air (Library and Archives NT, PH0767/0007)*

Testing of the Australian overland component of the race air route was the first transcontinental crossing of the continent by air. Captain Henry Wrigley and Sergeant Arthur ‘Spud’ Murphy left Point Cook for Darwin on the same day the Vickers Vimy aircraft left England. Wrigley and Murphy arrived in Darwin in their BE2e aircraft on 12 December, two days after the Vimy. Wrigley said that he felt the

106. Australian War Memorial, ‘Fifty Australians: Sir Ross Smith’, <http://www.awm.gov.au/exhibitions/fiftyaustralians/45.asp>.

107. ‘Darwin to Melbourne Route: Sydney excluded’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 November 1919.

trip was ‘only the forerunner of regular services and flights across the continent’, and he felt sure that ‘the time was not far distant when the journey might be accomplished in four or five days’.¹⁰⁸

The Smiths’ Vickers Vimy reached Darwin on 10 December 1919 without major incident and met the conditions to claim the prize. On the day after their arrival, Vickers Ltd instructed Smith to hand the Vimy to the Australian Government upon arrival in Melbourne for display in the new war memorial. The Government set Flemington racecourse in Melbourne as the landing place, with Point Cook as the alternative in case of unfavourable wind conditions. Meanwhile, Lieutenants Miller and Oakes flew the surveyed route from Point Cook to Sydney in preparation for that leg of the Vimy’s tour that was to follow.¹⁰⁹ The Government made preparations for a heroes’ welcome at Flemington racecourse, including a greeting by the Governor-General and handing over of the prize cheque by the Prime Minister. However, engine troubles caused a delay at Henty, New South Wales, and the crowd of fifty-thousand assembled at Flemington had to content themselves with a display of stunt flying by the intended aerial escort party from Point Cook.¹¹⁰ The Vimy subsequently landed at Point Cook on 25 February with only one-hundred people present and was transferred to the inventory of the Australian Flying Corps.

The official dinners to welcome the Vimy crew in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1920 were some of the first post-war gatherings of ex– Australian Flying Corps members. The camaraderie felt at the dinners was the catalyst for the formation of the Australian Flying Corps Association, which still addresses the needs of serving and ex-serving members of the RAAF as the Australian Flying Corps and RAAF Association. Figure 20 shows the dinner at Scott’s Hotel, Melbourne to welcome the crew of the Vickers Vimy.

108. ‘Flight to Darwin: Captain Wrigley’s Feat’, *Argus*, 7 January 1920. In November 1989, a CT4 trainer aircraft from Point Cook re-enacted that first south to north transcontinental crossing of Australia to coincide with the seventieth anniversary of Wrigley and Murphy’s 1919 milestone.

109. Parnell and Boughton, *Flypast*, 36.

110. ‘Flight not Completed: delay at Henty’, *Argus*, 25 February 1920.



Figure 20: No 1 Squadron AFC reunion dinner to welcome the crew of the *Vickers Vimy* (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, 1SQN AFC box file)

It was not long before the mapping and identification of aerodromes for the *Vimy* flight was used in civil aviation, when the first commercial flight between Sydney and Melbourne was flown by Nigel Love, landing at Point Cook on 16 April 1920.¹¹¹ In an expansion of civil aviation in the west of the country, Major Norman Brearley travelled from Perth to Melbourne by rail to select, test and train pilots for his Western Australian Airways in 1921. The two-week refresher training for his selected pilots was carried out at Point Cook in October 1921.¹¹² Among his new team of six was the later-famous Charles Kingsford-Smith.

In another pioneering aviation achievement, the first aerial circumnavigation of the Australian mainland was achieved by Wing Commander Jimmy Goble and Flying Officer Ivor McIntyre in 1924. They left Point Cook in a *Fairey IIID* floatplane on 6 April (see Figure 21) and landed back in Melbourne at St Kilda beach after the forty-four-day anticlockwise journey to be greeted by a crowd of ten-thousand people. Their arrival was escorted by a fleet of twelve aircraft that joined them as they flew

111. 'Sydney to Melbourne', *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express*, 23 April 1920.

112. 'Mainly About People', *Daily News*, 3 October 1921.

over Point Cook.¹¹³ The feat was replicated four months later by the first landplane to circumnavigate Australia—a DH50A under trial by the Civil Aviation Authority—which completed the journey in twenty-two days. That flight also left from Point Cook.¹¹⁴

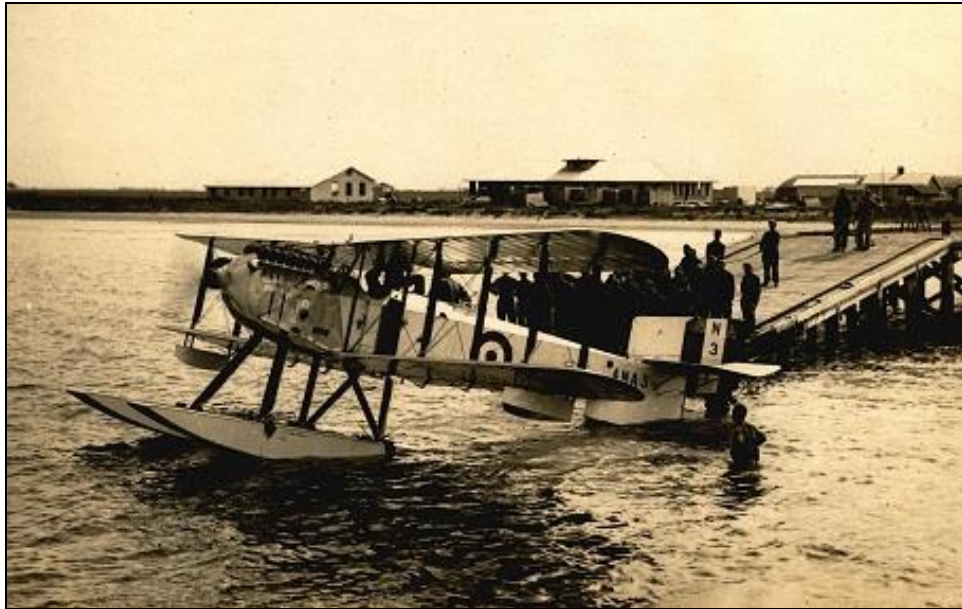


Figure 21: *Fairey IIIID floatplane on departure from Point Cook for the first aerial circumnavigation of Australia (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Fairey IIIID box file)*

The first aircraft of non-British origin to visit Australia was that of Vice Commandante di Stormo Marchese Francisco di Pinado, the head of the Permanent Italian Air Force, and his mechanic Ernesto Campanelli in 1925. They were on a thirty-two-thousand-kilometre flight from Rome to Tokyo via Australia. The RAAF hosted the aircraft and crew; and over their ten weeks in Australia, they circled the continental mainland anti-clockwise from Broome, Western Australia, to Cooktown, Queensland, in their Savoia-Marchetti flying boat (see Figure 22).¹¹⁵ The RAAF provided maps of the coast of Australia prepared by Goble and McIntyre the previous year. Once in Melbourne, their flying boat was overhauled at Point Cook.

113. Stephens, *Centenary History of Defence*, 39–41.

114. R Meyer, 'Round Australian in 22 Days: 1924 style', <http://www.airwaysmuseum.com/Round%20Australia%20Flight%20194.htm>.

115. 'Italian Flight to Tokyo Accomplished', *Flight*, 1 October 1925.

Later, in August 1926, mechanics at Point Cook overhauled the De Havilland DH50J aircraft flown by British pioneer long-distance pilot and De Havilland test pilot Alan Cobham. Cobham departed from Point Cook on the return leg of the first England-Australia-England flight.

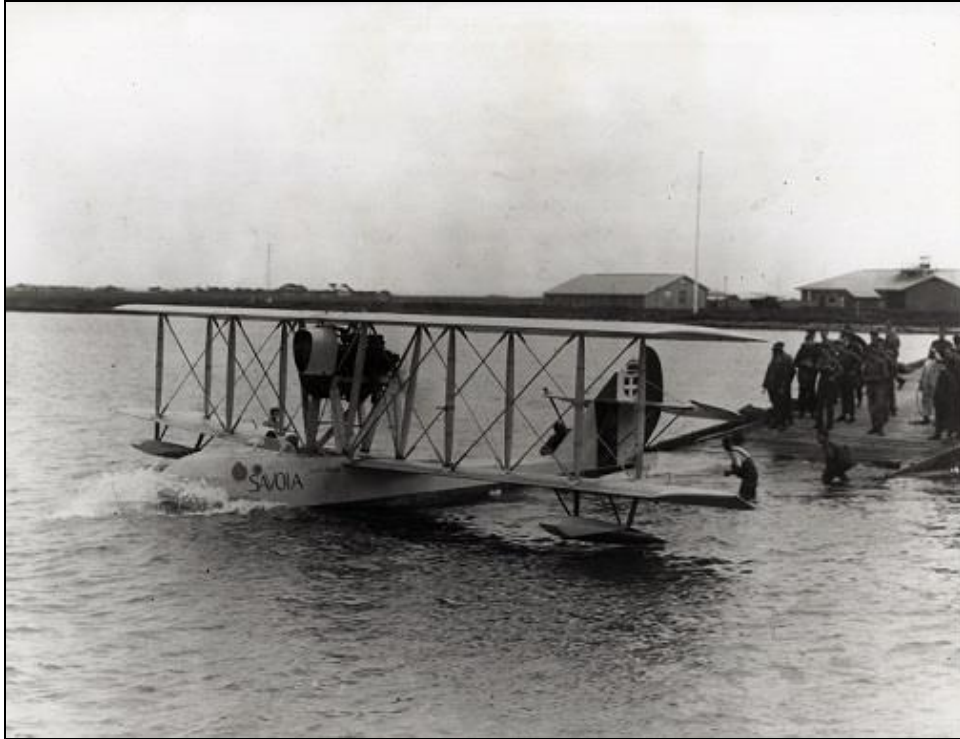


Figure 22: Savoia Marchetti flying boat at Point Cook, 1925
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Savoia box file)

Group Captain Richard Williams and 1924 aerial circumnavigation pilot Flight Lieutenant Ivor McIntyre surveyed the air route to New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from September to December 1926 in the De Havilland DH50A aircraft that had been shipped to Australia for use by the Governor-General. The flight, which began and ended at Point Cook, covered over sixteen-thousand kilometres and was the first time that an Australian-based aircraft had flown beyond Australian territory. In another pioneering flight, Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm took off from Point Cook in August 1928 in the *Southern Cross*—the same aircraft in which they were the first to cross the Pacific Ocean by air—and made the first non-stop

east-west crossing of the Australian continent, landing in Perth.¹¹⁶ Wireless operator McWilliams and navigator Litchfield accompanied them on the flight of 23 hours and 24 minutes.¹¹⁷ In July 1934, Charles Ulm and his crew departed from Point Cook in *Faith in Australia* on the first official airmail flight to New Guinea.

In late 1945, Prime Minister Ben Chifley established the Australian National Airlines Commission to start a Government-owned airline. The operational arm of the commission was to be known as Trans Australia Airways. Captains, first officers and maintenance engineers for the new airline began training at the National Airlines Training School at Point Cook in July 1946 using ex-RAAF DC3 Dakota aircraft.¹¹⁸ All of the pilots had served in the RAAF or the Royal Air Force, and many had been decorated for bravery.¹¹⁹ Students at the School, renamed TAA Pilot and Engineer Training School,¹²⁰ were mostly ex-service personnel and lived at Point Cook in conditions not far removed from their wartime service. Some are shown during their training in Figure 23. More than 250 personnel were under training by November 1946, by which time the new DC4 Skymaster aircraft arrived at Point Cook for crew and engineer conversion.¹²¹ By the time the school left Point Cook for Essendon, Victoria, in March 1947, it had trained 150 pilots in seven courses, 221 aircraft mechanics and ground engineers, and seventy-five hostesses.¹²² Miss Helen Somerville trained the airline's first hostesses at Point Cook, and applicants with knowledge of nursing or first aid and ex-service personnel were given preference.¹²³

116. F Howard, 'Kingsford Smith, Sir Charles Edward (1897–1935).'
<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kingsford-smith-sir-charles-edward-6964/text12095>.

117. 'Non-Stop: record flight', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 August 1928.

118. 'Airlines Crews to Train at Point Cook', *Argus*, 5 June 1946.

119. 'New Airline Pilots', *Examiner*, 4 July 1946.

120. 'Civil Pilot Shortage Looms', *Sunday Times*, 29 September 1946.

121. 'T.A.A. Staff has Good Background', *Examiner*, 9 November 1946.

122. 'Airlines Training School for Essendon', *Argus*, 22 March 1947.

123. 'Hostesses to be Sought for New Airlines', *Argus*, 13 August 1946.



Figure 23: *Trans Australia Airways* personnel under training at Point Cook (‘The Collection’)

The diverse range of skills identified in this section demonstrates that Point Cook is a place where many of the skills inherent in the establishment, development and progress of aviation in Australia were nurtured. Point Cook therefore is a site above all others that provides opportunity to mark the intangible heritage of the RAAF.

RITUALS, FESTIVE EVENTS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

The rituals, festive events and social practices of the RAAF share a broad commonality with those of the other armed services of Australia—the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Army—and international military forces more generally. However, there are sufficient, distinct differences in these practices that make them unique to the RAAF as a community. These practices contribute to the RAAF’s sense of distinct cultural identity and were first manifest in the earliest days of military aviation in Australia. The RAAF’s rituals, festive events and social practices have evolved over the past century, but many elements remain and continue to have an effect of the cultural heritage of the RAAF. This section is

arranged thematically and briefly documents those practices under the categories of: formal military parades; uniforms; death and funerals; hauntings; flypasts; sense of community; routine, discipline and safety; and academia.

Formal military parades

Formal military parades evolved from the review process of the training regime of the British Army during the Napoleonic Wars developed by General Sir David Dundas (1735–1820). By the turn of the nineteenth century, the manoeuvres of the review parade had become known in some circles as ‘the damned eighteen movements’.¹²⁴ By the time of the formation of the RAAF in 1921, the movements had been retained—in a stylised form—as a core component of ground-based training for *ab initio* courses. The stylised formal review parade was reserved for the apogee of formality and was employed during formal visits by important personages and at significant graduation parades (see Figure 24).



**Figure 24: *Formal graduation parade of air cadets, Point Cook parade ground 1930s*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

124. Philip Haythornwaite, *British Napoleonic Infantry Tactics 1792–1815* (Botley: Osprey, 2008), 5.

The first employment of the formal review parade by members of the RAAF was when personnel from Point Cook took part in the opening of the Provisional Parliament House, Canberra in the Australian Federal Territory on 9 May 1927. The grand spectacle involved a guard of honour and bands from the three services and was performed before the Duke and Duchess of York. While review parades were employed for some graduation events during the 1930s, the intervention of World War II reduced the scale of such occasions; and it was not until late in the war that the RAAF carried out another parade of a similar standard to the 1927 parade. The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester visited Point Cook on 26 February 1945 to present a gold cup from the Royal Air Force as a gift ‘to mark the comradeship and show the esteem with which the RAF holds the RAAF’.¹²⁵ The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Vice-Marshal George Jones, accepted the cup on a ceremonial parade, during which a ‘guard of 100 men, drilled to perfection’ gave the royal salute.¹²⁶

Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Point Cook on 6 March 1954 during their official visit to Australia. The Queen reviewed the RAAF guard of honour during the Queen’s Colour parade, and ABC Radio broadcast a description of the parade around Australia.¹²⁷ After the parade, RAAF members who had recently carried out significant achievements were introduced to the Queen, including Flight Lieutenant Bill Scott, who was the first person to break the sound barrier in Australia.¹²⁸

Less significant for the RAAF as a whole, but just as important for the individuals involved are formal graduation parades. They mark a point of transition for those graduating, usually the gaining of a significant qualification, such as a pilot’s licence, or the release from *ab initio* training. ‘Wings parades’ are the archetype of these parades, during which flying qualification badges are presented to newly-qualified pilots. They were carried out at Point Cook from the 1920s with varying levels of

125. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 90 App A.

126. ‘Duke Presents RAF Cup to Point Cook: “Cradle of RAAF”’, *Argus*, 27 February 1945.

127. ‘Broadcast of Colour Parade’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 1954.

128. ‘The Queen Meets Fastest Pilot’, *Sun-Herald*, 7 March 1954.

formality, sometimes akin to formal review parades. They reached an interim highpoint on 6 September 1944, when the last wings parade of the Empire Air Training Scheme was carried out at Point Cook. The Empire Air Training Scheme had graduated 2642 pilots at Point Cook.¹²⁹ The very last graduate was Leading Aircraftsman Coy, who was laid up in hospital due to a football injury, and Wing Commander Hal Harding pinned wings to his chest in his hospital bed after the formal parade.¹³⁰

The first four-year RAAF College course graduated at Point Cook in December 1951, and Prime Minister Robert Menzies presented graduates with their wings. After the conversion of the RAAF College to the RAAF Academy in 1961, the graduation parades took on a new level of significance, due to the associated academic degree qualification for graduates. The RAAF Academy graduation wings parades at Point Cook became a major annual ceremonial event, with practice conducted over the preceding weeks. The last of those parades was conducted on 11 December 1985, shortly before the RAAF Academy closed and training transferred to the Australian Defence Force Academy. Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen reviewed the parade in front of a record audience of 1500 dignitaries and family members. The RAAF laid-up the Queens' Colour for the RAAF Academy in the officers' mess after the parade, and Flight Lieutenant Mark Binskin gave a handling display of the latest jet fighter aircraft, the F/A-18 Hornet.¹³¹

In addition to formal review parades, the RAAF used simpler displays of military drill manoeuvres on celebratory occasions at Point Cook, notably on anniversary dates during World War II. For example, they held a parade to mark the third anniversary of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force on 15 March 1944, followed by a dinner and dance in the gymnasium.¹³² They also held a parade to mark the fourth anniversary of the Empire Air Training Scheme, celebrated as the wings parade for No 42 Course on 1 May 1944. The Governor of Victoria, Sir Winston Dugan,

129. 'Pt. Cook No Longer Service Flying School', *Advocate*, 7 September 1944.

130. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 77.; 'The Last Pilot-Trainee', *Army News*, 13 September 1944.

131. 'So it's goodbye', *RAAF News*, Jan–Feb 1986.

132. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 66.

reviewed the parade, which was the first to be open to the general public after the easing of wartime security restrictions.¹³³ The Government announced the surrender of Japan that ended World War II at 9.30am on 15 August 1945, and all except duty personnel at Point Cook were stood down for the remainder of the day.¹³⁴ The base held a formal parade the following week, during which the station commander read a message of ‘thanks and appreciation of the loyal service rendered by members during hostilities’ from the Chief of the Air Staff.¹³⁵

Firmly showing the prevailing ties to the British Empire, Point Cook hosted a parade to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 3 June 1953. The public was invited, and Air Marshal Sir Donald Hardman—the Royal Air Force officer who took over as the Chief of the Air Staff in January 1952—pledged on parade: ‘We pray that our Queen may have a long, brilliant, and very happy reign. We can lighten her task by giving her our devotion, allegiance, and service’.¹³⁶

Uniforms

Building an independent identity and a sound public reputation became the focus of the newly-formed RAAF from 1922. By then, the personnel had been selected and trained, and Point Cook—where the vast majority of those serving were employed—was settling into a routine of servicing and testing aircraft. The first head of the RAAF, Richard Williams, saw it as vitally important to take ‘every opportunity to demonstrate the possibilities and usefulness of aircraft, remembering that...few Australians had much knowledge of aircraft’.¹³⁷ A critical step in this process was to issue the airmen with the new RAAF uniform, which became available from March 1922, and the fact was reported in the specialist aviation press (see Figure 25).¹³⁸ Reflecting the role of the ‘cavalry of the clouds’, the service dress uniform sported

133. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 69.; ‘65 Air Trainees Get Wings: passing out parade’, *Argus*, 2 May 1944.

134. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 104.

135. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 107 App A.

136. ‘R.A.A.F. gave a pledge’, *Argus*, 3 June 1953.

137. Williams, *These Are Facts*, 142–3.

138. It is not clear, but officers may have obtained their RAAF uniforms at the end of their separate training at the Liverpool camp in New South Wales. George Jones suggests so, but officers’ uniforms were usually tailor-made at their own expense in accordance with sealed samples and were more likely to have been ordered in Melbourne, Victoria.

riding breeches and leggings for all ranks, and officers carried a silver-mounted black riding stick. The four-dip indigo fabric of the winter uniform—later to be known as the ‘passionate purple’ during World War II¹³⁹—was darker than the British equivalent and gave the RAAF an identity that still holds it apart from all other Commonwealth air forces. The 1922 white cotton version for summer use was replaced by a light khaki version after a short time. The cap badges and senior officers’ gold bullion peak embellishments incorporated a wattle-leaf and blossom motif, rather than the British oak-leaf peak and laurel-leaf cap badge. Peaked caps were worn by all ranks, as opposed to the soldier’s slouch hat and the sailor’s peakless flat-top cap, which gave RAAF members a distinctive appearance.



Figure 25: *Announcement of the new RAAF uniform in the press (NLA, Canberra)*

139. 'R.A.A.F. in England: mascots from Canada', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 1941.

The RAAF updated its uniform in 1936 to provide trousers in place of riding breeches and shirts and collars for the lower ranks, who had previously worn a high, stand-and-fall collar. They adopted the aforementioned British senior officer peaks and officer cap badges, but retained the distinctive Australian colour, somewhat to the indignation of the Royal Air Force—which envisaged full integration of RAAF personnel into its structure during the coming war. That distinctive airman’s uniform, with the distinctive four-dip Australian dark-blue colour met Williams’ aim of promoting the RAAF, and by the end of World War II, Australian airmen were easily-recognisable domestically and internationally.

The RAAF golden jubilee in 1971 celebrated fifty years of service to the nation. With a world war and a number of other major conflicts behind it, the RAAF felt that it had come of age. The official publication *The Golden Years* sought to recognise the achievements of the service;¹⁴⁰ and, as the RAAF began to place increased importance on its cultural heritage, it sought a new image to take it into the future. The most obvious way to do so was with a new uniform (see Figure 26). The uniform borrowed much from the United States Air Force and was a departure from the distinctive dark-blue uniform that had served the RAAF throughout the previous thirty-five years and had gained it worldwide recognition.



Figure 26: *Two RAAF members wearing the new blue-grey uniform in 1971*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, uniform box file)

140. Department of Air, *Golden Years*.

The new mid-shade blue-grey uniform had a drape-style tunic without a belt, and some airmen said it looked like that of a bus or tram conductor, with whom some claimed to have been mistaken.¹⁴¹ The almost-corporate appearance of the uniform did not contribute to pride in the service or to a sense of community among its members.¹⁴² As a result, Chief of Air Force Errol McCormack oversaw the re-introduction of the dark-blue uniform in 2000. The uniform revives the style of the readily-recognisable World War II RAAF uniform. It was well received and has helped to reinvigorate pride in their public appearance by members of the RAAF.¹⁴³

Death and funerals

Aviation is an inherently dangerous enterprise, and even more so in the military environment. Aviation deaths at Point Cook were rare but nonetheless significant to the cultural heritage of the RAAF. The first death of a pilot at the site occurred in March 1917, when private pilot Basil Watson's aircraft crashed at the water's edge. Watson was the son of a mining investor and had travelled to Britain before the war to learn to fly. He joined the Sopwith company and became an assistant test pilot. After returning to Australia, he built his own Sopwith Sparrow aircraft, which he had tested at Point Cook. Watson was flying to Point Cook from Albert Park, Victoria on 28 March and decided to demonstrate a loop manoeuvre, for which he was well known, over the personnel at Point Cook. The wings of the aircraft folded, and he plummeted into the shallow water of the bay's edge from a height of two-thousand feet, dying instantly. The wreckage of the aircraft is shown in Figure 27. The following day, members of the Australian Flying Corps marched his body from the camp medical room between two lines of airmen with officers as pall bearers,¹⁴⁴ and they placed a broken blade of his propeller, decorated by the officers and men at Point Cook with flowers, on his grave a couple of days later.¹⁴⁵

141. Patrick Patterson, discussion with author, 1986.

142. John Macdonald (ed.), 'Shades of Blue', 2018.

143. John Macdonald (ed.), 'Shades of Blue', 252.; 'New Air Force Uniforms Take Flight', *Ipswich Life*, 10 September 2014.

144. 'Basil Watson's Death: airmen pay last tribute', *Argus*, 30 March 1917.

145. 'Funeral of Basil Watson', *Argus*, 2 April 1917.



Figure 27: *Wreckage of Basil Watson's aircraft, Point Cook 1917*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, album file)

The first death of a military pilot occurred at Point Cook on 16 November 1917, when Lieutenant Reginald Duckworth of the Australian Flying Corps accidentally side-slipped his Maurice Farman aircraft at one-thousand feet and failed to regain control. He crashed in a paddock just beyond the aerodrome. It was only Duckworth's fourth solo flight.¹⁴⁶ The aftermath of the accident is illustrated in Figure 28.



Figure 28: *Wreckage of Duckworth's Farman aircraft*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, album file)

146. 'Aviator Killed: accident at Point Cook', *Argus*, 17 November 1917.

On 6 April 1921—one week after the RAAF came into existence—the service sustained its first crash and casualty. Flying Officer James Fryer-Smith and mechanic Corporal Bertie Whicker took off from Point Cook in an Avro 504K aircraft. The aircraft climbed to five-hundred feet and inexplicably nose-dived into the ground. The crew was cut from the wreckage and transported to Caulfield Military Hospital, where Whicker died that night.¹⁴⁷ Reflective of the cold nature of military administration, the routine order that listed personnel for posting in the newly-formed RAAF stated:

The Commanding Officer regrets to announce the death, as the result of an Aeroplane Accident on 6/4/1921, of the undermentioned Airman, who is struck off the strength as from that date :-

L.A.C. Whicker, B.W. (No.1 F.T.S.) – Fitter, Engine ¹⁴⁸

The RAAF held its first state funerals in June 1922, after Sir Ross Smith and Lieutenant Jim Bennett—national heroes in Australia for winning the 1919 England to Australia air race—were killed on a test flight in England. Smith and Bennett’s bodies were repatriated to Australia, and each was given a state funeral in their home state, Smith in Adelaide and Bennett in Melbourne. As they had served in the Australian Flying Corps during the war, full military honours were paid by its successor, the RAAF, which used the funerals to showcase the new service. Chief of the Air Staff Richard Williams organised the RAAF’s involvement himself,¹⁴⁹ and he ensured that the RAAF displayed the customs it had inherited from its World War I predecessor. In place of the horse-drawn gun carriage used at Army funerals, a motor tender carrying floral tribute towed an aircraft trailer carrying the coffin draped with the Union Jack and the officer’s decorations, flying helmet, goggles and gloves placed on top. The practice reflected that used by Number 3 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, which had used a motor tender to carry the Baron von Richthofen’s coffin at his funeral in France in 1918 (see Figure 29).

147. ‘Airmen Crash: mechanic dies, pilot injured’, *Camperdown Chronicle*, 9 April 1921.

148. 1FTS Routine Order April 1921

149. NAA: A705, 2/1/56.



Figure 29: *Funeral of von Richthofen, No 3 Squadron AFC, France 1918*
(Australian War Memorial, Canberra, P01034.058)

In the case of Smith's funeral on 15 June 1922, the RAAF sent tenders and trailers (see Figure 30), by rail from Point Cook, along with personnel to act as a firing party. They also flew three DH9 aircraft to Adelaide to perform the aerial escort for the cortege, and Smith's officer comrades from the 3rd Light Horse and Number 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps mounted a guard of honour.¹⁵⁰ The Adelaide returned services band played the funeral march, and a trumpeter played *Last Post*. Similar arrangements were made for Bennett's funeral in Melbourne two days later, with the guard of honour being provided by men stationed at Point Cook and the support of the Melbourne returned services band. Bennett's cortege led from Queen's Hall in Parliament House through the crowded streets to the cemetery at St Kilda. Four aircraft flew overhead in a cross formation trailing black streamers.¹⁵¹

150. 'The Gallant Pilot: burial on Thursday', *Mail*, 10 June 1922.

151. 'Burial of Lieut. Bennett: impressive ceremonies', *Argus*, 19 June 1922.



Figure 30: *Funeral cortege for Sir Ross Smith, Adelaide, 15 June 1922*
(State Library of South Australia, Adelaide, B876)

The RAAF extended similar funeral practices to its non-commissioned airmen. Henri Hermene Tovell was a war orphan whose parents were killed in France in World War I when he was five years old. Number 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps adopted him as its mascot in 1917, and they smuggled him home from Flanders, Belgium on the troopship *Kaiser-i-Hind* in 1919. After being brought up in Queensland with the Tovell family, he went to Point Cook, where he did an unofficial apprenticeship as a motor mechanic. While awaiting naturalisation papers to allow him to enlist formally, he died in a collision between his motorbike and a taxi in Spring Street, Melbourne on the night of 24 May 1928. Despite not officially being enlisted, the RAAF gave him a semi-official funeral at Fawkner Cemetery, Melbourne and provided the customary trailer for the coffin, and RAAF officers acted as pallbearers.¹⁵² His grave is shown in Figure 31.

152. Anthony Hill, *Young Digger* (Melbourne: Penguin, 2002), 247.



**Figure 31: *Grave of Hermene Tovell, Fawkner Cemetery, Melbourne*
(Australian War Memorial, Canberra, AO3681)**

In 2009, the RAAF conducted Operation MAGPIES RETURN to recover and identify the remains of the crew of Canberra bomber A84-291 that crashed in Vietnam in 1970. The crew of the No 2 Squadron aircraft, Flying Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver, were the last Australian servicemen missing from the Vietnam War.¹⁵³ The RAAF Museum at Point Cook identified the first aircraft parts recovered, thereby helping to confirm the crash site. The RAAF repatriated the remains of the crew, and the RAAF Museum now protects many of the objects found at the crash site, including some personal effects of the crew.

153. 'Found: Magpie 91 crew coming home', *Air Force*, Vol 51 No 14, 6 August 2009.

Hauntings

Point Cook has the reputation of being the most-haunted aviation site in Australia. Superstition accompanies many dangerous activities, and military aviation is no different. The Australian War Memorial displays a range of good luck charms carried by military aviators to ward off danger and ensure safe return. As a site of aviation deaths, Point Cook lends itself to the superstition of haunting within the RAAF and wider community. Evidence of supernatural events at the site is anecdotal, but this does not diminish the commonly-held perception that the base is haunted.

Many reports of hauntings emanate from the area near the air traffic control tower, and normally-fearless firemen have been spooked by the banging and rattling sounds in their hangar, located nearby. The tower is on the site of the demolished World War II tower, from which a United States Army Air force airman is reputed to have hanged himself. Fireman Sergeant Dusty Miller reported that a ghost affectionately known as 'George' resides in the hangar and that its footsteps have been heard, and that it closes doors and rattles cups, causing at least one young fireman to refuse to stay overnight on his duty shift. Miller also reported that a figure dressed in a modern flying suit can be seen strolling on the edge of the airfield in the central tarmac area near the site of the 1983 Porter crash and that 'several of us have seen him walking past our hut'.¹⁵⁴ Miller sighted it firsthand in 1989 while looking out of the window when having a shower around midnight, saying that it walked around fifteen paces and then disappeared.¹⁵⁵

Others have reported seeing a male figure dressed in a long flying coat, of the type worn during World War I, near the southern edge of the airfield. Walking and jogging around the perimeter of the airfield was a common walk to keep fit, and an early-evening walker saw the figure standing there in 1992. Being a lone female, she decided not to pass him, and before she turned to walk back to the married quarter area, he disappeared. A guard on security patrol reported a similar experience.¹⁵⁶

154. Ken Llewellyn, *Flight into the Ages* (Warriewood: Felspin, 1991), 113–14.

155. Llewellyn, *Flight into the Ages*, 113–14.

156. Neil Roche, discussion with author, 11 November 2009.

The World War II Armament School building (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four) is the site with the most-numerous ghost stories. It housed the RAAF Museum during the 1980s and 1990s, and one staff member reported instances of lights and heaters being turned on or off after security alarms had been set and of items being moved, including a heavy weapons-storage case.¹⁵⁷ The museum display depicting a re-creation of Sir Richard Williams' study drew many reports, with it being 'tidied' after dusting or books being physically returned after being temporarily taken for research. The display, containing many items of historic significance to the RAAF, was protected by a large Perspex screen that needed to be partially dismantled to gain access.¹⁵⁸

The Armament School building had a centrally-located research facility and staff rest hut, which was the location of numerous reported strange occurrences. Retired army Warrant Officer Class Two Jock Smith was a museum volunteer and not known for his humour. One day in the early 1990s, he reported seeing a figure walk through the wall of the rest hut, pause and face him, then continue walking through the opposite wall. His anger at not being believed by others working there was so great that they thought they might have to call an ambulance for fear of him having a heart attack. He never returned to the museum again. Similarly, two female officer cadets who had elected to be discharged early in their training worked at the museum awaiting their discharge from the RAAF, as was a common practice, and were working in the central research hut, when the blood-curdling scream from one of them brought staff running. After many minutes of consoling, she was finally able to explain that she had been rubbed against by a figure walking through the room.¹⁵⁹

While no firm evidence exists to prove the existence of supernatural entities at Point Cook, the prevalence of their reports makes the reputation of Point Cook as a haunted base part of cultural heritage of the RAAF.

157. Ken Kurtz, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, 1990.

158. Kurtz, interview.

159. David Gardner, discussion with author, 9–10 August 2013.

Flypasts

The RAAF, in line with most other air forces internationally, uses aircraft flypasts as a form of ceremonial salute. As the only military aerodrome operating in Australia until the opening of Richmond, New South Wales and Laverton, Victoria in the mid-1920s, Point Cook was the launching place for many early military flypasts in Australia. Further, as the interim national capital, Melbourne was the host city for many significant official arrivals in the country, where greetings by the Governor-General, Prime Minister and Federal ministers were a regular occurrence. The first official task of the newly-arrived Avro 504K and Sopwith Pup aircraft in April 1919 was to welcome home fellow airmen from the Australian Flying Corps on the *Hygeia* as they steamed into Port Phillip. The aircraft circled the ship as it docked at Port Melbourne, and one flew low enough to drop a message of greeting onto the deck.¹⁶⁰ They also took part in the welcome of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Jellicoe at St Kilda in May 1919¹⁶¹ and the arrival of Prime Minister Billy Hughes on his official visit to Bendigo in September.¹⁶² One newspaper attributed record attendance on the last day of the 1919 Royal Melbourne Show in part to the advertised attendance of two aircraft from Point Cook.¹⁶³ Later, in October 1934, most of the RAAF's fleet of aircraft took part in the welcome for the Duke of Gloucester to Melbourne. They combined with twelve civilian aircraft and three visiting Royal Air Force Short Rangoon flying boats, on a visit to Point Cook from Basra, Iraq, to make a total of fifty aircraft in the aerial escort to the Duke's ship.¹⁶⁴

As part of a national day of parades, Melbourne held its Victory Day parade in on 10 June 1946. General Sir Thomas Blamey on his white charger led twenty-thousand marchers before a crowd of 250,000 onlookers.¹⁶⁵ Aircraft from Point Cook flew over the parade, including the prototype CA-15 Kangaroo piston-engine fighter and the first 'jet-propelled' aircraft in Australia, a Gloucester Meteor on loan from the

160. 'Airmen Welcomed by Airmen', *Argus*, 19 April 1919.

161. 'Landing at St Kilda: a wonderful welcome', *Argus*, 31 May 1919.

162. 'Bendigo Suspends Business', *Argus*, 2 September 1919.

163. 'Royal Show Ends: 205,539 visitors for the week', *Argus*, 29 September 1919.

164. 'Impressive Aerial Escort: 50 machines take part', *Argus*, 19 October 1934.

165. '250,000 People Watch Melbourne's Victory Parade', *Advocate*, 11 June 1946.

Royal Air Force.¹⁶⁶ During Queen Elizabeth II's visit to Point Cook on 6 March 1954, the RAAF marked the royal salute with a flypast of twelve Vampire jets at a height of 350 feet, travelling at an impressive 500 knots.¹⁶⁷

Sense of community

Military aerodromes, because of the need to locate them on flat terrain away from major development, are isolated, and the communities that live there develop robust strategies to cope with the relative isolation. One strategy is to establish messes, which is a custom inherited from the Army. The term 'mess' refers to a military social entity as well as the building that the membership occupies. Messes provide notional and physical segregation of the social divisions within the military community, commonly comprising commissioned officers, senior non-commissioned officers and the enlisted ranks. Commissioned officers' messes have an ancient lineage, and senior non-commissioned officers began forming formal messes by the time military aviation began to develop. Messes, like that at Point Cook illustrated in Figure 32, are a place for dining and socialising that provide the segregation seen as necessary during non-working hours, and formal dining-in nights are a staple form of social bonding within messes.



**Figure 32: Originally captioned 'Sunday soberness', officers' mess Point Cook 1936
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

166. 'First Jet Plane Arrives: will be tested in Australia', *Border Watch*, 21 May 1946.

167. 'Eventful Visit to Geelong for Queen', *Mail*, 6 March 1954.; 'Royal Couple meet our flying aces at Air Force parade', *Argus*, 7 March 1954.

The first officers' mess for military aviators in Australia was formed by default when the two commissioned instructors and four commissioned flying students dined in the officers' mess tent in the camp that established Point Cook as a military aerodrome in 1914. The first military aviation sergeants' mess followed in September 1915, when the sergeant mechanics formed their own mess at Point Cook. The members elected Warrant Officer Henry Chester—who was assigned service number 1 and is now recognised as Australia's first enlisted airman—as its first president. The small sergeants' dining room to the rear of the officers' mess became their mess building. Officers held a formal dining-in at the mess every few months—although there is no evidence that sergeants and warrant officers did. The table settings for a typical dining-in are illustrated in Figure 33.



Figure 33: *Officers' mess Point Cook set for a formal dining-in, 1936*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

The small group of officers in the immediate post- World War I mess at Point Cook formed a close community, and they made their own evening entertainment. Hawaiian dance bands were very popular at the time, and Lieutenants McNamara and Oakes formed a quartet, whose ragtime music was a popular entertainment. Lieutenant Jack Tunbridge was an insomniac and frequently disturbed the sleep of his mess mates, so one day, McNamara chose to pay him back. While Tunbridge was

on leave, McNamara locked a draft-horse in Tunbridge's fashionably-decorated room in the mess. In another incident, Lieutenant Fred Shepherd became so enraged by Tunbridge playing his gramophone late at night that he discharged a full magazine of ammunition into the gramophone player.¹⁶⁸

Unmarried mess members used light-hearted, if sometime dangerous, games as entertainment in the isolation of Point Cook. A hunting trophy of a mounted wapiti head hung in the officers' mess, representative of the Wapiti light bomber aircraft of the early 1920s. It was positioned on one of the chimneys, high above the hearth in the ante room. One late-night mess game for the junior officers was to climb the wall and shimmy along the roof beam then hold the steel tension hoop in the beam to reach forward and kiss the wapiti on the nose (see Figure 34). Air Marshal Sir George Jones later said of his time at Point Cook in the 1920s, 'in those first ten years it was an intimate club, in which everybody knew or was known to each other'.¹⁶⁹ Officers and airmen attended the tri-service balls held in Melbourne each year as well as occasional RAAF balls. For the 1924 ball, the motor transport section transport provided transport in the form of an ambulance for officers and their wives, while airmen and their wives travelled in an open char-a-banc.¹⁷⁰



**Figure 34: Wapiti head trophy and roof-truss hoop, Point Cook officers' mess
(S. Campbell-Wright)**

168. Miller, *Early Birds*, 70.

169. Jones, *From Private to Air Marshal*, 29.

170. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 180, 2 October 1924.

Beyond mess life, many other activities combated isolation and built a sense of community. In the early 1920s, movies were shown at the base cinema, lectures were given in the recreation room, debating and rifle clubs were formed, concerts by visiting entertainers were organised monthly, and on one occasion, 'Professor Bell' and members of the Australian Society of Magicians performed a show.¹⁷¹ Sports were also important, especially against other organisations, such as football matches against the Post and Telegraph Department and participation in the Werribee District Cricket Association competition. Sport was held regularly on Wednesday afternoons, and proximity to the bay made fishing a popular pastime.¹⁷²

Late in World War II to help keep flagging spirits up, a base concert party calling itself 'Krazy Kampers' put on shows,¹⁷³ and personnel started a vegetable garden to supplement rations. World champion billiards player Walter Lindrum gave demonstrations of his skill at Point Cook,¹⁷⁴ and a very successful boxing and wrestling tournament was organised. The bouts, held in a hangar, included exhibitions by the world-famous American welterweight champion boxer 'Alabama Kid'.¹⁷⁵ Group Captain Frank Lukis commanded Point Cook in 1939 and was Vice-President of the Naval and Military Club in 1939, becoming President in 1940.¹⁷⁶ He knew the privations that war could bring and ordered an enormous quantity of Scotch whisky for the club. His actions were praised when the club was the only one in Melbourne able to serve Scotch by the end of the war.¹⁷⁷

As a reversal of the standard roles, members of the sergeants' and officers' messes acted as waiters for the 1944 Christmas dinner and served the airmen and airwomen at Point Cook.¹⁷⁸ On Christmas morning, 'Santa Claus' visited the children and parents living on the base and the personnel in the sick quarters. He distributed gifts

171. No 1 Station RAAF Routine Order 35, 26 February 1923.

172. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 39, 16 March 1923.; No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 4, 17 January 1924.

173. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 11–12.

174. 'Lindrum on Tour for Red Cross', *Argus*, 12 March 1942.

175. 'RAAF Boxing and Wrestling', *Argus*, 26 November 1942.; 'RAAF Boxing', *Argus*, 26 November 1942.

176. W Perry, *The Naval and Military Club, Melbourne: A History of its First Hundred Years, 1881–1981* (Melbourne: Lothian, 1981), 387–88.

177. Rob Lukis, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, 30 August 1996.

178. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 119.

from under a Christmas tree after arriving in an aircraft.¹⁷⁹ His arrival by air was a first for the base.

After the war, the formation of the RAAF College in 1948 engendered a continuation of sporting activities, with Rugby Union,¹⁸⁰ cricket, hockey, basketball, table tennis and athletics being played in organised competitions.¹⁸¹ International cricketers Lindsay Hassett and Neil Harvey opened the new turf wicket on the sports oval in October 1954 and gave the cadets some tips on the game during a short demonstration match.¹⁸² Hobbies were encouraged, and cadets built canoes, skis and toboggans, along with other less-practical activities. Air Cadet Alan Heggen later recalled that he and others spent some of their leisure time exploring ‘the “graveyard” of wartime aircraft that by 1949 occupied part of the semi-wetland by the far side of Point Cook airfield’.¹⁸³

The relative isolation and long period of stability at Point Cook from the 1960s through to the 1980s allowed the village atmosphere that had existed before World War II to be re-established, but with far greater amenity. The post office and primary school remained active, and they were joined by a sub-branch of the National Bank, a Caltex service station, a hairdresser, a dry-cleaners shop and a mini-mart. These were later augmented by a kindergarten, the RAAF Wives’ Club, a Scout group, a golf club, pistol club, gun club, snow ski club and flying club.¹⁸⁴ A tradition emerged known as ‘alpha strikes’, where cadets conducted a surprise party in an unsuspecting instructor’s house on the base with no notice. Naturally, the cadets brought all of the food and drink.

By the mid-1980s, over eighty Defence families lived on the base, and the more-liberal attitudes of the time prevailed. It was not uncommon for senior non-

179. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 121 Annex A.

180. ‘This will Start an Argument’, *Argus*, 22 July 1948.; ‘Point Cook Rugby is Unpopular’, *Argus*, 23 July 1948.

181. Frost, *RAAF College and Academy*, 20.

182. ‘Stars and airmen’, *Argus*, 7 October 1954.; ‘Test men for Pt. Cook’, *Argus*, 6 October 1954.

183. B Anderson, ed., *Ploughshares and Propellers* (Kerang: Hughes and Anderson, 2008), 254.

184. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Base Williams 1991* (Crows Nest: Showcase, 1991), 24.

commissioned officers to be invited to parties at senior officers' married quarters. In one of many examples of mutual support, a toddler belonging to an employee working at the base went missing late one afternoon, and the family's search was aided by many who lived on the base. The search had a sense of urgency, because it was not long after a similar disappearance on Laverton base ended in the death of the child when caught in a stormwater drain. The girl at Point Cook was found alive and well under the floorboards of a house that was under renovation.¹⁸⁵

Older children played together on the base in the 1990s, and many things were on offer to amuse them, including the fuselage of a World War II Hudson bomber aircraft that rested behind a hangar at the southern tarmac for many years. The disused fire training ground and rubbish tip by the water's edge also provided hours of playful enjoyment, with exploration amongst the old aircraft, discarded vehicle parts and field training dugouts. There was a large metal tank partially buried on the shoreline that took the children's interest as they climbed over it and tried to work out what it was.¹⁸⁶ It later proved to be a washed-up anti-shipping mine and, once identified, bomb disposal experts were called in to deal with it. News reports indicated that the mine was detonated by explosives experts after the establishment of a one-and-a-half-kilometre exclusion zone, with Victoria Police helicopter enforcement of a no-fly zone over the beach.¹⁸⁷ In fact, the mine was found to be inactive and was salvaged. It is now in the RAAF Museum's collection.

The sense of community established at Point Cook over successive generations of workers, families and children—during wartime and peacetime—provides an insight into aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of the RAAF. Such insights are rare in observations of military communities.

Routine, discipline and safety

Technology forms the basis of all aviation, and adherence to flying and engineering standards is essential to avoiding injury and death. The RAAF uses routine and

185. Susan Campbell-Wright, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, 2013.

186. Angus Wright, email to author, 23 June 2013.

187. 'WW2 mine detonated on Vic beach', <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2003-10-17/ww2-mine-detonated-on-vic-beach/1494844>.

discipline to instil a sense of responsibility in its personnel regarding the need to adhere to aviation standards and military values. Engineering standards at Point Cook were very high from the beginning of flying on the site. A newspaper report in 1915 stated that the Gnome aircraft engines were overhauled after every twelve hours of flying, and the airframes were stripped of their fabric and checked every fifty hours.¹⁸⁸ One of the Deperdussin aircraft, which was used for taxiing and engine starting practice, was maintained by the flying students to give them mechanical experience.¹⁸⁹ This practice gave pilots an understanding of the technology under their control, which led to improved safety through pilots not overstressing aircraft components.

Discipline and regimentation were part of life at Point Cook from the start of the RAAF in 1921. Trumpet calls regulated routine at Point Cook, with reveille, mead times, lights out and other daily events having their own distinctive call (see Figure 35).¹⁹⁰ The orderly office lowered the ensign each weekday to the sound of *Retreat*, the times of sunset being given to the trumpeter by the base sergeant-major weekly.¹⁹¹ The orderly sergeant called the roll after the sounding of *Tattoo* each evening in the recreation hall,¹⁹² and he locked the gates after the sounding of *Lights Out*.¹⁹³ Routine orders regularly reminded the men that, when marching from the hangars by the shore to the domestic area, they were to 'march at attention'.¹⁹⁴ Airmen needed reminding on one occasion that:

The practice of wearing fancy socks, tunics opened at the neck, with civilian pattern ties and collars, etc, when Airmen appear in uniform away from the Station, does not add to the prestige of the R.A.A.F.¹⁹⁵

188. 'Military Flying School: work at Point Cook', *Argus*, 25 March 1915.

189. 'Military Flying School'.

190. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 68, 2 October 1922.

191. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 81, 26 October 1922.

192. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 55, 23 March 1923.

193. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 106, 26 June 1923.

194. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 81, 26 October 1922.

195. No 1 Aircraft Depot Routine Order 147, 4 August 1925.

3. AMENDMENTS - STATION STANDING ORDERS - ROUTINE :

 Reference Station Standing Orders, Part 4, Para 8, Sub-
 para V is cancelled, and the following substituted :-
 SUMMER ROUTINE.

TRUMPET CALL.	MONDAY.	TUES, WED. & THURSDAY.	FRIDAY.	SATURDAY & SUNDAY.
REVELLE.	0630	0630	0630	0700 Hrs.
BREAKFAST.	0745	0715	0715	0745 Hrs.
QUARTER-WARNING.	0815	0745	0745	0745 (Watch)
5 mins. WARNING.	0825	0755	0755	0755 Hrs.
ADVANCE.	0830	0800	0800	0800 Hrs.
STAND-DOWN (SmokeOh)	1045	1045	1045	-----
STAND-TO.	1100	1100	1100	-----
FALL-IN (By UNITS at HANGARS)	1215	1215	1215	-----
DINNER.	1235	1235	1235	1235 Hrs.
QUARTER-WARNING.	1305	1305	1305	-----
5 Minutes WARNING.	1315	1315	1315	-----
ADVANCE.	1320	1320	1320	-----
STAND-DOWN (SmokeOh)	1500	1500	----	-----
STAND-TO.	1510	1510	----	-----
FALL-IN (By UNITS at HANGARS).	1705	1705	1545	-----
DISMISS (On UNIT PARADES)	1715	1715	1600	-----
TEA.	1730	1730	1615	1730 Hrs.
FIRST POST.	2200	2200	2200	2200 Hrs.
SECOND POST.	2230	2230	2230	2230 Hrs.
LIGHTS OUT.	2245	2245	2245	2245 Hrs.

Figure 35: Summer base routine, Point Cook 1924
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, 1AD Routine Orders)

In May 1922, the RAAF dismissed five aircraftsmen as unfit for service life after a prima facie dispute over uniforms. Builders were extending the airmen's mess, and the men were required to eat dinner, wearing formal service dress, in the recreation room on seating forms that had become greasy from overalls worn at lunch time. They, and most of the 230 other men, disregarded the order to wear service dress at dinner.¹⁹⁶ This was not the official reason for their dismissal, but they cited it in a complaint to the press alleging wrongful dismissal. They also complained that life at Point Cook comprised routine camp work and excessive drill practice.¹⁹⁷ Wing Commander Richard Williams countered in the press that the five men had shown signs that air force work did not suit them and that it was 'both in their own interests

196. 'Discharged Airmen: trouble at 'drome'', *Mail*, 20 May 1922.

197. 'Air Force Dispute: five men dismissed', *Daily News*, 23 May 1922.

and in the interests of the service, to give them an opportunity of making a fresh beginning in civil life, where they might be more successful'.¹⁹⁸

The first RAAF prosecution for inappropriate press comment was in 1929, with the court martial of Aircraftsman Keith Hooper at Point Cook. Hooper was a clerk in the headquarters of No 1 Flying Training School, where he handled the commander's files and correspondence. He had disobeyed standing orders by communicating official information to Sydney's *Smith's Weekly*. The prosecution alleged that Hooper's information was designed to make the RAAF appear inefficient and that he was paid for his information. The prosecuting officer produced a diary found in Hooper's effects, in which one entry read: 'If anyone suspected my Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde scheme it would be the finish so far as I am concerned'.¹⁹⁹ Hooper was discharged from the RAAF after serving a twenty-eight-day sentence of imprisonment.²⁰⁰

Opportunities for corruption presented themselves in the black market that developed as goods and supplies became harder to acquire during World War II. Airmen and civilian staff at Point Cook stole over one-thousand litres of high-grade aviation petrol,²⁰¹ and the ensuing court martial found two corporals and five aircraftsmen guilty of the thefts. The corporals were reduced to the ranks, and all were awarded between sixty-five and ninety days' detention.²⁰²

World War II commanders paid considerable attention to flying discipline, and in addressing a parade at Point Cook in December 1942, Group Captain Rolf Brown warned newly-qualified pilots against overconfidence in the air. Those found to be in breach of flying discipline, especially conducting unauthorised low flying, were often court martialled, and dismissed in some instances. Such lessons were not always learnt, and on 7 December 1983, army Pilatus Porter aircraft A14-702 crashed at Point Cook. The pilot, Captain David Groves, was flying the aircraft from Laverton, Victoria to Fairbairn in the Australian Capital Territory—where his family was

198. 'Discharged from Air Force: men declared unsuited for work', *Argus*, 23 May 1922.

199. 'Court Martial Follows Air Force Disclosures', *Canberra Times*, 18 July 1929.

200. 'Air Force Court Martial: imprisonment and dismissal', *Argus*, 24 July 1929.

201. 'Reported Petrol Losses; Now Charged', *Herald*, 20 November 1941.

202. 'Detention for Seven R.A.A.F. Men', *Age*, 4 December 1941.

awaiting his arrival—and he sought clearance to overfly Point Cook on the way. It was his last day in the army, and overflying his alma mater was a fitting way to mark the occasion. However, it seems that emotion overcame airmanship,²⁰³ and he decided to ‘beat up’ the airfield, flying low and slow down the north-south runway. As the aircraft turned past the control tower, it stalled and crashed beside the taxiway in front of the tower (see Figure 36).²⁰⁴ Groves survived the initial impact but succumbed to his injuries despite an immediate response from rescuers.²⁰⁵



**Figure 36: Wreckage of A14-702 Pilatus Porter, Point Cook 7 December 1983
(ADF Serials, A14-702)**

Another example of poor airmanship involved the Commanding Officer of the RAAF Museum, Squadron Leader Jeremy Clark. He flew the RAAF Museum’s Vampire jet trainer for the sunset flypast on a ceremonial occasion at Point Cook in the mid-1990s. During the rehearsal, he flew the flypast at an altitude of 400 feet, and the Officer Commanding, Group Captain Ian ‘Tiny’ Ashbrook—himself a pilot of

203. Airmanship is the term used to describe the professionalism, judgement and discipline required to operate an aircraft safely and efficiently.

204. Michael Dance, discussion with author, 6 August 2013.

205. ‘Death Flight: Army plane in flames’, unidentified newspaper clipping, undated.

the same Vampire—chastised Clark for flying too low over the audience area and ordered him to make the flypast at 500 feet or higher for the event itself. Instead, Clark did the flypast at 250 feet with the aircraft in the inverted attitude. Ashbrook banned Clark from flying the Vampire ever again.²⁰⁶

Informal discipline also played a part in flying training, and the ‘sight-board run’ emerged at Point Cook during the 1980s and 1990s. During this form of what is more-recently recognised as bastardisation, trainee pilots had to run the perimeter of the airfield in their flying suit, helmet, life vest and parachute. When moved to do so, instructors sent trainees on the run immediately after a sortie as a technique to reinforce a lesson after students had demonstrated poor airmanship. The trainee’s destination was one of the sight-boards placed beyond the end of the runways to help pilots maintain a visual reference while landing, and the round trip was about four kilometres. Students adopted the habit of writing their name on back of the board, often citing their infraction.²⁰⁷ The boards are no-longer required for flying and are held in the RAAF Museum collection.

Academia

Due to its reliance on technology, the RAAF requires many of its members to have a sound underlying knowledge of physics and mathematics and did so from its earliest days. Further, the needs of providing air power for Australia require many members of the service to be educated in a broad range of political, strategic and social disciplines. As the 1923 flying course at Point Cook progressed, the RAAF employed a Science Instructor to teach the theory of aerodynamics, navigation, wireless, aerial range-finding, optics, internal combustion engines, bombing and gunnery. Doctor Richard Hoskins held the position, and he also provided lectures on mathematics and technical subjects out of hours for staff employed at Point Cook. He is shown in discussion with Lord Gowrie during a ceremonial graduation parade at Point Cook in the 1930s in Figure 37. Hoskins stayed with the RAAF until 1939, by which time his

206. Peter Meehan, discussion with author, 30 August 2013.

207. Glen Coy, email to author, 3 July 2013.

role had become the inaugural Principal Education Officer, in charge of five subordinate RAAF education officers.²⁰⁸



Figure 37: *Doctor Richard Hoskins in discussion with Lord Gowrie, Point Cook 1930s*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

The RAAF College was formed on 1 August 1947, with the ideal of providing professional education and training for future generations of the RAAF's senior leaders.²⁰⁹ Examination of military officer education in a number of countries led to the college's four-year course design, which was ultimately based on United States and British models. According to its first commandant, Air Commodore Val Hancock,

the college will impart a knowledge, not only of warfare right up to the atomic age and beyond, but of the political, scientific, social, and economic questions so important to an understanding of the modern world.²¹⁰

208. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 199.

209. Stephens, *Going Solo*, 118.

210. 'Point Cook—Duntroon of the Air', *Argus*, 9 October 1948.

To that end, the college placed strong emphasis on personal qualities and knowledge of the humanities.²¹¹ The University of Melbourne provided the formal education component of the course, and graduates did receive academic degrees. The location of Point Cook was deliberately chosen, because ‘it is in surroundings rich in association with the pioneers of aviation in this country’;²¹² and, while some RAAF senior staff preferred Canberra as the location, it was not suitable due to the nature of the associated aerodrome at Fairbairn.²¹³

Recommendations to align the education provided at the RAAF College with a complete, rather than the previous partial, university degree had been considered since 1956, and a report of late 1957 provided formal recommendations to restructure the RAAF College and its training syllabus.²¹⁴ As a result of these two factors, the RAAF Academy was formed on 1 January 1961 and offered the Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Melbourne. Along with the navy and army during this period, the RAAF saw a need to provide a higher standard of education for its officers, noting that

the increasing rate of technological change has decreed that the RAAF train officers with the ability to comprehend not only the military problems of modern warfare but also the technical details of modern weapons which will play an increasingly-important part in future RAAF planning.²¹⁵

The RAAF Academy succeeded in producing some excellent scholars, and Flight Lieutenant Colin Hingston was the first graduate to become a Rhodes Scholar in 1975. On his return from Oxford, England, the RAAF employed him as an engineering officer on the new F-111 aircraft.²¹⁶ Hingston was the second Rhodes Scholar for the RAAF, having followed in the footsteps of Aircraft Research and

211. Frost, *RAAF College and Academy*, v.

212. ‘Duntroon of the Air’.

213. Frost, *RAAF College and Academy*, 7.

214. Frost, *RAAF College and Academy*, 35–7.

215. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, *Report relating to the proposed construction of a Science Block at the Royal Australian Air Force Academy*, 4 (1961).

216. ‘RAAF base to get a philosopher’, *Canberra Times*, 4 September 1975.

Development Unit engineer, Flying Officer Robert Shaw, who was a Rhodes Scholar in 1948.²¹⁷

The rituals, social practices and attitudes identified in this section demonstrate that many of the aspects of intangible cultural heritage of the RAAF had their genesis at Point Cook. The site, more than any other associated with the RAAF, is a place that coalesces the greatest amount of cultural heritage elements.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has sought to document the intangible heritage aspects of Point Cook's past as descriptive historical narrative, and, in the process, to determine what events of significance for Australian aviation, military and civil, occurred at Point Cook during the military occupation of the site. Such an enterprise is inevitably an inventory of actions of significance, but it will form the basis, along with the heritage evaluation of the site in the following chapter, of a more-complete range of cultural elements to allow analysis in Part Two of this thesis.

Point Cook has been the site of many significant events for the RAAF and for Australia's civil aviation. Famously, the site hosted the first flight by an Australian military aircraft; however, it also hosted the inauguration of numerous skills related to the culture of the RAAF, including flying training, flying safety and maintenance excellence. It was also the site for many significant events, such as the first civil and military flying deaths in Australia, the first attempted air-sea rescue, the formation of the Australian Flying Corps squadrons for service overseas in World War I and the staging of the first wartime air operations from the Australian mainland. The rich heritage of the site has contributed to cultural rituals and beliefs that are part of the intangible heritage and cultural identity of the RAAF. Point Cook is in a unique position within the collective memory of the organisation.

217. 'Rhodes Scholar', *Western Mail*, 18 December 1947.

CHAPTER FOUR – A HISTORY OF POINT COOK THROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE SITE

Place is the greatest thing, as it contains all things.

Thales (624–546 BC)¹

Nestled on the shore of Port Phillip, twenty-five kilometres from Victorian state capital Melbourne, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base of Point Cook is separated from the farming and suburban environs that surround it. Set apart since 1913, it has developed according to the requirements of Australian military aviation and has remained largely unaffected by the influences of civilian activity and development. The site is unique, therefore, as a substantially-intact aviation site that spans almost the entire duration of powered flight in Australia. The built environment of the site is not on a monumental scale, even within the relatively-meagre standards of Australian military architecture. The site has nothing to compare, for example, with the multi-storey bluestone buildings of Victoria Barracks in Melbourne and Sydney that embody much of the public memory of Australia's colonial military heritage; but, architectural historian Dolores Hayden argues that:

The importance of ordinary buildings in public memory has largely been ignored, although, like monumental architecture, common urban places like union halls, schools, and residences have the power to evoke visual, social memory.²

This chapter examines how the 'ordinary buildings' of Point Cook—the hangars, training buildings and residences—form an environment of industrial and domestic elements that creates a rich cultural landscape. Retention of the site by the Commonwealth has applied a form of conservation that accords with Article 8 of the *Burra Charter*, which places importance on setting in conservation and interpretation:

1. Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 1: The Seven Sages (c200), 35.

2. Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), 46–47.

Conservation requires the retention of an appropriate setting. This includes retention of the visual and sensory setting, as well as the retention of spiritual and other cultural relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place. New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.³

While the site has evolved, in line with most other industrial sites, the construction and demolition that has taken place has been within the framework of the enduring purpose of the site and not intruded upon by external, non-aviation-related development.

Military occupation was the final use of the land and followed the eighty years of European agricultural use that, in turn, supplanted thousands of years of Indigenous use. Each pattern of use at the site sustained the needs and endeavours of the users. This chapter is primarily concerned with two research questions: what contribution did the environment at Point Cook make to human existence prior to military occupation; and how has the built environment of Point Cook developed during the period of military ownership? In contrast with the preceding chapter of this thesis, which employed a thematic approach, this chapter employs a chronological approach that firstly traces pre-military occupation of the site and its environs before addressing the military use of the site in a detailed descriptive historical narrative.

PRE-MILITARY OCCUPATION AND USE OF THE SITE

According to research conducted during the 1970s by Wyndham region local historian Ken James, the Indigenous community considered the land in the vicinity of the RAAF base to be boundary territory.⁴ The Werribee River formed a boundary between the lands of the Kulin Nation to the east and the Mara Nation to the west.⁵ Therefore, groups from either Nation could hunt on the land.⁶ Groups from the Mara's Wathaurong (or Wada-wurrung) tribe and the Kulin's Wurundjeri and

3. Australia ICOMOS, *Burra Charter*, 5.

4. Ken James, *Aborigines of the Werribee District* (Geelong: Campbell Wilson, 1978), 5.

5. James, *Aborigines of the Werribee District*, Appendix B.

6. James, *Aborigines of the Werribee District*, 5.

Bunurong (or Boon-wurrung) tribes defined their boundaries along the southern reaches of the Werribee River. Ken James and Lance Pritchard originally claimed that the Marpeang-buluk clan of the Wada-wurrung tribe occupied the land to the west of the Werribee River.⁷ However, subsequent research by Gary Presland indicates that members of the Western Kulin tribe of the Worinyuloke bulluk occupied the land to the west of the Werribee River.⁸

Future research may determine the Indigenous inhabitation of the land to the west of the Werribee River with greater clarity; however, researchers generally agree that the Yalukit-willam clan of the Bunurong tribe used the land to the east of the river, now occupied by the RAAF base.⁹ This assessment of the original land-owners is affirmed by heritage consultants Kathleen Hislop and David Rhodes in their cultural heritage management plan for a site north of the base.¹⁰ The map in Figure 38 indicates the ranges of the Indigenous inhabitants of the land around Port Phillip.

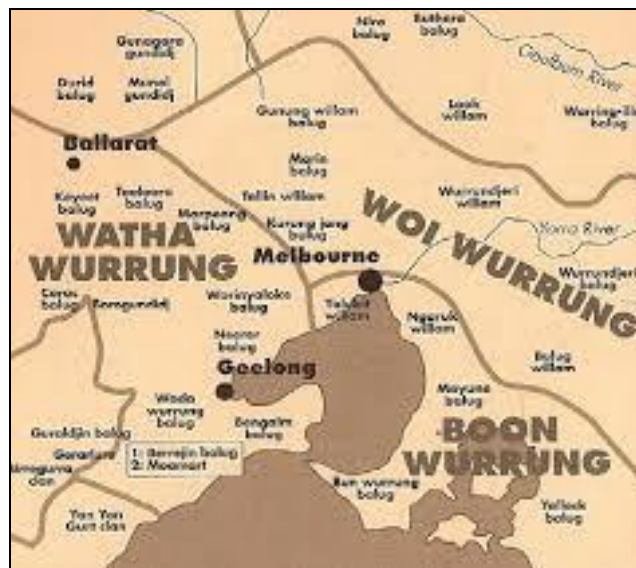


Figure 38: Map of traditional owners of the land around Port Phillip (City of Hobsons Bay)

7. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 8–9.

8. Gary Presland, *First People: The Eastern Kulin of Melbourne, Port Phillip and Central Victoria* (Melbourne: Museum Victoria Publishing, 2010).

9. Ian Clark, *The Yalukit-willam: the first people of Hobsons Bay* (Altona: Hobsons Bay City Council, 2011).

10. Kathleen Hislop and David Rhodes, *Proposed Residential Development at 360-438 Point Cook Road, Point Cook: Cultural Heritage Management Plan*, Heritage Insight Pty Ltd (Collingwood, 2014), 22.

The first Europeans arrived in what became known as Port Phillip in 1802, and were the party of Lieutenant John Murray, who discovered the entrance to the port during the previous year. Explorer Matthew Flinders followed them later in 1802. On reports of their discoveries, Governor King sent botanist and gardener James Fleming and Acting Surveyor-General of New South Wales Charles Grimes from Sydney to examine the land, soil and timber of the Port Phillip area in February 1803. The survey party met a group of eleven Aborigines at Point Cook on 18 February and provided gifts of biscuits, fish, a tomahawk and a hat.¹¹ The survey was in reparation for Lieutenant Colonel David Collins' ill-fated penal settlement, established in October 1803 at the place now known as Sorrento. In his journal, Fleming described the land at Point Cook as:

a gentle rise from the beach, which is muddy, with large stones; the land is clay, the stone appearing at the top...There is a slip of trees about half a mile from the beach, then a clear plain to the mountains, which I suppose to be fifteen or twenty miles.¹²

The next Europeans to explore the area were Hamilton Hume and Captain William Hovell, who passed with their party through during their 1824–25 expedition to Corio Bay, and Hume noted 'abundant game and water, the luxuriant growth of grasses and rushes and the general prosperity of the region blacks'.¹³

In June 1835, John Batman of the Port Phillip Association set out from Van Diemen's Land for the region of present-day Melbourne and, on some accounts, made a treaty to 'purchase' the lands now occupied by the city.¹⁴ John Helder Wedge, surveyor for the Port Phillip Association, followed Batman in October of that year and surveyed the Port Phillip District 'purchase', dividing it into seventeen portions

11. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 3.

12. John Shillinglaw, ed., *Historical records of Port Phillip: the first annals of the Colony of Victoria* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1972), 29.

13. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 1.

14. Batman's treaty has been much debated. See, for example, James Boyce, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne & the Conquest of Australia* (Collingwood: Black Inc, 2011).

for distribution by drawing lots to the members of the association.¹⁵ Wedge acquired the land comprising Point Cook.¹⁶ He noted in 1836 that

[t]he whole is thickly covered with a light growth of grass the soil being in general stiff and shallow...the plains are quite open...and I have no doubt they will become valuable sheep stations for breeding stocks.¹⁷

The local Indigenous community remained in the area during the 1830s, despite Wedge's vision for use of the land. Historian Ian Clark claims that the local Indigenous community maintained the grassy plains by regular burning to encourage new growth that attracted kangaroos and emus for hunting.¹⁸

Birds and shellfish were abundant in the coastal area at Point Cook in the summer months, and the Yalukit-willam clan hunted and gathered in the area. Ken James, citing earlier research by Stanley Mitchell, says that there were three types of camps used by the Indigenous community at Point Cook, each depending on the length of stay.¹⁹ The first type was only used for a few hours at a time, where the people gathered shellfish and caught fish. The second type was occupied for one or two weeks, while the third type was a permanent camp, which sheltered extended family groups of up to one-hundred people.²⁰ Extant evidence of occupation in the area includes artefacts scatters, shell middens, stone object collections and a stone feature.²¹

The swampy areas to the immediate north of the base are where the first type of site described by James were located and were used to catch animals and gather vegetation for a variety of uses. The rise described by Fleming in 1803 that overlooked the lower areas was used for short-duration campsites.²² The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Register records a number of stone artefact finds that were

15. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 3.

16. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 1.

17. Susan Priestly, *Altona: a long view* (North Melbourne: Hargreen, 1988), 3.

18. Clark, *The Yalukit-willam*, 7.

19. James, *Aborigines of the Werribee District*, 11.

20. James, *Aborigines of the Werribee District*, 11.

21. Hislop and Rhodes, *360-438 Point Cook Road*, 12.

22. Hislop and Rhodes, *360-438 Point Cook Road*, 27.

discovered on the high ground situated on the west side of Point Cook Road.²³ The finds are low-density scatters and individual artefacts comprising stone cores and flakes. A 2003 report prepared for Australand Holdings by TerraCulture Propriety Limited determined that, in part due to their prior disturbance, the finds ‘are not particularly significant or rare, and the stone types are common to many sites in the Melbourne area’.²⁴

Past evidence of the local Indigenous community on the RAAF base is currently only recorded for a single site. However, two further sites are evident from press reports. The recorded site is identified as Point Cook: RAAF 1 (7822-610) on the Victorian Archaeological Survey and comprises a stone scatter between the south-east shore of the lake and the coastline.²⁵ A 1919 newspaper report described the two presently-unrecorded sites. The report claimed that a military staff member unearthed a skeleton on the beach at Point Cook. Local police collected the remains and came across another skeleton in the same vicinity. They were discovered close to the beach and assumed to be part of an Indigenous burial site.²⁶ The report did not give sufficient information to identify the sites, and the dynamic nature of the foreshore may have removed any evidence that survived the removal of the skeletal remains. So, the true extent of Indigenous occupation of the Point Cook base may never be fully understood. However, the evidence, even if unreliable, that the site was used for burials is significant, and requires further investigation to allow the RAAF to gain a greater understanding of the site’s Indigenous significance. The low-density tool scatters, comparable to many in the Melbourne area, may have been disregarded under expert recommendation; however, the burial sites show a pattern of usage that transcends the transitory or routine.

In September 1836, the frigate HMS *Rattlesnake*, under the command of Captain William Hobson,²⁷ carried the inaugural Governor of Port Phillip, William Lonsdale, and his family to the unauthorised Port Phillip Association settlement established at

23. Hislop and Rhodes, *360-438 Point Cook Road*, 13–14.

24. TerraCulture, *Archaeological Investigations on Point Cook Road Point Cook* (Geelong, 2003), 16.

25. Allom Lovell & Associates, *RAAF Williams Point Cook*.

26. ‘The Werribee Shire Banner’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 July 1921.

27. Hobson was later Governor of New Zealand.

what was named Melbourne in the following year.²⁸ Hobson and his officers stayed for three months and surveyed the coast of the bay.²⁹ Hobson named the geographic Point Cooke after John Murray Cooke, mate of *Rattlesnake*. Cooke later became a lieutenant and commander in the Royal Navy, serving in India and the Far East.³⁰ Thus, the connection with armed forces and Point Cook goes back to the earliest days of European settlement in the Melbourne region.

In 1836, members of the Port Phillip Association and others from Van Diemen's Land settled on the Werribee Plains, grazing large quantities of sheep and some cattle. Historian Ken James claims that, by as early as 1837, the Werribee Plains were fully occupied by European owners for a distance of forty kilometres back from the coast and stocked with thousands of sheep.³¹ Early reports, such as those afforded by John Helder Wedge's nephew Charles Wedge, were that relations between settlers and Indigenous people were peaceful, claiming that communication between the parties was made easier by the influence of escaped convict William Buckley, who had connection with them.³²

The Bunurong tribe had ranged from the land now occupied by the RAAF base around the shore of the bay and beyond to Wilson's Promontory, organised in six clans, with the Yalukit-willam clan occupying Point Cook. James and Pritchard estimate that the tribe comprised two-hundred and forty people in 1830 and had dropped to eighty-three by 1839.³³ The effects of dispossession on the Indigenous population at Point Cook were similar to elsewhere in colonial Australia. Those who

28. BR Penny, 'Lonsdale, William (1799–1864)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967).

29. EJ Tapp, 'Hobson, William (1793–1842)', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, ed. Douglas Pike (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966).

30. The matter of the spelling of the place name has met with controversy over time. Some official maps had dropped the 'e' from as early as 1861; and the matter came to public attention in 1937, when research disproved the by then commonly-held assumption that navigator Captain James Cook had a connection with the place. The RAAF and the press have used both spellings interchangeably in the past, but the weight of common usage has forced the 'e' to be dropped seemingly permanently. Notwithstanding, Joan Stewart—daughter of Air Vice-Marshal William Bostock and base resident as a child—was successful in having the name of the geographic feature restored to its historically-correct form, with the aid of my advice to the Place Names Committee, in 1998.

31. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 4.

32. James, *Werribee*, 11.

33. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 8.

survived the introduced diseases found their natural resources displaced and were left with little choice but to move—as in the case of the surviving members of the Marpeang-buluk clan, who were moved to the Loddon Reserve at Mount Franklin in 1840—or, in some cases, succumb to the tyranny of the squatters. Ned, the son of Charles Wedge, provided evidence of the massacre of many of the Yalukit-willam clan by the provision of flour containing arsenic.³⁴ By the 1840s, it is claimed that there were no members of the Indigenous community remaining in the vicinity to range over Point Cook, with the Yalukit-willam in the area no longer evident as a local community.³⁵

Historian Jessie Serle provides much of the information known about the European inhabitation and use of the land at Point Cook. Her 1983 report entitled *Point Cooke: A History Prepared for the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works* is the most comprehensive research into this little-known field. She states that William Drayton Taylor obtained a pastoral lease over the land that comprises the RAAF base and some of the present-day suburb of Point Cook in 1849, and the conditions for obtaining the lease indicate that he was already in possession of the land prior to that date; but, for how long is uncertain.³⁶ Alexander Irvine subsequently acquired the lease in 1850,³⁷ before Scottish immigrant sheep-farmer Thomas Chirnside purchased the pre-emptive right to the land and surrounding allotments in March 1852 of eighty-thousand acres (32,375 hectares).³⁸

Chirnside built the extant Point Cook bluestone homestead by 1857 (see Figure 39)—while other nearby structures on the property may be relict from Taylor’s improvements prior to 1849 and Irvine’s subsequent modest homestead.³⁹ In 1859, Chirnside organised stag hunts of imported red deer for the Geelong Hunt Club and Metropolitan Hunt.⁴⁰ Chirnside purchased the majority of the land between

34. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 9–10.

35. Clark, *The Yalukit-willam*, 10–12.

36. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 3.

37. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 4.

38. J Ann Hone, ‘Chirnside, Andrew Spencer (1818–1890)’, in *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1969).

39. Wyndham City Council, ‘Werribee South Irrigation Settlement, Werribee South’, in *Heritage of the City of Wyndham Study 1997* (Werribee: Wyndham City Council, 1997).

40. ‘Epitome of Town and Country News for the Month’, *Geelong Advertiser*, 16 August 1859.

Point Cook and Werribee Park, to the extent that it became a single pastoral run,⁴¹ and one newspaper reported in 1861 that Chirnside's property extended from Footscray in the east to Mount Cotterill in the west, spanning a distance of seventeen miles (twenty-seven kilometres).⁴² Sheep grazing was the main activity on the run, but pigs and goats were also raised. Rabbit shooting, with rabbits from the Austin family at Barwon Park, was a pastime at Point Cook, along with fox hunting.⁴³ By 1870, the deer on the property had risen to seven-hundred and, along with the rabbits, were considered a nuisance.⁴⁴



Figure 39: *Point Cooke Homestead, circa 1900* (Wyndham City Council)

In a precursor to the Commonwealth military activity in the area of Point Cook, Thomas Chirnside hosted the first two militia encampments in Victoria, in 1861 and 1862. The encampments centred closer to the Werribee Park estate than the Point Cook estate, but he made the plains of the pastoral run between the two domestic centres available for manoeuvres.⁴⁵

In 1876–77, Thomas Chirnside and his brother Andrew completed Werribee Park mansion (see Figure 40), which became Andrew Chirnside's family residence, while

41. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 7.

42. 'The Volunteers: The Camp at the Werribee', *Argus*, 27 March 1861.

43. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 19–22.

44. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 31.

45. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 16–18.

bachelor Thomas resided at the Point Cook homestead, when he was not in England. From there, Thomas Chirnside, in conjunction with his nephew Robert, conducted a program of thoroughbred racehorse breeding and training after importing stock from Doncaster, England in 1864.⁴⁶ The Chirnside-owned horse *Haricot* won the Melbourne Cup in 1874.⁴⁷



Figure 40: *Werribee Park mansion, circa 1880* (State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, H24838)

By 1881, the state census recorded that the population of Wyndham—including the township of present-day Werribee and surrounding districts that includes Point Cook—was 320 persons residing in fifty-seven dwellings, and the main pursuits were agriculture and grazing.⁴⁸ After Thomas' death in 1887, the Werribee Park estate—including the land now occupied by the RAAF base—passed to Andrew until his subsequent death in 1890 and thence to Andrew's sons, George and John Percy.⁴⁹

46. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 19–23.

47. Hone, 'Chirnside, Andrew Spencer (1818–1890)'.

48. *Victorian Year-Book, 1881–2*, (Melbourne: Government Statist of Victoria, 1882), 50.

49. Hone, 'Chirnside, Andrew Spencer (1818–1890)'.

Beginning in 1891, the brothers subdivided portions of the estate for tenant farming,⁵⁰ with eight families taking up tenancies initially.⁵¹

In 1895, the Chirnside brothers divided ownership of the estate, and George took over Point Cook homestead and Werribee Park mansion.⁵² George, much less the farmer than his forebears, relied more on leases to tenant farmers than sheep grazing;⁵³ and Serle notes that, by 1905, the holding at Point Cook was described as ‘an unkempt Sahara’.⁵⁴ Around that time, they fenced a corner of a sheep paddock on the estate in the area now occupied by the RAAF to provide a triangular area planted with a mix of about one-hundred eucalyptus and cypress trees to provide shelter for livestock. The area shown in Figure 41 has been known as the Chirnside Triangle since at least the 1970s, when the RAAF published its first anniversary history.⁵⁵



Figure 41: *Triangle of trees planted by the Chirnside family at Point Cook in the late nineteenth century (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)*

50. Heather Ronald, *Wool Past the Winning Post: A History of the Chirnside Family* (South Yarra: Landvale Enterprises, 1978), 161.

51. Wyndham City Council, ‘Heritage of the City of Wyndham’.

52. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 51.

53. James and Pritchard, *Werribee: The First 100 Years*, 1.

54. Serle, *Point Cooke*, 52.

55. Department of Air, *Golden Years*.

The *Closer Settlement Act, 1904* allowed for the compulsory acquisition of land holdings in excess of £20,000 in unimproved value,⁵⁶ as well as sale by offer from the landowner to the Government. The Act followed the 1901 act with the same title and was intended to reduce the landholdings of the squatters and to allow for urban development. George Chirside sold five-thousand acres (two-thousand hectares) of his Werribee Park estate for freehold farming in 1904, in what Chirside family historian Heather Ronald claimed was an attempt to forestall acquisition of the land by the Victorian Government for Closer Settlement.⁵⁷ Government acquisition would not have realised the most advantageous terms for Chirside, so pre-empting a forced sale was a logical tactic. However, Chirside's next major sale, in 1905, was that of 23,485 acres (9500 hectares) to the Government for Closer Settlement.⁵⁸ This sale included the land now containing the RAAF base. Rather than wait for compulsory acquisition, Chirside negotiated the sale with Victoria Premier Thomas Bent's agents. The terms of the sale provided for payment of £13 per acre, with settlement of £1781 in cash and £300,000 in Government debentures.⁵⁹ Ronald claimed that the price paid was 'less than half the price some of his land had brought at auction';⁶⁰ however, this claim does not take into consideration that not all the land in the Chirside holdings was of equal value, and that the land at Point Cook was of low agricultural value.

The December 1905 sale was the subject of a Royal Commission in 1909, which revealed that Bent went beyond his authority as Premier and agreed to the land purchase of his own volition, without approval of the Government or the Closer Settlement Board.⁶¹ The Board had agreed to pay up to a maximum of £13 per acre, but it had not authorised the purchase. That figure should have remained confidential to allow the Board to secure a better purchase price, if possible, but Bent announced it publicly,⁶² which the Royal Commission saw as interference.⁶³ As a

56. *Closer Settlement Act, 1904*, Part II, Para 12.

57. Ronald, *Wool Past the Winning Post*, 163.

58. Ronald, *Wool Past the Winning Post*, 163.

59. Ronald, *Wool Past the Winning Post*, 163.

60. Ronald, *Wool Past the Winning Post*, 163.

61. 'Bent Land Commission', *Argus*, 26 June 1909.

62. 'Werribee-Park Estate', *Argus*, 4 June 1912.

63. 'Bent Land Inquiry', *Argus*, 28 July 1909.

result of the sale, George Chirnside received an annual return on his debentures of £12,000, while the Government only received a £10,000 annual return from rents paid by tenants, sustaining an annual loss of £2000.⁶⁴

The Victorian Government placed the land now containing the RAAF base under the management of the Closer Settlement Board, which had difficulty in selling the poor-quality grazing land. Its proximity to the nearby sewerage treatment works and the resulting noxious odours added to their difficulties.⁶⁵ Notwithstanding, by 1913, seventy-five leases were granted on the land in the Point Cook area, resulting in a population of 196.⁶⁶ However, by as early as 1912, many of the farmers found difficulty in paying their rents due to low yields on the land,⁶⁷ and some moved off their land, preferring land at Sunbury, Victoria and other places with better yields. This situation indicates that the price paid to Chirnside was too high.

Meanwhile, Senator George Pearce had already determined that the military flying school was to be located adjacent to the newly-established military college at Duntroon, near Canberra in the Australian Federal Territory. However, public criticism of the site, notably by well-known Australian aviator William Hart of Penrith, New South Wales, led to a halt in establishing the aerodrome. Hart had bought Hammond's spare Bristol Boxkite in 1911 when the Bristol demonstration team left Australia. He planned to fly the first Sydney to Melbourne flight, and he had scouted landing grounds near Goulburn in early March 1913. His view was that the altitude of Canberra, at 1800 feet, was 800 feet above the ceiling altitude of the aircraft; and without a more powerful engine, the Boxkite aircraft would not even be able to take off.

Pearce sent military flying instructor Henry Petre to Canberra in May 1913 to inspect the site at Duntroon, and he was not favourably impressed. Agreeing with Hart, he declared that 'the atmosphere was so rarefied in Canberra'.⁶⁸ He went on to inspect alternative sites at Langwarrin, Cribb Point, Werribee and Altona Bay, all not far

64. 'Bent Land Inquiry'.

65. 'Land Commission', *Argus*, 3 July 1909.

66. Wyndham City Council, 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham'.

67. 'Werribee-Park Estate'. *Argus*, 4 June 1912.

68. 'Australian Flying Corps: site for aerodrome', *Argus*, 8 July 1913.

from Army Headquarters in Victoria.⁶⁹ Fellow military flying instructor Eric Harrison joined Petre in early June, and he and Petre carried out further inspection of the alternative sites. Their chauffeur was Horrie Miller, who later went on to become an aviator and founder of the McRobertson-Miller Airline.⁷⁰

Petre and Harrison concluded that the Altona Bay site—as the site at Point Cook was called at the time—was the most suitable. It was flat land located beside the bay near Point Cook. It had the advantage of being suitable for landplanes and seaplanes to meet the navy's proposed requirements.⁷¹ Petre later also admitted that he did not wish to suffer the isolation of Canberra.⁷² Harrison pointed to the greater availability of aircraft parts in Melbourne than elsewhere in the country. The land at Point Cook had little vegetation compared with the site near Duntroon, which needed to be cleared at a cost estimated to be over £1000. However, the Point Cook site required the surveyed road to Laverton railway station to be turned from a farm track into a decently-made road.⁷³

The Liberals ousted the Federal Labor government in June 1913, and Senator Edward Millen replaced Pearce as Minister for Defence. Millen decided to ratify the Altona Bay site at Point Cook as the preferred site for the school on 7 July, only two weeks after he became minister. It seems likely that Pearce was wedded to the notion of locating the Central Flying School next to the Royal Military College at Duntroon, from where most students were envisaged to come and where medical support was readily available, but he did not accept the technical aviation evidence that it was not possible.

As noted earlier in the chapter, the land selected at Point Cook belonged to the Victorian state government in 1913. This was another important reason for the

69. From Federation in 1901, Melbourne acted as the seat of the Federal capital prior to the construction of the city of Canberra, and the headquarters of the Department of Defence was located in Melbourne's Victoria Barracks. The Federal Parliament moved to Canberra after the opening of Parliament House in 1927, and the Department of Defence moved to Russell Offices, Canberra in 1958.

70. Miller, *Early Birds*, 7.

71. NAA: A289, 1849/8/398

72. 'Interview with Henry Petre'.

73. NAA: A2023, A38/5/4

Commonwealth Government considering it. Millen stated in a newspaper interview that, ‘the site had been selected when it came to a final choice because it was Crown Land’.⁷⁴ However, he did not address the additional compelling factor that the state government was not able to sell the land without the embarrassment of making a substantial loss, due to Thomas Bent’s actions in 1905. Cooperation on this sensitive matter was made possible by both governments being Liberal. Further, there was some urgency in deciding on the Point Cook land option, because the Victorian Government had already listed it for public allotment on 13 July 1913. However, the land had been reserved from the sale to address the question of which level of government should make and maintain the road between Laverton railway station and Point Cook, because the Commonwealth Government was reluctant to pay for a minor local road.⁷⁵ This led to significant delay in the Commonwealth Government purchasing the land.

Nonetheless, the Commonwealth Government went ahead with development of the site, and announced in the October 1913 Federal Budget statement that, ‘as soon as the necessary buildings are completed, for which a provision of £10,000 is made, ...the school will be established’.⁷⁶ The gazettal of the land transfer of the 734 acres (297 hectares) finally occurred on 17 October 1914 for the sum of £6040 2s 3d.⁷⁷ This was more than a year after occupation of the site.⁷⁸

EARLY MILITARY OCCUPATION OF THE SITE

With the site finally secured by the Commonwealth, instructors Henry Petre and Eric Harrison carried out an inspection with Federal Director of Works Thomas Hill on 4 October 1913. They pegged out the locations for the hangars, workshop and office—the plans for those structures having been drawn by the Department of Home Affairs with advice from Petre over the preceding months. Tenders, due in

74. ‘Australian Flying Corps’, *Argus*, 8 July 1913.

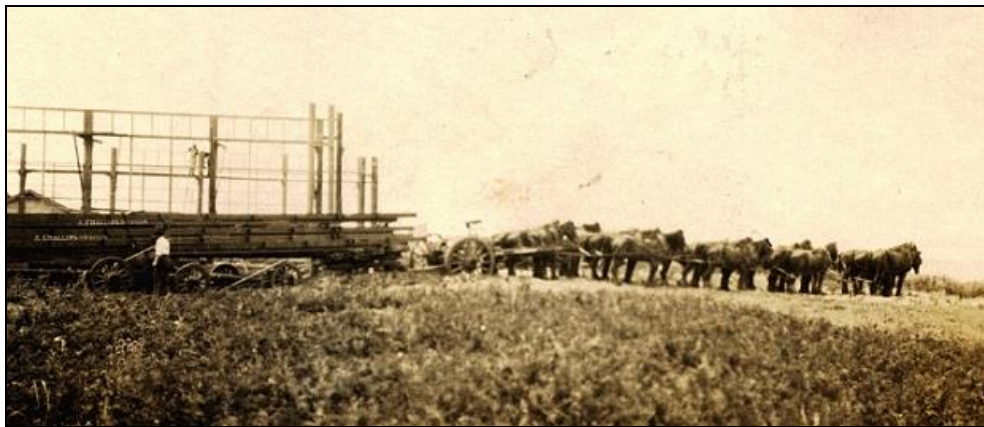
75. NAA: A2023, A38/5/4

76. ‘Federal Budget’, *Argus*, 3 October 1913.

77. Commonwealth of Australia, *Commonwealth of Australia Gazette*, “Purchase of Land for Defence Purposes at Werribee, in the State of Victoria,” No.83, 17 October 1914

78. The land transfer also occurred more than seven months after flying had commenced.

December 1913, called for the construction of the buildings, and Walter Cooper won the contract in January 1914, commencing building on 3 February, as shown in Figure 42. The relatively-rapid progress made after minister Millen's decision to locate the school at Point Cook was set against the backdrop of public criticism that a considerable amount of money had been spent with no tangible result. Referring to Petre and Harrison, a newspaper reported that, 'there would almost seem to be a possibility of the experts going stale for want of practice'.⁷⁹ Millen had set a date for the first flight as New Year's Day 1914—a date that had come and gone.



**Figure 42: First aircraft hangar under construction at Point Cook
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK box file)**

The military advance party—comprising instructor Harrison, mechanics Henry Chester and George Fonteneau, and caretaker Bill Lord—arrived at Point Cook on Monday 16 February 1914 and set up camp.⁸⁰ Their basic set of stores, shown arriving in Figure 43, included tents, bedding, lamps, cooking equipment, water buckets and washing tubs.⁸¹ Instructor Petre, mechanics Ted Shorland and Norm Heath, and military stores clerk Williams joined the advance party a week later;⁸² and on Saturday 28 February—the last day of the month—the crates containing the Bristol Boxkite and one of the two Deperdussin aircraft were moved from Victoria

79. 'Flying Corps: flight at New Year', *Argus*, 23 October 1913.

80. NAA: CRS2023, A38/5/37

81. NAA: CRS2023, A38/5/17

82. NAA: CRS2023, A38/5/37

Barracks to Point Cook.⁸³ Arrangements were also made to grub out about twenty tree stumps from the paddock.⁸⁴



Figure 43: *Military stores arriving at Point Cook, February 1914*
(RAAF Museum,, Point Cook, PCK box file)

The permanent hangar and workshop being constructed by builder Walter Cooper were located at the southern end of the aerodrome near the shore of Port Phillip. However, there was no shelter for a summer camp in the vicinity of the hangar. The only shelter on the entire property was at the northern end in the Chirside Triangle of trees.

Captain Clougston of the Royal Engineers at Victoria Barracks drew a sketch plan of the camp layout in February 1914. His plan showed the location of the accommodation tents, latrines, stores tents and the large canvas hangar, designed by Petre to house the aircraft. The plan has notes about providing electric light to the tents and described every tree and shrub in the triangular plantation. The plan (see Figure 44) suggested places where the wire fence should be cut to provide access to different parts to the site. One of those gaps in the fence, which provided access to a proposed garage, survives as the intersection of Cole Street and Williams Road.

83. 'Aviation: Army Airmen Fly'.

84. NAA: CRS2023, A38/5/13

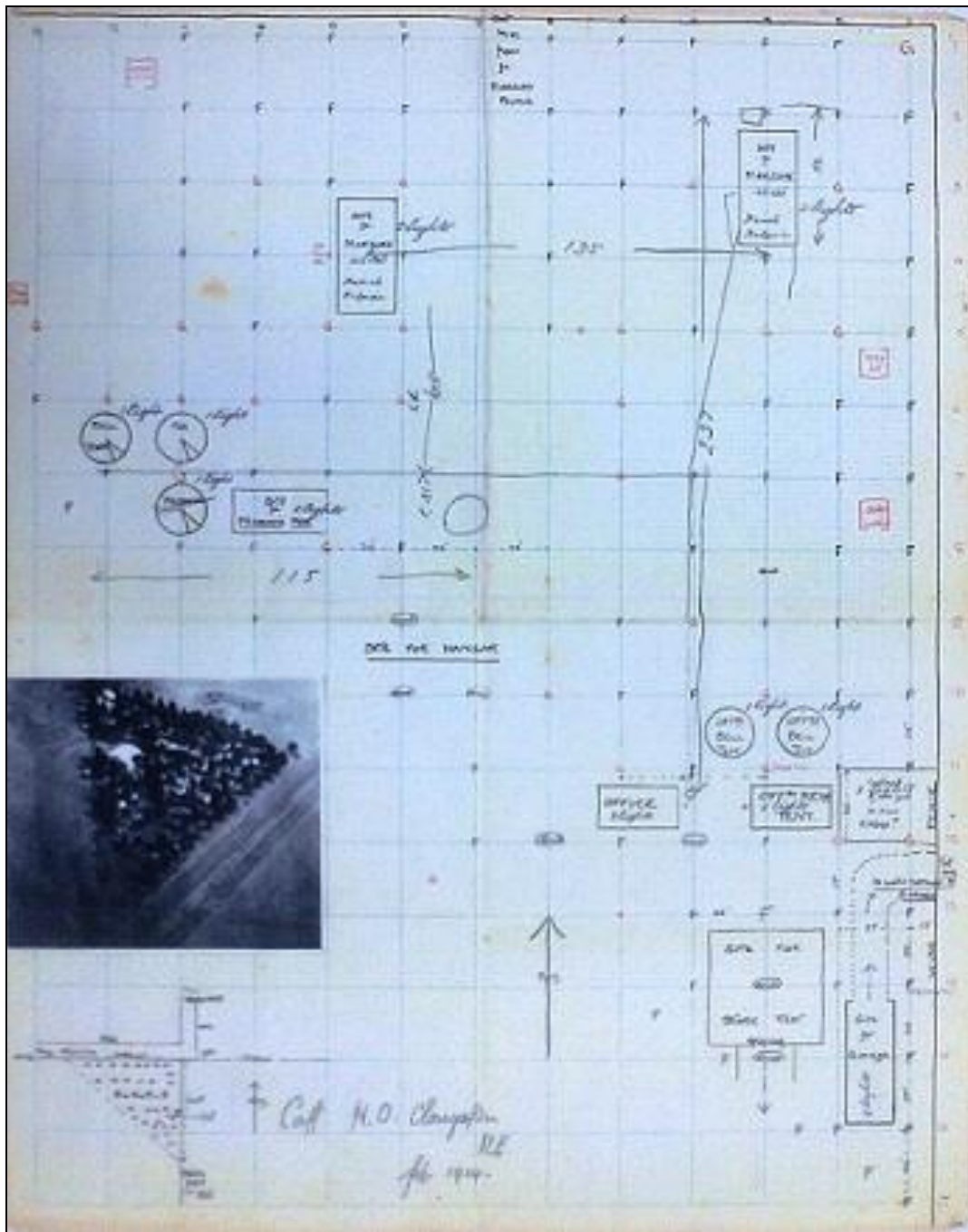


Figure 44: Sketch map of the Chirnside Triangle, February 1914⁸⁵
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, core collection)

85. The aerial photograph was affixed to the original plan at a later date, probably during the 1970s. The photograph is printed mirror-image.

The staff gradually made the camp more comfortable during the autumn and winter of 1914, with officers' and mechanics' mess tents, two large tents for married mechanics, a stores tent and a kitchen. Caretaker Bill Lord and his wife Delia (nee Bree) also lived at the site in a twenty-four-foot by twelve-foot hospital tent with a canvas latrine until their cottage was completed in early 1915.⁸⁶ Delia set up the camp's first kitchen in one of the crates used to transport the stores and aircraft to the site.⁸⁷

Heavy rain fell in Melbourne during April 1914, and the tents at Point Cook did not provide adequate protection of the aircraft and personnel. The mess and stores tents leaked severely, and the rain pooled on top of Petre's canvas hangar, because his roof design was too flat.⁸⁸ While waiting for the permanent hangar to be completed, the solution was to fit three brass eyelets and place a bucket under each.⁸⁹ A carpenter and sailmaker from the Government Harness Factory in Melbourne carried out the temporary repairs.⁹⁰

Meanwhile, building progressed on the workshop, hangar, office and oil store at the southern end of the site. Cooper completed the hangar in July 1914, and it was due to be formally handed from the Department of Home Affairs to the Department of Defence in a ceremony on 13 July. However, the road was impassable due to mud, and the ceremony was cancelled.⁹¹

In August 1914, the role of the camp changed from establishing a military presence to training Australia's first military pilots and aircraft mechanics. One of the students on the first course, Lieutenant Richard Williams, described the scene at the camp:

86. The Lords had lived in Footscray, and Bill had been a baker and a storeman and was something of a jack-of-all-trades. Delia Lord was a cook with some management experience and was engaged as the officers' cook and manager of their mess tent. She had previously been employed as a cook at the Missions to Seamen in Melbourne. It appears that her job at the camp came with being married to the caretaker, because she was not listed on the staff roll.

87. Heather Lomas, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, October 2003.

88. NAA: CRS2023, A38/3/91

89. NAA: CRS2023, A38/5/66

90. NAA: CRS2023, A38/3/56

91. 'Aviation School: inaccessible by road', *Argus*, 16 July 1914.

There was no air of an army establishment, apart from the tents, and the ground was in the same condition as when it was purchased—a sheep grazing area, now covered in long grass.⁹²

In October 1914, a second phase of construction commenced that included the domestic buildings required to turn the camp into a permanent establishment. The phase comprised single officers' and mechanics' quarters, a caretaker's cottage, a commandant's residence with garage and four cottages for married mechanics.^{93 94} With the exception of the caretaker's cottage, the dwellings for married staff were aligned on a single street facing the flying paddock and became known as Harmony Row—now Cole Street.⁹⁵ John Smith Murdoch of the Department of Home Affairs designed the buildings and was later responsible for the design of many of Canberra's early buildings as the department's Chief Architect.⁹⁶ Murdoch's plan for the first residences on the site is shown in Figure 45.

92. Williams, *These Are Facts*, 24.

93. Sergeants Heath and Fonteneau were already married when they arrived in Australia, and Quartermaster Sergeant Hendy and Warrant Officer Chester advised that they were to be married in early 1915.

94. Lieutenant Eric Harrison had married Kathleen Prendergast—the daughter of state politician and later Labor Premier of Victoria George Prendergast—in June 1914, with Petre as best man. ('Lieut. E. Harrison to Miss K. Prendergast', *Punch*, 9 July 1914.)

95. By the 1920s, families living in these dwellings were carefully vetted, because life in the relative isolation of Harmony Row could be very difficult if there was any friction.

96. Rowe, D. J. 1997, *Building a National Image: the architecture of John Smith Murdoch, Australia's First Commonwealth Government Architect*. Deakin University, unpublished thesis

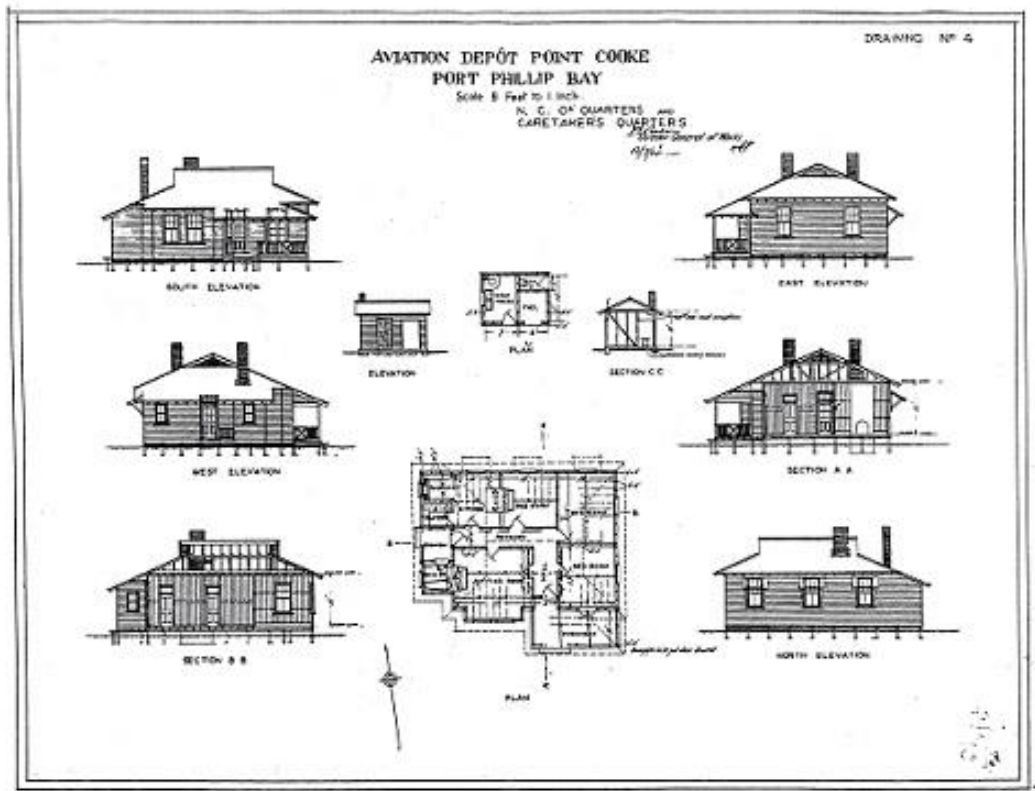


Figure 45: *Plan for residences at Point Cook by John Smith Murdoch, 1914*
(Defence Support Group, Melbourne)

The buildings follow a distinct style, described by heritage architects Span and Neal as Early Commonwealth Vernacular,⁹⁷ and all but the mechanics' mess and commandant's garage survive. The timber balustrades on the verandas of the married quarters follow a convention used by Murdoch in the design of domestic buildings to insert a decorative motif within the line of timber balusters. The motif at Point Cook is two crossed timbers that resemble the outline of a four-bladed propeller, as used on the aircraft at the site. Figure 46 shows the balustrades as rendered in the first base commander's residence in Harmony Row (now 8 Cole Street).

97. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 18.



Figure 46: *8 Cole Street, the original base commander's residence* (S. Campbell-Wright)

After the outbreak of World War I, the camp began its primary role of raising and training the Australian Flying Corps squadrons to be deployed to the Middle East and European theatres of war. The training involved the establishment of tented camps—initially near the Chirnside Triangle and later at the southern part of the camp—that provided training in camp establishment and living, as well as the accommodation needed to house the trainees.

Erection of the first of two water towers and extension of the electricity supply south to the hangars and workshops bolstered facilities at the site during 1917–18, and additional hangars accommodated the growing fleet of aircraft. The Commonwealth purchased vacant land to the north-west in 1919 to provide an enlisted men's accommodation precinct north of the Chirnside Triangle. A new officers' mess and associated kitchens, single officer quarters, servant quarters and a sergeants' dining room were approved in late 1918 and completed the following year. It is most likely that the old 1914 officers' mess became the sergeants' mess, allowing the sergeants and warrant officers greater room than their previous small dining room located behind the first officers' mess. The new officers' mess was later used as the cadets' mess and then the sergeants' mess, and it survives in remarkably original condition, as do the associated servants' quarters. When used as accommodation for the warrant officer disciplinary courses in the 1990s, the humble servant quarters were facetiously known as 'Pine Lodge'.

EARLY ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OCCUPATION OF THE SITE

At the end of World War I, and despite Chief of the General Staff Major General James Legge's calls for significant staff reductions in the Army in February 1919, he and the Government allocated £370,000 for the development and expansion of military aviation, increased to £500,000 in April 1919.⁹⁸ With the cessation of overseas air operations, Point Cook changed from a training centre to the operational centre for Australian civil and Defence aviation. It hosted many of the pioneering flights that helped establish Australia's commercial aviation networks, and it was the operational base for what later became the Royal Australian Air Force in 1921. The experience gained during World War I highlighted the need for the air defence of the nation as part of a wider air defence system of the British Empire. Awaiting the necessary legislation to form the separate air force, the Government formed the interim Australian Air Corps on 1 January 1920. At the same time, there was international recognition that civil aviation needed to be controlled,⁹⁹ and the work of providing a sound basis for civil aviation formed the majority of the work done at Point Cook immediately after the war.

A limited amount of building works approved in the 1921 Federal budget were carried out at Point Cook in 1922. These included a small hospital, an aeronautics school, additions to the original 1914 workshop and a motor transport garage.¹⁰⁰ The mechanical workshop is illustrated in Figure 47. With the completion of the garage, the Motor Transport Repair Section at North Fitzroy closed down, and the staff was transferred to Point Cook in April 1922. The garage still stands, and RAAF motor transport drivers considered it to be the spiritual home of RAAF motor transport. The ex-RAAF Motor Transport Drivers Association held reunions there in the 1990s.

98. 'Air Force: scheme to be organised', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April 1919.

99. Parnell and Boughton, *Flypast*, 33.

100. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 12.



Figure 47: *RAAF mechanical workshop, Point Cook circa 1924* (F. Lukis, private album)

A fresh building program commenced in 1923—following the Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Works deliberations and tour of Point Cook—and it helped to cement the village atmosphere at the site. The program proceeded according to a master plan along ‘garden city’ lines drawn in 1921 by the Department of Home Affairs (see Figure 48). It identified areas for different functions. Under the plan, the airmen’s mess was located in the residential precinct, so it needed to be moved two-hundred metres north into the newly-identified airmen precinct. This provided the opportunity to enlarge the mess after being moved.

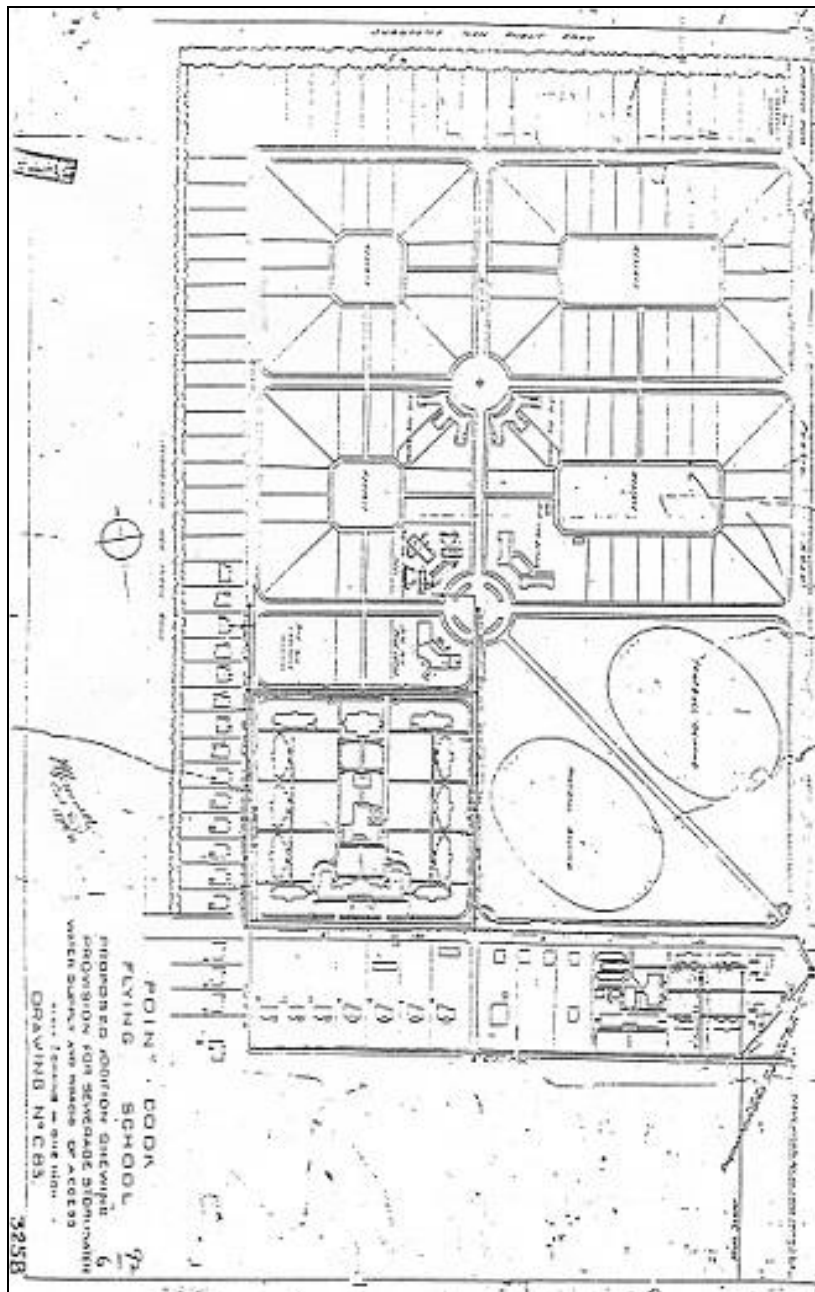


Figure 48: 'Garden city' master plan for the domestic precinct of Point Cook, 1921
(Defence Estate and Infrastructure Group, Melbourne)

A new recreation hall became the gymnasium, and it briefly housed the School of Photography before ultimately becoming the base cinema during World War II. A library, recreation room and canteen were added to the precinct, along with a state government primary school (see Figure 49). The school catered for the local farming community as well as the RAAF families living on the base. Of note, the balustrades

of the state school veranda reflected the X-pattern of the existing RAAF residences. Sewerage and electricity were upgraded, and the second water tower was constructed. The cypress tree planting program that still makes Point Cook a distinctive site was commenced.



Figure 49: *State primary school, Point Cook base, 1923*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

The difficulty of transporting heavy building materials to Point Cook meant that most buildings were constructed of timber. As the fear of fire in such an environment was ever-present, a fire shed was constructed equidistant from the officers' mess, airmen's mess and married quarters.¹⁰¹ Staff members provided fire sentries initially, and by the mid-1920s, a dedicated fire-fighting squad—precursors to the RAAF Fireman mustering—underwent regular training with the Metropolitan Fire Brigade at Eastern Hill, Melbourne.¹⁰² Snakes were also a threat at the site, and Wing Commander Adrian Cole's daughter recalls her father killing a tiger snake in their married quarter with a piece of fencing wire while she, being very young, perched safely on his shoulders.¹⁰³

101. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 40.

102. 'Fire at Flying School: boiler room damaged', *Argus*, 18 July 1928.

103. Sonia Clerehan, questionnaire responses to author, 1996.

From 1914, flying at Point Cook had mostly been carried out on the west side of the road leading from the camp in the north to the hangars in the south, and the land to the east was not used. The RAAF established the new sixty-hectare 'east aerodrome' in 1921 and gradually levelled the site, with couch grass planted over both aerodromes. The concept of runways had not developed by then, and a white circle in the centre of each aerodrome indicated the best landing spot. Pilots could approach the circle from any angle depending on the wind direction. Staff held parades in a few places near the camp area, including on the northern edge of the west aerodrome, where there was a small saluting base, and drill practice therefore ranged over parts of the west aerodrome. The base commander issued a routine order in 1923 that, '[i]n future parties are not to be marched across the Western Aerodrome while flying is in progress'.¹⁰⁴ However, he rescinded the order in 1924 when the eastern aerodrome became available for use and issued a new order that increased the status of drill practice stating: 'When drill parades are being held on the Western Aerodrome...care is to be taken to avoid interfering with such parades, and machines landing will land on the Eastern Aerodrome'.¹⁰⁵ These two aerodromes are shown in Figure 50, which also clearly illustrates the northern domestic area extending from the Chimside Triangle and the southern tarmac operations and maintenance area.



**Figure 50: Point Cook RAAF base looking south-east
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

104. 1AD Routine Order 48, 14 March 1923.

105. 1AD Routine Order 93, 2 June 1924.

The new base commander's residence was built in 1927, and its aspect faced down Harmony Row in a manner that reflected the hierarchical layout of seating at a formal military dining-in. The streetscape of Harmony Row remains intact. It had included an aircraft packing crate that was recycled for use as stables in the backyard of the new station commander's residence.¹⁰⁶ The crate was destroyed in 2015, however, during tidying of the yards to allow for easier access by mowing contractors.



Figure 51: *Base headquarters Point Cook, 1929*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

The headquarters building (see Figure 51) was constructed in late 1929, and it demarked the southern boundary of the parade ground. The clay surface of the parade ground caused a lot of problems and, after attempts to break it down with gypsum,¹⁰⁷ a gravel surface was laid. The perimeter was planted with ornamental cypresses (see Figure 52). Staff at the site clearly understood the significance of the location of the parade ground as the place from which Eric Harrison made the first military aviation flight in 1914.¹⁰⁸ The master plan therefore gave the parade ground and headquarters pride of place in the centre of the sweeping road junction that led

106. The stables were demolished in 2014, despite their heritage-listing protection.

107. Adrian Cole, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, 9 September 1996.

108. Sir George Pearce made reference to the establishment of Australian military aviation 'on that spot' during his speech at the unveiling of the Australian Flying Corps Memorial, facing the parade ground, in 1938. ('Memorial to Airmen: Point Cooke Ceremony', *Argus*, 31 October 1938.)

from the old northern camp to the hangars in the south. The north-facing open-air balcony of the headquarters provided a vantage point for guests to view graduation and annual inspection parades. The parade ground therefore remains Australian military aviation's *sanctum sanctorum*.



Figure 52: *Point Cook parade ground during a commemoration ceremony, early World War II* (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

After a period of stagnation in the development of the site during the early 1930s, the next phase of facilities development at Point Cook began in 1936. More accommodation was built for cadets under training. A new aeronautics school was built, and gunnery stop-butts were erected for zeroing machine guns on aircraft. Garages were built as more officers and airmen bought their own cars. The old caretaker's cottage was moved from its original site near the former front gate to a location next to the row of senior non-commissioned officer cottages. The road to Werribee, which ran through the site, was diverted around the north northern perimeter; and a new formal entrance was erected, with sentry boxes and wrought-iron gates in art deco style with 'RAAF' lettering on a motif of waves and the rising

sun (see Figure 53). The original 1914 office, store and casualty room were moved from beside the bay to the domestic area next to the primary school.

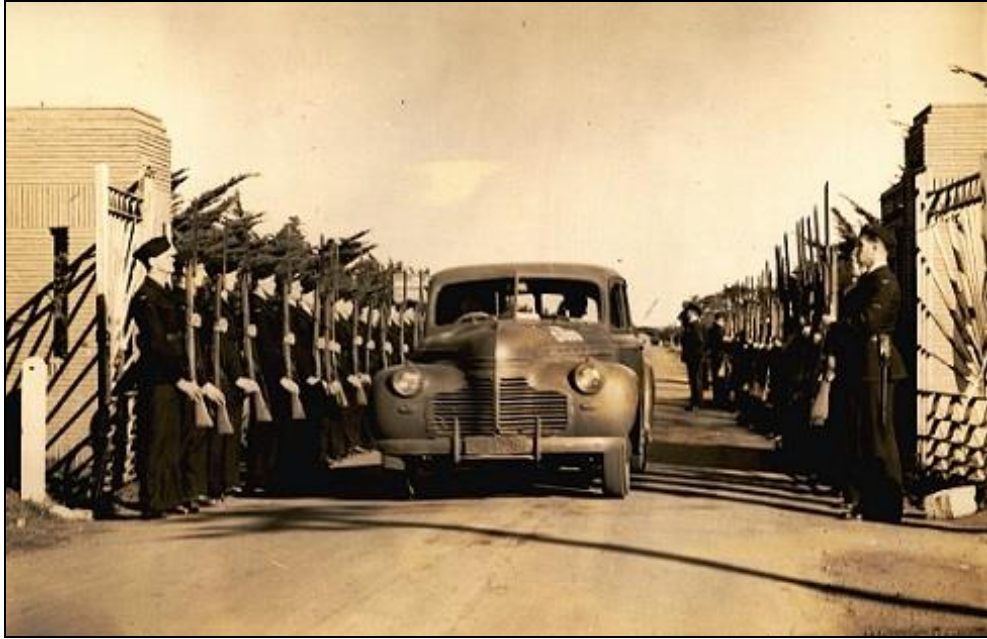


Figure 53: *Formal entrance gates to Point Cook, 1944*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, RAAF Station Point Cook Unit History)

The 1936 facilities funding for the RAAF as a whole allowed for the building of the four celebrated pre-war RAAF officers' messes. Built in the art deco style, the messes at Point Cook and Laverton in Victoria, Richmond in New South Wales and Pearce in Western Australia were the representational showpieces of a fighting service that was becoming confident of its abilities and place in the life of the nation. The messes were an almost-extravagant statement that the RAAF was there to stay. The new mess at Point Cook was the first brick-construction building of any substance at the site.

Harmony Row was extended, with the construction of three houses for squadron leaders and a new two-storey commander's residence to take over from the previous 1927 house. The new 1938 residence (see Figure 54)—later named Lukis House after its first occupants Group Captain Frank Lukis and his family—was known as 'Noah's Ark' to the Lukis family because of its unusual, almost American, style. The house was built with the Lukis family knowing that they were to be the first

occupants, and when they viewed progress on the weekends, Mrs Florence Lukis tried to convince the builders to change elements of the design to suit her firm ideas of how the house should be—usually without success.¹⁰⁹ The family had a tennis court in the back yard—which was reassigned to the house, having previously served the old commander’s residence next door—and more stables were also erected in the back yard.



Figure 54: *New commander’s residence, Point Cook 1938*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

On the brink of a new war, a dedication to those who had died in the air services in the last war was unveiled in 1938 (see Figure 55). The Australian Flying Corps Association began raising funds for a national memorial to their fallen comrades from late 1934. Governor-General Lord Gowrie unveiled the memorial at the northern edge of the parade ground on 16 November 1938 with high ceremony. Lord Gowrie placed a copper-clad scroll in the top of the memorial with the names of all Australian airmen who had died in overseas service during World War I. The

109. Lukis, interview.

memorial stands beside the place where Harrison inaugurated Australian military aviation with his 1914 flight. Unsubstantiated rumours abound that sand brought home from Mesopotamia after World War I was sprinkled on the parade ground. While this may be apocryphal, it is within a tradition practiced by military members around the world. The memorial is inscribed:

Dedicated to the glorious memory of our comrades of the Australian Flying Corps, Royal Naval Air Service, Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force who, at the birth of the air service during the great war 1914-19 made the supreme sacrifice and whose sacred trust of imperishable honour and duty to country is now given into the keeping of the Royal Australian Air Force. Per ardua ad astra.



Figure 55: *Australian Flying Corps Memorial, 1938*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

The erection of the memorial on the edge of the parade ground reinforces its position as Australian military aviation's *sanctum sanctorum*. In a ceremony in 2016, the Chief of Air Force placed a second scroll in the top of the memorial that lists the names of all airmen who have died on active service since World War I, as shown in Figure 56.



Figure 56: *Copper-clad scrolls in the Australian Flying Corps and RAAF Memorial, Point Cook (RAAF Association of Australia, Victorian Branch)*

THE SITE DURING WORLD WAR II

During World War II, Point Cook took its place as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme that provided trained aircrew and ground staff to augment British forces in the European theatre of war. In a pattern similar to the numerous temporary bases established under the scheme, Point Cook required additional temporary facilities to accommodate the rapid expansion of the RAAF. However, as a base identified to continue after the war, Point Cook also acquired some new permanent buildings during the period.

A new facility to house the signals school, along with a school for air navigation training, were two new permanent buildings—both constructed at the southern tarmac area by the bay.¹¹⁰ Other permanent facilities included additional two-storey sleeping blocks in the airmen precinct of the domestic area to match the one built in 1928, airmen’s tennis courts and an officers’ squash court. Flying activities moved entirely to the eastern aerodrome, and a golf course was laid out on much of the western aerodrome.¹¹¹

In late 1940, the Armament School building and the new hospital, built around the original 1922 hospital, were completed. The Armament School building is distinctive for having a target motif built into the brickwork of its façade—a small extravagance during a time of austerity. The building of new RAAF establishments around the country was marked by the erection of large quantities of galvanised corrugated iron huts and hangars and, in Point Cook’s case, the area to the north of the airmen precinct became known as ‘Silver City’ (see Figure 57).¹¹² Contractor Squire and McBean of Melbourne erected these temporary buildings under contract to the Department of the Interior for a cost of £24,347.¹¹³ Despite a planned ten-year life, many of these huts still survive over seventy-five years later.



**Figure 57: *World War II Armament School with adjoining Silver City*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

110. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 93–96.

111. Lukis, interview.

112. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 15.

113. ‘New Defence Works: tenders accepted’, *Riverine Herald*, 25 July 1940.

Under the Empire Air Training Scheme expansion, prefabricated Bellman hangars were erected to provide increased aircraft storage and workshop space at the southern tarmac. The four southern tarmac Bellman hangars are among the first ones brought to Australia from Britain. As ubiquitous symbols of military aviation, many subsequent Australian-built Bellman hangars survive at locations all over Australia. The 1927 seaplane hangar was doubled in size, and this necessitated moving Australia's first aircraft hangar, built in 1914, to another location at the southern tarmac. The expansion was supplemented by the building of additional stop butts for test firing and zeroing aircraft machine guns.¹¹⁴

A new central tarmac precinct, comprising ten Bellman hangars and sundry huts, was established on the edge of the eastern aerodrome. These now form the majority of buildings occupied by the RAAF Museum. Sleeping accommodation huts and ablution blocks were also installed in the newly-excised backyards of the married quarters in Harmony Row in an effort to accommodate extra personnel. The Post Master General established a post office at the base in December 1940 to facilitate the correspondence of those far from home.¹¹⁵ A large warehouse with a distinctive sawtooth roof was completed in October 1941,¹¹⁶ but it could not be occupied, because the Department of the Interior had not fitted out the building. It was six months before the warehouse was able to be occupied.¹¹⁷ The building program went on well into 1941, and by the end of the year, Point Cook appeared a vastly different place from the one those who had served at before the war knew. Figures 58 and 59 show the base in 1939, before the development brought by the Empire Air Training Scheme and two years later after completion of the building program. The 1921 master plan for a garden city was interrupted by the need for the 'temporary' Silver City.

114. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 16.

115. 'Post Office Official Honored', *Williamstown Chronicle*, 21 December 1940.

116. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 16.

117. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 15.

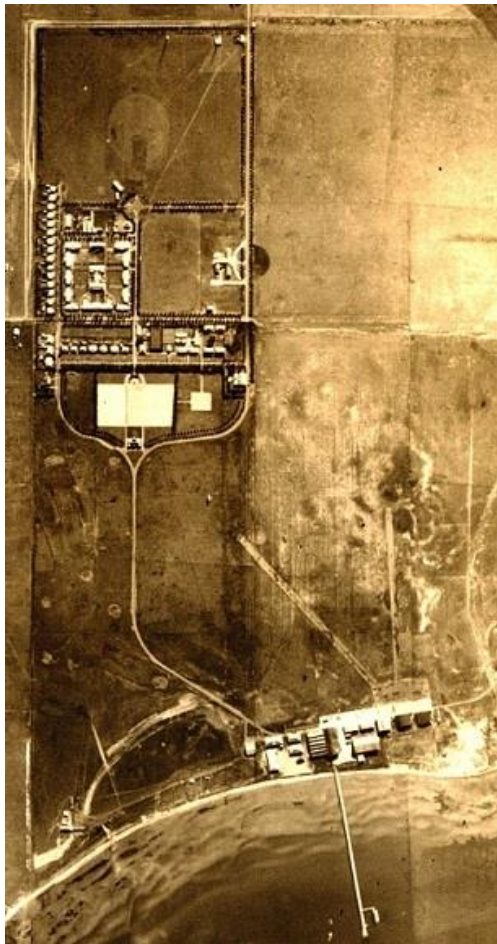


Figure 58: *Map of Point Cook pre- Empire Air Training Scheme development, 1939*
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, RAAF Station Point Cook Unit History)



Figure 59: *Map of Point Cook post- Empire Air Training Scheme development, 1941*
 (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, RAAF Station Point Cook Unit History)

With the commencement of the war in the Pacific from late 1941, the increased threat of an attack on mainland Australia was evident, and the ground defence of the base was extensively upgraded over the following six months. The aerial photograph in Figure 60 shows the preparations. Equipment for air raid defences and additional blackout materials were obtained in December 1941, and works were commenced immediately, including the digging of slit trenches and the erection of first aid casualty stations. The old station commander's residence, built in 1927, was designated as a subsidiary hospital, and a cemetery ground was allocated by the foreshore. The grass on the aerodrome was burnt off to reduce the fire risk. The station headquarters were sandbagged, and submerged concrete gun-pits were

constructed on the approaches to the aerodrome.¹¹⁸ The building blackouts were tested, and an air raid alarm was installed.



**Figure 60: World War II ground defence map, Point Cook
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, album file)**

From January 1942, the base was in continuous blackout at night, along with the rest of the Australian community. The Fall of Singapore in February 1942, along with the Japanese bombing of northern Australia and direct attacks on RAAF Station Darwin in February 1942, added a sense of urgency at Point Cook. The Metropolitan Fire Brigade visited the station and gave demonstrations of fighting fires caused by incendiaries and petrol or oil fires. A program of building camouflage was commenced in March, and as married quarters became vacant due to postings, they were not re-occupied. The Volunteer Defence Corps, comprising many World War I

118. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 6.

veterans, was allocated four huts in March,¹¹⁹ and they helped to build the ground defence works and communications.¹²⁰

To test the station's response to air raid drills, dummy air raids were conducted by Brewster Buffalo aircraft from Laverton in July 1942. However, by the August drills, complacency had set in, and the station commander warned that Point Cook had suffered 'heavy losses' due to personnel not taking cover during the air raid drills.¹²¹ Unknown to those serving at Point Cook and Laverton at the time, a Japanese 'Glen' floatplane had taken a three-hour reconnaissance flight over Melbourne a few months earlier. On 26 February 1942, Warrant Flying Officer Nobuo Fujita and Petty Officer Second Class Shoji Okuda flew over the munition factory at Maribyrnong, the fort at Williamstown and RAAF Station Laverton. The aircraft was erected from the submarine I-25 that surfaced near Cape Wickham, King Island in Bass Strait.¹²² It was the same aircraft that had flown a reconnaissance flight over Sydney on 17 February.

The winter of 1942 brought heavy rains that flooded the aerodrome, so very little flying was carried out for nearly a year at Point Cook. Instead, the three satellite aerodromes at Werribee, Little River and Lara, which had been developed during the first few months of 1942, were used to meet the training needs. Working and living accommodation of temporary corrugated-iron huts, along with hangars were erected, and staffs of the relevant sections were gradually transferred to the satellite aerodromes.¹²³ Others were driven daily to their respective aerodromes in RAAF and hired vehicles. The ensuing aerodrome repair and drainage works at Point Cook offered the opportunity to establish and pave concrete runways in place of the all-

119. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 13.

120. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 10.

121. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 22, 28.

122. 'Laverton overflown by Japanese floatplane',

<http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/HistoryRecord/HistoryRecordDetail.aspx?rid=492>;

'Japanese Reconnaissance Flight over Melbourne and Port Phillip Bay on 26 February 1942',

<http://www.ozatwar.com/japrecce/recce02.htm>

123. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 18–21.

over field concept used thereto. The work took a year, with flying operations finally returning to Point Cook on 5 June 1943.¹²⁴

Wing Commander Hal Harding took command of Point Cook in May 1944. He had served at Point Cook before the war as an airman and was drum-major of the RAAF Band.¹²⁵ He had fond recollections of Point Cook as the ‘show station’, with sweeping lawns and garden beds around the messes. He was disappointed to see vegetable gardens in their place and general neglect brought by the war.¹²⁶ As the Empire Air Training Scheme gradually wound back throughout 1944,¹²⁷ he was the perfect appointee to oversee the dismantling of the Point Cook elements of the scheme. In his first monthly report, Harding said that ‘Point Cook has the reputation of being a happy station’, and ‘the high standard of work put out by all ranks is very largely attributable to this fact’. He planned to return Point Cook to the ‘show station and garden city’ of the RAAF.¹²⁸ Harding was proactive in his approach and took over as the president of the welfare committee. He began removing the camouflage, starting with the publicly-visible gates and guard room, and he had the parade ground regraded.

THE SITE AFTER WORLD WAR II

The post-war housing shortage in Australia, caused, in part, by personnel returning from overseas and the need for housing for newly-married couples affected Point Cook. The post-war commander of the base, Group Captain Reg Burrage, married the daughter of recently-retired Group Captain ‘Moth’ Eaton in August 1946, and the press reported that, ‘they are among the lucky people who have a home, for the CO’s modern home on the station awaits their return’ from their honeymoon—Lukis House.¹²⁹ In a short-term attempt to provide more married quarters for the

124. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 51.

125. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 47.

126. ‘“Happy Hal” has a Find’, *Western Mail*, 19 October 1944.

127. Australian War Memorial, ‘Empire Air Training Scheme’, <https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/raaf/eats>.

128. Operations Record Book: Station Headquarters, RAAF Station Point Cook, 70.

129. ‘I Heard and Saw...: Tourists’, *Argus*, 14 August 1946.

many others serving at the base, many of the Silver City huts in the north-west part of the station were converted into two-bedroom homes by lining and partitioning them. In a practice common to other RAAF bases, they were painted inside and out, bathrooms and toilets were fitted, and they were fenced to provide separate backyards (see Figure 61).¹³⁰



Figure 61: *Wirraway aircraft flying above Silver City huts converted to married quarters (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Wirraway file)*

Compared with the comfort of the Burrages, they must have been miserably cold in winter and stiflingly hot in summer, because the lining and insulation was tar paper and sugar cane boards. They proved to be a death trap, as one family discovered in 1955. On 26 March, Leading Aircraftsman John Harvey and his wife Kathleen awoke to find fire and smoke in their quarters at five in the morning. Harvey managed to rescue their two children, but their three-month-old daughter Margaret died soon after admission to the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne. On the day after the inquest into Margaret's death, the RAAF organised for the flammable linings to be removed from the temporary married quarters.¹³¹

130. Stephens, *Going Solo*, 108.

131. 'Baby dies in fire', *Argus*, 28 March 1955.; 'Paper Walls were a 'Death Trap'', *Argus*, 18 May 1955.; 'Fire traps will go', *Argus*, 19 May 1955.

On 6 February 1950, the new Minister for Air, Thomas White—one of the first four flying students at Point Cook in 1914—visited the base. Base commander Group Captain Courtney and Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal George Jones hosted White’s nostalgic tour of the facilities; and while at the southern tarmac, White noticed the dent he had made in a hangar when he crashed the Boxkite in 1914 (see Figure 62).¹³² Jokingly, he said, ‘you are very unenterprising if you haven’t taken that out in all those years’. Quick-wittedly, Courtney replied: ‘It’s a historic landmark’.¹³³ The significance of the dent was realised at that moment, and it is still not repaired.



**Figure 62: World War I hangar with dent in gable, Point Cook
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

New awareness of the RAAF’s heritage emerged during the 1960s. Retired officers, such as Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, ensured that regular newspaper and magazine articles were written about the early days of the Australian Flying Corps and the RAAF. These focussed on the deeds of aircrew for the most part and, in Williams’ case, were often set to portray the protagonists in a positive light. Despite a long-held celebration of Point Cook as the birthplace of military aviation in Australia in that circle of writers, little research was carried out into Point Cook’s built

132. Thomas ‘Tommy’ White crashed into the hangar while attempting to land the Boxkite on the morning of 11 September 1914. He had been on a short solo flight and was aware of the efforts required of the mechanics when landing far from the hangar. He tried to land too close in a cross wind and struck the gable of the workshop. The flying students pitched in with the repairs by stitching and dopping the fabric; (Williams, 26.)

133. ‘Air Minister pays visit to old training ground’, *Argus*, 7 February 1950.

heritage, and no site heritage assessments had been conducted. The first formal attempt to recognise the site's built heritage was in 1964–65, when the Department of Works, under the authority of the base Commandant and Officer Commanding, Air Commodore Keith Parsons, placed markers on buildings of known heritage significance. This first attempt at determining significance was carried out by the RAAF and the Department of Works within their own understanding of heritage values. Local RAAF orders prohibited inappropriate modification of the buildings. One surviving marker is shown in Figure 63.



Figure 63: *Heritage significance plaque on 7 Cole Street (S. Campbell-Wright)*

The RAAF College had been formed in 1948 to train career officers for the RAAF, and in 1961, after forming a partnership with the University of Melbourne, the College was renamed the RAAF Academy. However, the higher status of the academy was not matched by its facilities, because it remained in the old Armament School complex that it had occupied from 1948, comprising mostly World War II Silver City huts. Academic staff complained in 1961 that

existing facilities are quite unsuitable for a university degree course and that the University could not be expected to carry on for any period under conditions as they now exist.¹³⁴

A new and modern facility that reflected the forward-looking, technology-based training of the new academy was needed, and the Parliamentary Works Committee approved funding in late 1961. The first building of what was to become the cohesive quadrangle of the new RAAF Academy precinct was the science block, opened on 15 August 1963. The completed precinct is shown in Figure 64.



Figure 64: RAAF Academy precinct, Point Cook 1985 (S. Campbell-Wright)

Other buildings that completed the quadrangle were the aeronautical science building, the arts and military studies wing, the physics building, the chemistry building and the academy headquarters. Cadet living quarters, a laundry and the cadets' mess were also built nearby. A centrally-located assembly hall completed the

134. Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, Short 'Report relating to the proposed construction of a Science Block at the Royal Australian Air Force Academy', 4.

precinct and had a roof line cleverly designed to appear to be reaching every skyward. The architectural design of the precinct was in the modern International Style, adopted by the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, which was built in the late 1950s by the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill. Figures 65 and 66 show the close similarity in styles between the library buildings of the two academies. The United States Air Force Academy's modern architectural styling was in marked contrast to that of the United States Army's historic Military Academy at West Point, New York; and, in turn, the RAAF Academy's modernist precinct was deliberately in marked contrast to that of the older style of the Royal Military College, Duntroon. When the building program was complete in 1967, the RAAF Academy quadrangle—despite differing greatly from the other buildings on Point Cook—formed an architecturally-successful self-contained enclave that befitted the needs of academia and the service alike.



Figure 65: *United States Air Force Academy library building, Colorado Springs*
(United States Air Force)



Figure 66: *RAAF Academy library building, Point Cook* (S. Campbell-Wright)

Outside of the new RAAF Academy precinct, some new facilities were erected that intruded on the thereto largely original and intact earlier construction pattern. The sergeants' mess received a new dining room and kitchen in 1957.¹³⁵ The officers' mess likewise received a new dining room and kitchen in 1972, and these were followed by a two-storey single officers' accommodation wing linked to the north end of the officers' mess. Without a modern understanding of heritage matters, the historic weatherboard Cole Street streetscape was intruded on by a series of brick condominiums built in the early 1980s to accommodate single airmen, and similar condominiums were built behind the 1936 officers' mess.

A serving RAAF officer and active member of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Wing Commander David Francis, took an interest in the built heritage of Point Cook in the 1970s. He drafted a recommendation for heritage recognition of three buildings at Point Cook's southern tarmac in 1975. They were the original 1914 hangar, the heavily-extended 1914 workshop and the 1917 FE2b battleplane hangar. The unique significance of the 1914 hangar is that, despite being moved, it is Australia's first architectural response to the new problem of needing to house a fragile piece of new technology safely—the aeroplane. The workshop, incorporating the first seaplane hangar and extensions, remained on its original site and was being

135. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 41.

used as the gymnasium and carpenters' workshop in 1975. The battleplane hangar was also on its original site and was being used by the Fire Training School.

Other buildings of outstanding heritage significance survived because new uses were found for them. These included the seaplane hangar that once housed the Southampton flying boats, which was later used as the Transport Section hangar, and the 1914 office and casualty room, which were used as the barracks store, having been moved from the southern tarmac to the domestic area.¹³⁶ Francis completed his report in 1977,¹³⁷ and it went on to form the basis of the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) classification of the three significant southern tarmac buildings. As part of the broader heritage recognition of the Point Cook estate and neighbouring wetlands, the base was added to the Register of the National Estate in 1980.

The more outward-looking approach to community relations adopted by the RAAF from the 1970s coincided with the flowering of the 'New Wave' in the Australian film industry brought about by the support and policies of Prime Ministers Gorton and Whitlam. This also coincided with the change from black and white to colour television, and Point Cook started its long association with the film and television industries. Film companies used Point Cook for its proximity to the bay and for its seclusion. One example that was more interesting than most was the filming of an episode of 'Homicide' on the partially-submerged wreck of the passenger ferry *Queenscliff*. The ferry, built in 1905, was caught in rough seas on 30 December 1973 and headed for the safety of Point Cook pier. However, it bumped against a beam jutting from the pier and a hole was gouged in its hull. It foundered off the end of the pier, where it sat for years during a dispute over responsibility for its removal. In an interesting turn of events, sports divers discovered that the *Queenscliff* was resting on the wreck of another vessel.¹³⁸ That vessel turned out to be the *Isabel B*, the Central Flying School motor launch that sank in April 1919.¹³⁹

136. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*, 47.

137. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

138. 'Shipwreck List', <http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/shipwrecks/heritage/778>.

139. 'Shipwreck List': Fear of a land aircraft being forced to ditch in the bay was ever present at Point Cook. In the beginning of a Marine Section capability that carried on into the 1990s, the motor launch Isabel B was purchased late in world War I for rescue use and to

The television mini-series 'A Thousand Skies', released in 1985, charted the exploits of Charles Kingsford-Smith and used Point Cook as one of its filming locations. A full-size replica of his *Southern Cross* aircraft was kept in a RAAF Museum hangar during the filming. It was not a flying version but was very accurate in its detail, down to the oil stains from the engines. The producers painted one of the Bellman hangars to look like Mills Field San Francisco airport where, Kingsford-Smith was based in the United States of America.¹⁴⁰ A hangar was also painted to look like the fictional outback town of Coopers Crossing and was used in the filming of 'The Flying Doctors' television series for eight years from 1985. The unserviceable Nomad aircraft used in the series was kept near the hangar.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation filmed part of *The Great Air Race*, released in 1990, on the base. The movie was a fictional story based on the events surrounding the 1934 MacRobertson Trophy Air Race from Mildenhall, England to Melbourne. A wooden replica of the winning bright-red DH88 Comet *Grosvenor House* languished behind a hangar on the southern tarmac for many years after the filming.

A horizon tank for filming movies to appear as though filming is occurring in the middle of the ocean was constructed at Point Cook in 1997. Careful use of camera angles and heights hides the thin remnant of coastline that remains to protect the filmset. Point Cook's tank is one of only three in the world, the others being in Malta and Mexico.¹⁴¹ The \$800,000 tank was constructed with finance from the film industry and government assistance and was originally planned to be deconstructed after the filming of internationally-released movie *Moby Dick* (see Figure 67).¹⁴² Workers unearthed many items of historic interest as they dug the tank. These included the wing of a Mustang fighter, practice bombs, silk stockings new in their packets and other objects from the onetime World War II rubbish dump. Rather than refilling the tank with earth, it was leased to Meniscus Productions under the

assist with any handling of hydroplanes. It was wrecked in a storm while moored at the Point Cook jetty on the night of 5 April 1919. Its engine and other serviceable parts were salvaged, but the hull remains off the jetty as a heritage listed shipwreck.

140. 'Museum Corner', *RAAF News*, November 1985.

141. 'Filming Tanks/Pools Worldwide', <http://www.macdp.com/petermac/filtanks.html>.

142. 'A tank full of promise', *Werribee Banner*, 3 June 1998.

title of Point Cook Film Studios and used for the 1999 filming of the movie *Noah's Ark*.¹⁴³



**Figure 67: *Filming of movie Moby Dick in horizon tank, Point Cook*
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Moby Dick album)**

The local film and television industry also used Point Cook for series such as ‘Blue Heelers’, which was filmed in the local Werribee area and used the base’s service station in at least one episode in the late 1990s. Television advertisers also used the site to make advertisements, including one for the EL model Ford Falcon, which used a large bamboo arch constructed over the road to the southern tarmac.¹⁴⁴ In 2007, the telemovie *Curtin* used the officers’ mess for many interior and exterior scenes.

143. ‘Moby Dick’,
http://web.archive.org/web/20010428084004/http://www.usanetwork.com/movies/moby_dick/

144. Wright, email to author.

In 1983, the RAAF formed the Point Cook Historical Committee, which included representation from the Department of Works and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The committee commissioned a professional heritage assessment by consultants Span and Neale in 1984.¹⁴⁵ The comprehensive report identified the previous uses of surviving buildings and captured a vast amount of information that might have been otherwise lost. The report surveyed the built heritage of Point Cook and placed it within a wider context of national heritage. The work of the consultants and the heritage committee led to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) classifying the entire base and airfield in November 1984, and the entry on the Register of the National Estate was amended to recognise the built heritage of the base.¹⁴⁶

The 1980s ushered in a new period of facilities development. No 1 Flying Training School upgraded its facilities with the addition of a new headquarters and training complex, avionics workshops, a flight line office and a parachute drying facility in the World War II Bellman hangar precinct. A new air traffic control tower replaced the old one dating back to World War II, which was removed to Barwon Heads, Victoria for reuse. A new mess and recreation facility for airmen was built in 1981. The facility was named the 'Henry Chester Club' in honour of the Australian Flying Corps' first airman. The disused original airmen's mess, with elements dating back to 1914, burnt down in a fire one night in September 1984.¹⁴⁷

Regarding the married quarters, the row of non-commissioned officer houses along Dalzell Road dating from not long after World War I was in a poor state of repair, and these were demolished in the early 1980s, as were the converted Silver City married quarters in the northwest corner of the base. Some prefabricated eight-square houses had been erected in the north-west corner of the base in the 1960s under a so-called 'crash' program of married quarter construction to provide a

145. Span and Neal, *Point Cook Heritage Study*.

146. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

147. Gardner, discussion with author.

recruiting incentive.¹⁴⁸ They were all gradually replaced by new brick-veneer houses throughout the 1980s.

To provide an increased aviation presence to the main entrance of the base, a retired Vampire jet aircraft was mounted on a post in a dynamic flying attitude to act as a gate guardian (see Figure 68). The base had finally become the garden city envisaged by Wing Commander Hal Harding at the end of World War II, and it was recognised for its outstanding example in the ‘Tidy Towns’ awards scheme conducted by the Keep Australia Beautiful Council with awards in 1983 and 1984.



Figure 68: *De Havilland Vampire aircraft gate guardian, Point Cook* (S. Campbell-Wright)

The creation of the Australian Defence Force Academy in the Australian Capital Territory in 1986 had a profound effect on Point Cook. The new academy trained career officers for the three armed services in a central location, which forced the closure of the RAAF Academy. In response, the RAAF reinstated the defunct title of RAAF College in January 1986, into which it integrated the Officers’ Training School, the RAAF School of Applied Management and the Engineer Cadet Squadron. The Officers’ Training School took over the RAAF Academy’s science

148. Stephens, *Going Solo*, 110.

block and chemistry building, while the School of Applied Management took over the physics building, and the RAAF Academy headquarters building became the new RAAF College headquarters. The arts and military studies building became the RAAF College library, and the assembly hall was consecrated as the Chapel of the Holy Trinity in 1987. Most of the RAAF's laid-up colours are now displayed in the chapel.

THE SITE FROM THE 1990s

The RAAF base at Point Cook, once the RAAF's only base, lost its status as a standalone base on 31 March 1989, when it was amalgamated with RAAF Laverton to form RAAF Williams— named in honour of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams. The bases became known as RAAF Williams–Point Cook Base and RAAF Williams–Laverton Base.¹⁴⁹ The amalgamation was a result of the Force Structure Review, undertaken in the wake of the Government's White Paper *The Defence of Australia 1987*, which recommended the sale of the airfield at Point Cook and the retention of the domestic and working areas. The review announced the planned closure of No 1 Flying Training School but foreshadowed the move of other units to the base.¹⁵⁰ The amalgamation met its desired outcome of reducing the size of the administrative staff. Communication between Laverton and Point Cook was critical, and this was addressed by the establishment of a microwave link for the telephone and incipient computer networks. While RAAF members might have been accustomed to the nuances of the renaming of the bases, the situation caused considerable public confusion, with visitors frequently reporting to the wrong base for meetings.

In 1993, the RAAF Museum moved its headquarters to the facilities vacated by No 1 Flying Training School that had previously been used as the RAAF College and first RAAF Academy headquarters, and this offered an immense improvement over the old Armament School buildings. Museum staff extended the public displays by

149. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Base Williams 1991*, 2–3.

150. Department of Defence, *Defence Update* (May 1991), 14.

converting the No 1 Flying Training School maintenance complex into the RAAF Museum Heritage Gallery, which opened on 11 October 1996.

Meanwhile, the Victorian Government had pressed for the establishment of the National Air and Space Museum of Australia (NASMA) from 1988—initially at Laverton but at Point Cook by 1992—to display civil aviation heritage items.¹⁵¹ The new museum required joint state and federal funding and would have integrated the RAAF Museum into its structure.¹⁵² The proposal was dropped in 1996 due to lack of state and federal funding commitment,¹⁵³ and the decision, as expressed in the terms of the 1999 Air Force report on the future of Point Cook, ‘finally removed the NASMA millstone from around the RAAF Museum’s neck’.¹⁵⁴

Following the disbandment of No 1 Flying Training School in 1993, the RAAF Aviation Medicine Institute was no longer co-located with an operational flying base. Further, the unit was still located in the World War II hospital, based around the first hospital of 1921, and the institute was in desperate need of modern facilities. It relocated to RAAF Base Edinburgh, South Australia in 1995. In the years before leaving Point Cook, the institute had continued to offer routine hypobaric training to aircrew and to carry out aviation medicine research. In a substantial loss for military aviation heritage, the original hospital that housed the institute was demolished in 1996, despite its heritage protection status.

As Point Cook became less populated during the 1990s, its heritage significance became a matter of greater interest for a wider sector of the RAAF community. The site gradually changed from being a place of work to a place of heritage significance. For example, for the first time, people requested the scattering of ashes from aircraft over the airfield, and the newly-consecrated chapel was used for the funeral of the wartime Chief of the Air Staff, Sir George Jones. The chapel was converted from the RAAF Academy assembly hall (see Figure 69).

151. ‘National Museum a Step Closer’, *RAAF News*, March 1992.

152. National Air & Space Museum of Australia, *National Air & Space Museum: Laverton Victoria* (National Air & Space Museum of Australia, c1988), 39.

153. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

154. Department of Defence, *Notes from Briefing by RAAF re Future of Point Cook at HQ Training Command Laverton 16 Jul 1999*, wt990215 (1999).



Figure 69: RAAF Chapel, Point Cook (S. Campbell-Wright)

In the wake of the decision to disband No 1 Flying Training School in 1992, Federal Member for Lalor Doctor Barry Jones chaired a consultative committee to determine the future uses of Point Cook and Laverton. His committee recommended potential use in aviation heritage through the continued presence of RAAF training and the RAAF Museum, along with appropriate civil aviation use. In a parallel move, the 1992 Port Phillip Airport Study examined potential civilian activities at Point Cook and Laverton as part of the wider civil aviation network plan, and conservation architects Allom Lovell and Associates carried out a comprehensive heritage appraisal of both bases. Their report codified the heritage significance in line with modern professional heritage practice.¹⁵⁵

Public interest in the heritage of Point Cook also increased during the 1990s. The Federal Government-sponsored 'Australia Remembers' program commenced in 1995 on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. The program caused a

155. Allom Lovell & Associates, *RAAF Williams Point Cook*.

public awakening of Australian defence heritage and, as veterans were asked to tell their stories by younger generations, the significance of military heritage sites gained a wider public recognition. Attendance increased significantly at dawn services around the country, and the Australian Flying Corps Memorial at Point Cook became the focus of military-aviation-related dawn services in Melbourne.

In a further round of cost-saving initiatives, the Defence Reform Program commenced in April 1997, based on the recommendations of the 1996 Defence Efficiency Review.¹⁵⁶ The program furthered the government's desire to invest in combat equipment and combat support, with Minister for Defence Ian McLachlan—a pastoralist by profession—expressing the view that, he would rather invest his money in sheep than buildings.¹⁵⁷ The resulting restructure of the Australian Defence Organisation placed the stewardship of all Defence properties in the newly-formed Defence Estate Organisation from 1997. One of the aims of that entity was to raise revenue through the disposal of properties by a 'rationalisation of the Defence estate through the continuing business review of selected establishments'.¹⁵⁸ In 1998, the Defence Estate Organisation identified Point Cook as one of the properties to be disposed of in the 2001 financial year.

In 1998, as a first step towards the sale of Point Cook, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology gained a lease on part of the No 1 Flying Training School complex that was not being used by the RAAF Museum. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology offered initial and advanced flying training for pilots in the Chinese domestic airline industry and also leased five vacant married quarters from Defence in 1999 to house the students of two courses commencing in 1999. They hoped that living in the married quarters would help the students to integrate into the community and make them feel welcome in Australia.¹⁵⁹ Defence began moving military units from the base, such as the Australian Defence Force School of

156. 'McLachlan Announces Defence Reform Program, MIN 61/97', news release, 11 April 1997.

157. Officer Commanding RAAF Williams, discussion with author, May 1996.

158. Commonwealth of Australia, *Portfolio Budget Statements 1998-99, Program Eleven: Defence Estate*, (Canberra).

159. RMIT International Ltd, Letter to Point Cook base residents, undated, circa October 1999.

Languages, which moved to Laverton in 1998. The sergeants' mess held its last dining-in on the evening of 26 February 1999,¹⁶⁰ and the RAAF's oldest sergeants' mess closed soon after. The 1929 two-storey headquarters building was allocated to the Air Training Corps, which was rapidly becoming the largest uniformed presence on the base, especially during its annual camps and drill competitions.

Public interest in retaining Point Cook—variously as a heritage asset, operating airfield or both—followed the announcement to dispose of Point Cook. The Point Cook Airfield Preservation Action Group formed on 12 December 1998 at a meeting called by Colin Grey as an umbrella group for lobbying to save the base from inappropriate development.¹⁶¹ The Group had representation from the Sport Aircraft Association of Australia, the Antique Aircraft Association of Australia, the Australian Warbirds Association, the Gliding Federation of Australia, Moorabbin Air Museum and the Aviation Historical Society of Australia. Its aims were to preserve the heritage of Point Cook, keep the airfield operating, retain the RAAF Museum at Point Cook and encourage wider civil use and access.¹⁶²

Historian Geoff Bellamy said that the site should be given World Heritage Site listing because of its significance as 'the only remaining intact pre-world war military airfield in the world'.¹⁶³ David Francis continued to agitate from within the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), and lobbyists such as Mark Pilkington, Ted Ilton, Ian Sutherland and Susan Campbell-Wright agitated through meetings and letters to parliamentarians and senior RAAF officers. The local Federal Parliament member, Julia Gillard, recognised the operational and heritage values of Point Cook to her electorate and became a strong supporter. Recreational aviation groups and airfield tenants joined forums with the Victorian Branches of the Returned and Service League and the RAAF Association, and Gillard tabled a petition in parliament in 1999 with eleven-thousand signatures—collected in three months—calling for retention of the site as centre for aviation preservation, education, training and heritage tourism. The Air Officer Commanding Training Command, Air

160. Dining-in menu RAAF Williams–Point Cook Sergeants' Mess, 26 February 1999.

161. Notice: 'Seminar/Workshop' issued by Colin Grey

162. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

163. 'Time flies at Point Cook', *Age*, 3 October 1998.

Commodore Doug Chipman, said, that the 'RAAF cannot afford to dither any longer', emphasising that 'the lack of action has resulted in sapping of Point Cook's lifeblood' through lack of spending on maintenance.¹⁶⁴

In October 1999, a new group, Point Cook Operations Limited, formed to lease and operate the base as a potential disposal solution for Defence. Point Cook Operations Limited board of directors included retired Air Vice-Marshal Peter Scully, former RAAF test pilot Randall Green, former RAAF Museum commanding officer Gary Westley and businessman Gordon Kennett.¹⁶⁵ Point Cook Operations Limited saw the benefits of its control of Point Cook as the preservation of Point Cook, the retention of the RAAF Museum at the site, along with sympathetic residential and community development. The plan included achieving the RAAF Museum's proposed Project Pegasus, which was to cover a number of the central tarmac Bellman hangars and other museum buildings under a single wing-shaped structure, allowing the ability to preserve large historic aircraft.¹⁶⁶ The Point Cook Operations Limited proposal later developed to include a retirement village for retired RAAF members in the north-west corner of the base.

Meanwhile, the commander of the base encouraged married quarter residents to apply for alternative houses off the base from 2000, the canteen and cinema closed, and the Thrift Shop moved to Laverton. The Defence Estate Organisation issued eviction orders to private aviation operators who had long-standing arrangements for the use of facilities, such as the Point Cook Flying Club and heritage aviation operator Bob Eastgate. This led to protracted disagreements that resulted in an Australian National Audit Office investigation and a Senate Inquiry into the sale of defence facilities in 2001. The Senate Committee took evidence from users of leased premises at Point Cook and reported that 'it would not be an overstatement to say that the criticism was trenchant and harsh of the management of the leasing arrangements put in place by DEO'. The Committee, citing lack of consultation

164. Department of Defence, *Short Notes from Briefing by RAAF re Future of Point Cook at HQ Training Command Laverton 16 Jul 1999*.

165. 'Pt Cook site set for sale', *Werribee Banner*, 20 October 1999.

166. Department of Defence, *Short Notes from Briefing by RAAF re Future of Point Cook at HQ Training Command Laverton 16 Jul 1999*.

between the Defence Estate Organisation and users, went on to say that ‘some good old-fashioned manners and common courtesies would go a long way to resolving many of the problems created by DEO and its agents’.¹⁶⁷ The affected tenants were allowed to remain, albeit at a higher rent.

In 2001, the Victorian State Government commissioned a report by the Ambidgi Group into airfield capacity in Melbourne, which recommended retention of Point Cook as part of the wider network of general aviation operations;¹⁶⁸ and in May 2001, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Brendan Nelson, announced the retention of the Point Cook base as an operating airfield, due mainly to the view expressed by Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for State and Regional Development Tony Robinson that, ‘Point Cook must retain an operating capacity for the long-term benefit of general aviation in the state’.¹⁶⁹ Despite headlines such as ‘Point Cook Saved’, and quotes from local Federal Member Julia Gillard that ‘this is fantastic’ and ‘is what we have been fighting for the past three years’, the Federal Government still planned to go ahead with the sale of the base to private interests.¹⁷⁰ A Project Steering Committee to review the method of disposal of the site was formed and chaired by Don Hayward, former Victorian Minister for Education. Hayward’s committee appointed the company Sinclair Knight Mertz as project consultants, which devised four proposals for land use and embarked on a round of community consultation before presenting recommendations to Nelson’s replacement, Parliamentary Secretary Fran Bailey. Matters such as the decontamination of the RAAF Fire Training School burn sites, which was required to be carried out by the vendor under new environmental protection legislation, were brought to light in the process.

In August 2003, Bailey announced the freehold sale of Point Cook, to be effected by June 2004. The disposal plan designated a heritage precinct to be retained by the

167. Commonwealth of Australia, *Senate Report into Defence Property Disposal*, Australian Senate (Canberra, 1999), 66–68, http://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/senate/committee/fadt_ctte/completed_inquiries/1999-02/defprop/report/c07.pdf.

168. Ambidgi Group, *Aviation Capacities in the Port Phillip Region* (2001).

169. ‘Point Cook Saved’, *Werribee Banner*, 16 May 2001.

170. ‘Point Cook Saved’.

Commonwealth, which included the RAAF Museum complex, the World War I timber messes and associated accommodation, the original two-storey headquarters, the parade ground and the Australian Flying Corps Memorial, but little else.¹⁷¹ The 1914 Caretaker's Cottage would have been marooned in an area to be disposed, so plans were made to relocate it within the heritage precinct. Despite the impending sale of what he described as the RAAF's 'ancestral home', Air Marshal Houston said, 'our history is important to us, and Point Cook holds a symbolic place in the history of the Royal Australian Air Force—it is the foundation on which we have built the organisation we are today'.¹⁷²

In September 2003, the Australian Council of National Trusts placed Point Cook on its Endangered Sites List and lobbied the Federal Government not to go ahead with the sale. David Kemp, Minister for Environment and Heritage, visited with representatives of the Point Cook Airfield Preservation Action Group and the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). This was followed by a visit from Fran Bailey in November. In a further move to strengthen the heritage protection of the site, the Action Group nominated Point Cook for inclusion on the highest level of heritage recognition in Australia, the Commonwealth Heritage List and National Heritage List in February 2004.¹⁷³

Finally, after further consideration, Bailey announced a reversal of the decision to sell Point Cook in February 2004, choosing the RAAF Museum's air pageant that celebrated the ninetieth anniversary of military aviation in Australia to make the announcement. Instead of a sale, the site was to be retained in Government hands and operated by a new body, the National Aviation Museum Trust. Don Hayward was appointed to establish the trust.

However, in November 2005, Bailey's replacement as subsequent Parliamentary Secretary, Teresa Gambaro, announced the closure of the trust and the full retention and operation of Point Cook by the Department of Defence. In place of the trust,

171. Codey, 'Point Cook sale'.

172. Codey, 'Point Cook sale'.

173. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*; Inclusion on the Commonwealth Heritage List and the National Heritage List was achieved in 2007 and afforded protection under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

the newly-formed RAAF Heritage Advisory Council was to 'be responsible for providing the Chief [of Air Force] with strategic and policy advice to engage the ongoing community interest in preserving the RAAF heritage values of Point Cook'.¹⁷⁴ Through the passion and determination of a number of dedicated individuals and groups, Point Cook had survived its greatest threat, having almost gone the way of its United Kingdom counterpart, the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon, which has lost its airfield to development and is closely surrounded by housing. However, the years of indecision over the base's future caused neglect of vital infrastructure, and the in-ground infrastructure needed refurbishment.

Throughout 2008, consultation took place for the Point Cook Redevelopment Program, which the RAAF devised in response to Defence's Melbourne Accommodation Review and the RAAF's Rebalance and Reshape Program, both of which emerged under the influence of the Global Financial Crisis. The aims of the one-hundred-million-dollar Point Cook Redevelopment Program were to redevelop the RAAF Museum facilities, move Combat Support Unit Williams, No 21 Squadron and the Rifle Flight Detachment of No 1 Airfield Defence Squadron from Laverton to Point Cook and provide facilities for the Air Force Band at Point Cook.¹⁷⁵ The program assessed the risks of inaction to environment and heritage at the site, noting that 'further deterioration of assets will necessitate removal for safety reasons, which is contrary to the objectives of the Commonwealth Heritage List and National Heritage List'.¹⁷⁶ The program also noted the associated risk to Defence's reputation from public, media and political attention. Funding for the redevelopment was allocated in the Green Book—the Federal Government list of proposed major public works.

At a local level, the RAAF Williams Point Cook Heritage Management Plan was published in April 2008 to protect the heritage values of the site and to ensure its future care and appropriate use.¹⁷⁷ The plan reinforced the decisions of the Point

174. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

175. URS Australia, *RAAF Base Williams Redevelopment: Requirements Analysis Report (draft)* (Adelaide: , 2008), 1–2.

176. URS Australia, *RAAF Base Williams Redevelopment*, 7-3–7-4.

177. Environmental Resources Management, *RAAF Williams Point Cook Heritage Management Plan*, (Pymont: Department of Defence, 2008).

Cook Redevelopment Program and introduced the concept that the base to be a 'working heritage base' to conduct operations 'while preserving and displaying Air Force and Australian aviation history'.¹⁷⁸ The plan stated that 'the aim is to "re-blue" the base with a range of RAAF uses, functions and support'. Various proposals were authorised under the plan for adaptive re-use of heritage buildings and new purpose-built facilities.¹⁷⁹

In order to commence the Redevelopment Program, Defence cleared the base of remaining occupants in all but the RAAF Museum and RAAF Academy precincts and evicted commercial and community tenants. Aviation operator Bob Eastgate, who had been invited to operate on the base in the 1970s and survived an earlier eviction attempt in 2001, was required to move after claims that the hangar he rented was unsafe. He and other tenants had paid one-hundred-thousand dollars collectively in rent since 2001 and argued that the rent should have been invested in maintenance of their facilities. Local Federal Member of Parliament (and later Prime Minister) Julia Gillard said, 'these tenants have been treated outrageously and we are absolutely convinced there is no safety issue'.¹⁸⁰ The 1st Point Cook Scout Group moved to new facilities in the wider community, followed by the Point Cook Primary School and the RAAF Point Cook Kindergarten.¹⁸¹ With the cessation of the Gap Year Program at the end of 2010, the RAAF Academy cadets' mess, by then known as the Officers' Mess Annex, was closed, as was the gymnasium. The last two families in the heritage married quarter precinct moved off the base in 2010 and 2013.¹⁸²

A series of demolitions of non-heritage buildings commenced in 2010. Most of the buildings had been identified as intrusive to the heritage values of the base in the 2008 Heritage Management Plan. Public criticism had been levelled at the

178. Environmental Resources Management, Short *RAAF Williams Point Cook Heritage Management Plan*.

179. Environmental Resources Management, Short *RAAF Williams Point Cook Heritage Management Plan*, 11–12.

180. 'Hangar', *Werribee Star*, 25 April 2008.

181. The RAAF Point Cook Kindergarten's convenor, Mary Michelon, had served in that capacity at Point Cook for twenty-three years.

182. Warrant Officer Ross 'Frog' Chavasse and his family moved in 2010, and Squadron Leader Steve Campbell-Wright and his family moved in 2013 after living on Point Cook for twenty-four years.

unoccupied brick 1980s married quarters in the northwest part of the base, due to the perception of a housing shortage in the community, so they were the first buildings to be demolished in tranches over two years. The primary school site was cleared of the portable classrooms that had gradually augmented the school over the previous decade, and the service station was taken down. The single airwomen's quarters and the airmen's condominiums were demolished. The officers' tennis courts and the intrusive 1957 dining room that had been added to the sergeants' mess were demolished in 2011, along with the airmen's mess and associated Henry Chester Club and the Officers' Mess Annex.

Along with the removal of many intrusive elements, some essential maintenance was completed in 2011, such as the erection of boundary fences and the replacement of the rotting wooden covers of the drain that crosses the airfield. The 1922 motor transport hangar lost its roof in a storm in July 2008, and after almost succumbing to the elements, the spiritual home of RAAF motor transport drivers was reroofed. After lobbying from aviation heritage activist Mark Pilkington, the local Federal Member of Parliament and then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, provided over two-million dollars for urgent protective maintenance in 2011. Gillard said that 'this has included urgent work on various heritage buildings to protect the buildings from deterioration and to enhance their appearance'.¹⁸³ Figure 70 shows some of the buildings on Cole Street after the protective painting, with a cadet accommodation block on the right and the 1914 officers' mess in the centre-left. The 1914 base commander's residence is visible to the far left.

183. Julia Gillard, letter (reference C12/55459), 7 September 2012.



Figure 70: *Buildings on Cole Street, Point Cook after conservation painting, 2011*
(S. Campbell-Wright)

A further \$27 million was allocated for the remediation of the former fire training ground east of the southern tarmac, and the process was conducted during 2013–15. According to Gillard, the \$100-million Point Cook Redevelopment Plan was forecast to commence in 2015.¹⁸⁴ Shortly after announcing her intention not to stand for re-election in 2013 and reflecting on her most significant achievements, Gillard said: ‘I have been pleased to play a part in getting...the RAAF base at Point Cook saved’.¹⁸⁵ However, the planned redevelopment only commenced in 2018.

CONCLUSION

The various uses of the site at Point Cook—Indigenous, European agricultural, military—were responses to the ability of the land to provide for each subsequent communities’ needs. As the communities associated with the site changed, so, in turn, did the responses to the land. Ultimately, the built environment after military occupation underwent significant development, which remains largely intact. The pattern of military and civil aviation use of the site displays a developmental series of responses to the evolution of aviation operations and training in Australia. Point Cook remains highly significant for its completeness as an aviation site and as the

184. Gillard, letter (reference C12/55459).

185. Julia Gillard, letter, undated (July 2013).

setting for some of the most-important past events for Australian aviation. This is recognised by the overarching Defence Heritage Strategy, which states:

Defence owns and uses a variety of places that are significant for their cultural, Indigenous, historical, natural and social heritage values. These places are not only significant for their association with Defence and our achievements, but are also important to the broader Australian community. It is important that we manage our heritage places responsibly and openly, demonstrating to the community that we are worthy of their trust in the contribution we make to ensure a positive legacy for future generations.¹⁸⁶

Further, placement of Point Cook on the Commonwealth Heritage List and National Heritage List recognises the outstanding heritage value of Point Cook to the nation and the central role it has played in the development of military and civil aviation in Australia.¹⁸⁷

186. Department of Defence, *Defence Heritage Strategy: from a proud past to a better future* (2004), 3, <http://www.defence.gov.au/environment/defenceheritagestrategy.pdf>.

187. Environmental Resources Management, *Short RAAF Williams Point Cook Heritage Management Plan*, iii.

PART TWO

THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF POINT COOK

CHAPTER FIVE – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

John Donne (1572–1631)¹

Part Two of this thesis will interpret the historical narrative of Part One from a cultural heritage perspective, considering the relationship between Point Cook and a range of entities that are influenced by the site. It builds on the foundation provided by the preceding descriptive historical research into the elements of Point Cook's past that have an enduring effect on the cultural heritage of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), the local community, the nation and aviation internationally. Part Two therefore aims to examine and explain the significance of Point Cook. Chapter Five thus answers the research questions: how has Point Cook influenced the local community that surrounds it since military occupation; and what significance does Point Cook hold for Australia and internationally in the present day? Chapter Six will examine the significance of the site to the RAAF and its associated communities.

The attitudes to Point Cook of the local community associated with the site have changed over time. Prior to the arrival of military aviation activity at Point Cook in 1913–14, the place was subjected to a variety of uses and significances by the communities that used it within the context of their broader usage of the local land and resources. During the period of greatest military activity—from 1914 to 1995—the connection between the local community and the site was generally one of mutual partnership and respect. However, since the reduction in military aviation activity after 1995, the place has taken on other significances for the local community. Most notably, Point Cook has shifted in understanding from a place that was significant for its contribution to the sustainment of the local community to one that holds symbolic significance as an important part of the heritage of the area. The local community has formed a sense of place regarding the RAAF base, and the

1. John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (England, 1624).

symbolic elements of the site now sustain the local community's views of, and beliefs related to, the base. Further, Point Cook, as a physical and symbolic place, plays a part in the life of the nation and, to a lesser extent, the international aviation community.

As a framework for determining significance, this chapter will firstly describe the early connections between the local and military communities at Point Cook and investigate the local community's understanding of Point Cook over time, before assessing the significance of Point Cook to the present-day local community. It will then go on to assess the significance of the site nationally and internationally. However, before examining the significance of Point Cook to the local community, the role of place in social memory more broadly requires investigation to provide a framework for discussion.

THE ROLE OF PLACE IN MEMORY

Historian David Thelen claims that memories 'provide security, authority, legitimacy and finally identity in the present';² and cultural historian Kate Darian-Smith identifies that, through memory, 'we frame our sense of individual, group and national identities, give meaning to our own life history, and understand our social past';³ while historian Greg Denning, states that: 'Institutions require a memory. A memory creates precedent and order'.⁴ In its most basic form, memory comprises the recall and interpretation of past occurrences, which are usually linked to a place and a time. So, how is place instrumental in the formation of institutional or community memory? Concepts from various disciplines, such as the concepts of sense of place, place attachment, place memory and social or public memory, each provide an insight. The field of memory studies has developed concepts of social memory and place memory, and the discipline has generated a considerable body of literature to

2. David Thelen, ed., *Memory and American History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), xvi., in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15.

3. Kate Darian-Smith, 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front During the Second World War' in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 137.

4. Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language*, 147.

become a well-established area of study internationally. Commenting on the field of memory studies by Australian researchers, Rosanne Kennedy and Susannah Radstone claim that:

Australia is not identified with a reverential relationship with any particular tradition or approach; rather, Australian memory studies is characterised by bricolage, eclecticism, innovation and originality and by its testing of the claims of accepted approaches.⁵

Australian historians Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton argue that:

Memories link us to place, to time and to the nation; they enable us to place value on our individual and our social experiences, and they enable us to inhabit our own country.⁶

Further, reflecting the eclectic nature of memory studies in Australia, the broader Australian relationship with place is influenced by the knowledge of Indigenous relationships to ‘country’,⁷ and, as Hamilton explains, in the period since the 1970s, ‘there has been a huge shift in our understanding of what constitutes an *Australian* past’.⁸

In defining the concept of sense of place, environmental educator Nicole Ardoin claims that,

sense of place is deceptively complex. All at once, a sense of place incorporates psychological being, social community, cultural symbols, bio-physical territory, and political and economic systems.⁹

These interconnections between individuals, communities, social constructs and physical place are also the elements required to form community memory about a place. Ardoin explains that sense of place can be examined through the fields of

5. Rosanne Kennedy and Susannah Radstone, ‘Memory up close: Memory Studies in Australia’, *Memory Studies*, no. 6 (3) (2013): 241.

6. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, ‘Introduction’ in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 1.

7. Kennedy and Radstone, ‘Memory up close’, 239.

8. Paula Hamilton, ‘The Knife Edge: Debates about Memory and History’ in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 13.

9. Nicole Ardoin, ‘Towards an Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place: Lessons for Environmental Education’, *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 11 (2006): 121.7

psychology, sociology and anthropology. In the case of psychology, personal identity is linked with place identity; while in the case of sociology, society ‘develops, portrays, and often promotes an aggregate understanding of place’.¹⁰ In the case of anthropology, ‘cultural and symbolic elements sustain society’s views of and beliefs related to place’.¹¹ For Ardoin, sense of place describes more than the physical elements of place and, invoking Yi-Fu Tuan, explains that, through familiarity, an undifferentiated space may be endowed with value and therefore be considered place.¹² In explaining the process of endowment, sociologist David Hummon claims that sense of place is a dual process that involves ‘an interpretive perspective *on* the environment and an emotional reaction *to* the environment’.¹³

Environmental psychologist Richard Stedman—relying on earlier researchers, such as Brandenburg, Carroll and Relph—outlines the predominant three-component model of sense of place, which includes ‘the physical setting, human activities, and human social and psychological processes rooted in the setting’.¹⁴ More recent researchers, such as Maria Lewicka, refer to this model as the tripartite model, which uses the shorthand three P descriptor of Person, Process and Place.¹⁵ So, for environmental psychologists, sense of place relies on the connection of symbolic meanings with a physical setting by an individual or group. For Stedman, the connections are positive, containing an element of satisfaction or attachment,¹⁶ and the general agreement by researchers in the field of sense of place is that the emotional response to place is usually positive and is a strong element in the formation of place attachment.

10. Ardoin, ‘Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place’, 116.

11. Ardoin, ‘Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place’, 116.

12. Ardoin, ‘Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place’, 113. with reference to Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1977), 6.

13. David Hummon, ‘Community Attachment: local sentiment and sense of place’, *Place Attachment* (1992): 6.

14. Richard Stedman, ‘Toward a Social Psychology of Place: predicting behavior from place-based cognitions, attitude, and identity’, *Environment and Behavior* 34, no. 5, September 2002: 562.

15. Maria Lewicka, ‘Place Attachment: How far have we come in the last 40 years?’, *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 31, no. 3.

16. Stedman, ‘Social Psychology of Place’, 563.

The concept of place attachment, a primary concept of the field of environmental psychology, provides insight to understanding the role of place in the formation of memory by a community. As Stedman argues: 'Place attachment rests on symbolic meanings. We attribute meaning to landscapes and in turn become attached to the meanings.'¹⁷ The symbolic nature of the relationship between communities and place is agreed by Anthropologist Setha Low, who provides a definition of place attachment as,

the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's or group's understanding of and relation to the environment... Thus, place attachment is more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place.¹⁸

Meaning, therefore, is central to the symbolic relationship between people and place and is reinforced by Stedman, who argues that 'once held, meanings are crucial determinants of attachment, satisfaction, and behavior'.¹⁹

Based largely on the work of Low, Jennifer Cross identifies six types of relationship to place as: biographical, spiritual, ideological, narrative, commodified and dependent.²⁰ Each type of relationship is formed by a different cognitive process. Of Cross' types, relationship formed through narrative is the most relevant in the military context. Cross describes narrative relationships as a bond created by learning about a place through such stories as 'creation myths, family histories, fictional accounts, local lore, moral tales, national myths, and political accounts'.²¹ Narrative relationships can range from small-scale examples, such as an individual's familial connection with a small village, to a population's connection with places of national significance. Architectural historian Dolores Hayden goes as far as claiming that '[s]ocial memory relies on storytelling',²² while Darian-Smith and Hamilton declare

17. Stedman, 'Social Psychology of Place', 563.

18. Setha Low, 'Symbolic Ties that Bind: Place Attachment and the Plaza', *Place Attachment*: 2.

19. Stedman, 'Social Psychology of Place', 578.

20. Jennifer Cross, 'What is Sense of Place?' (12th Headwaters Conference, Colorado 2001).

21. Cross, 'Short What is Sense of Place?'. 7.

22. Hayden, *Power of Place*, 46.

that '[m]ythical narratives are explanatory, connecting the past to the present and providing a historical rationale for our society as it is now'.²³

Examples of large-scale narrative relationships about place include those between the United States of America and the 'Wild West', and the United Kingdom and Kent: 'the garden of England'. In such cases, and many like them, as Stedman argues, 'the physical setting and its attributes take on the role of object or locus for beliefs, attitudes, and identity'.²⁴ As explained by Tuan, in reference to place, '[e]xperience can be direct and intimate, or it can be indirect and conceptual, mediated by symbols'.²⁵ Tuan provides an excellent example, when he cites a comment from Neils Bohr to Werner Heisenberg when the two physicists visited Kromberg Castle in Denmark:

Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones, and admire the way the architect put them together. The stones, the green roof with its patina, the wood carvings in the church, constitute the whole castle. None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here. ... Kronberg becomes quite a different castle for us.²⁶

Tuan's example aligns with the concept of place memory, attributed to philosopher Edward S. Casey, which he describes as 'the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability'.²⁷ Casey claims that: 'We might even say that memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported'.²⁸ Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose, when discussing the Indigenous Australian connection to place—but with universal relevance—argues that history and memory accumulates in place. Rose points out

23. Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 2.

24. Stedman, 'Social Psychology of Place', 565.

25. Tuan, *Space and Place*, 6.

26. Werner Heisenberg, *Physics and Beyond: encounters and conversations* (New York: Harper Touchbook, 1972), 51.; cited by Tuan, *Space and Place*, 4.

27. Hayden, *Power of Place*, 46.

28. Edward Casey, *Remembering: a phenomenological study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 186–87.

that place memory is ‘vulnerable, because the ongoing life of the place happens through the actions of ephemeral living beings’.²⁹

Darian-Smith and Hamilton note that individuals discern between memories of their own experience and those held in common with others, and that collective memory is used by individuals to structure their world and understand the past;³⁰ and Hamilton further notes that, to some in the field of memory studies, ‘history is merely official memory’.³¹ In his work, *Public Memory in Place and Time*, Casey describes four types of memory, as individual, social, collective and public, providing distinct criteria for each type. Distinct from collective memory, social memory is held in common between people who have some form of pre-existing relationship: familial, social or civil.³² That is, social memory frames personal recall within a context of group identity and is therefore different from personal experience or recollection.³³ However, the scale of public memory exceeds that of social memory, in that nature of the relationships between those who share the memories goes beyond a pre-existing connection. However, the distinction between public memory and social memory in Casey’s model need not necessarily be rigid, as Hayden notes that,

places trigger memories for insiders, who have shared a common past, and at the same time places often can represent shared pasts to outsiders who might be interested in knowing about them in the present.³⁴

Significantly for Casey, ‘public memory is both attached to the past (typically an originating event of some sort) *and* acts to ensure a future of further remembering of that same event’.³⁵ Therefore, the element of agency in public memory is strong and may manifest itself in rhetoric, doctrine, public discourse, history and community or national narrative. Casey argues that public memory is subject to varying degrees of

29. Deborah Bird Rose, *Country of the heart: an Indigenous Australian homeland*, 2nd ed. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), 162.

30. Darian-Smith and Hamilton, “Introduction” in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 2.

31. Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 11–12.

32. Edward Casey, ed., *Public Memory in Place and Time*, Public Memory (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 21–22.

33. Casey, *Public Memory*, 25.

34. Hayden, *Power of Place*, 46.

35. Casey, *Public Memory*, 17.

endurance, reliability and consistency.³⁶ Its public nature ensures that a variety of agents can act on it; and the meanings associated with past events can be revised, appropriated and distorted. Public memory ‘is there to be *invoked*’.³⁷ As a natural extension of the invocation of public memory, revival and revalorisation of past events of significance is also possible.³⁸ The recent revival of the national narrative in Australia regarding the nation’s military past—centring on Gallipoli and Kokoda—is a salient example of such revival and revalorisation and follows an earlier narrative that revived Australia’s settler and rural past in a public memory of ‘the bush’. In each example, place is an essential element of public memory.

Casey asserts that, ‘despite being subject to major physical or hermeneutical transformations, places with some lastingness will always be called for in the constitution and continuation of public memory’.³⁹ He argues the need for a concrete anchoring of public memory at a place and cites the example of military cemeteries located on or near the sites of the battles where the combatants lost their lives.⁴⁰ Likewise, in a more-recent example, it is not possible to sustain a public memory of the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States of America without reference to the site of the World Trade Center or the Pentagon. Invoking the words of Pierre Nora to reinforce the central part played by place in public memory, Casey states that: ‘Without such concrete implacements [*sic*], memories would have “no referent in reality; or, rather, they [would be] their own referent: pure, exclusively self-referential signs”’.⁴¹

So, the role of place in the formation of the memory of a community is crucial. Places are endowed with meaning through a shared knowledge of past events related to the site, which are embodied in symbolism for a community and passed on, often through the mechanism of narrative.

36. Casey, *Public Memory*, 29.

37. Casey, *Public Memory*, 29.

38. Casey, *Public Memory*, 30.

39. Casey, *Public Memory*, 39.

40. Casey, *Public Memory*, 39.

41. Casey, *Public Memory*, 39. with reference to Pierre Nora ‘Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*’ *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989)

CRITICAL HERITAGE DISCOURSE

Beyond the discourse regarding place and memory, new concepts in heritage studies have emerged in recent years. Archaeologist Tracy Ireland and historian Sandy Blair characterise this emergent trend as

a need for more detailed archival, empirical and ethnographic work that describes and charts the relationship between critique, theory and practice in heritage, to develop richer accounts that explore how practices and forms of expertise are established, how they gain authority, how practitioners and non-practitioners feel about them, and how they are impacted by prevailing intellectual concepts and critiques.⁴²

Heritage practitioners Paulette Wallace and Kristal Buckley have also noted that academics working in ‘critical heritage studies’ have determined a need for a deeper level of theory to help inform modern heritage practice.⁴³ This new critical approach to heritage practice is leading to a re-theorisation of heritage. Archaeologist Laurajane Smith argues that ‘heritage is a cultural process or performance of meaning’,⁴⁴ a paradigm that firmly places heritage—as a way of making meaning—in the present. Archaeologist and heritage researcher Rodney Harrison has sought to redefine heritage from the long-standing notions of tangible and, more-recently, intangible inheritance to ‘a set of attitudes to, and relationships with, the past’.⁴⁵ He argues that:

These relationships are characterised by a reverence and attachment to select objects, places and practices that are thought to connect with or exemplify the past in some way.⁴⁶

The formation of these relationships is therefore a process that occurs, according to Harrison, ‘*in the present*’.⁴⁷ Further, Harrison claims that the manner in which ‘the past is actively produced in the present’ is based on present-day understandings of the

42. Tracy Ireland and Sandy Blair, ‘The Future for Heritage Practice’, *Historic Environment* Vol. 27 No. 2 (2015): 15.

43. Paulette Wallace and Kristal Buckley, ‘Imagining a new future for cultural landscapes’, *Historic Environment* Vol. 27 No. 2 (2015): 44.

44. Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 44.

45. Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (London: Routledge, 2013), 14.

46. Harrison, *Heritage*, 14.

47. Harrison, *Heritage*, 14.

moral and ethical matters relating to those past events.⁴⁸ However, if history is said to be written by the victors, then heritage interpretation is conducted by the establishment. Sociologist Tim Winter notes that ‘the provision of state funded and non-governmental assistance is inherently political and shaped by past and present world orders’.⁴⁹

In seeking to find a common language for contemporary heritage discourse, Harrison introduces the term ‘official heritage’ to define ‘a set of professional practices that are authorised by the state and motivated by some form of legislation or written charter’.⁵⁰ Harrison’s concept, however, follows that of Smith, who introduced the concept of an ‘authorised heritage discourse’, which recognises that one of the consequences of such discourse is ‘that it defines who the legitimate spokespersons for the past are’.⁵¹ Smith and anthropologist Emma Waterton also note that an authorised heritage discourse defines ‘both the concept of heritage and the boundaries of debates about its nature, values and meanings’.⁵² Smith argues further that:

Within the narrative of nation, the heritage discourse also explicitly promotes the experience and values of elite social classes. This works to alienate a range of other social and cultural experiences.⁵³

The agency of established elite social classes in heritage interpretation manifests itself in political actions and outcomes, and geographer Nigel Thrift claims that ‘[s]paces can be stabilised in such a way that they act like political utterances, guiding subjects to particular conclusions’.⁵⁴ Thus, the shared knowledge of a site may be mediated, or even restricted, by those who control the site to shape its symbolism and the shared memory that forms in the communities associated with it. This is important, noting, as Bruce Scates et al. claim, that ‘[t]here is a renewed premium placed on memory in,

48. Harrison, *Heritage*, 168.

49. Tim Winter, ‘Heritage diplomacy and Australia’s responses to a shifting landscape of international conservation’, *Historic Environment* Vol. 27 No. 2: 21.

50. Harrison, *Heritage*, 14.

51. Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 29.

52. Smith and Waterton, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*, 43.

53. Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 30.

54. Nigel Thrift, ‘Performance and . . .’, *Environment and Planning A* 35 (2003)., in Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 13.

and by, modern societies'.⁵⁵ At the national and state levels, the most-apparent means of control is the power to include sites on heritage lists, affording recognition and singling out sites for protection and possible consequent financial and other resources.

The national narrative regarding the symbolism and meaning of war in Australia is a good example of the political dimension of heritage interpretation. Citing many historians, Bruce Scates et al. note that

memory of war is partial and selective, that it is produced out of complex relations of public culture and private experience, and that commemorative rhetoric often conceals as much as it recalls.⁵⁶

Scates et al. also observe that governments in Australia use Anzac Day to develop a modern national character and to provide a means for citizens to identify as Australian.⁵⁷ While much of the commemoration of Anzac Day occurs at a local—and even personal—level, the framework of that commemoration is largely determined by a national collective understanding of its meaning, which is set by an established elite class through government pronouncements,⁵⁸ education programs in schools,⁵⁹ and guidance from bodies such as the Returned and Services League of Australia.⁶⁰ Critical analysis of established interpretations of the Anzac legacy is discouraged, and, as argued by Emma Waterton and Jason Dittmer, '[b]y making Anzacs extraordinary, the legend has frozen their memory and put it beyond

55. Bruce Scates et al., 'Anzac Day at Home and Abroad: Towards a History of Australia's National Day', *History Compass* Vol. 10/7 (2012): 524.

56. Scates et al., 'Anzac Day at Home and Abroad: Towards a History of Australia's National Day', 524.

57. Scates et al., 'Anzac Day at Home and Abroad: Towards a History of Australia's National Day', 524.

58. Commonwealth of Australia, 'Anzac Day traditions and rituals: a quick guide', https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1617/Quick_Guides/TraditionsRituals.

59. Department of Veterans' Affairs, 'Anzac Portal: Military history and commemoration for schools', <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/research-education/schools.>; Department of Education and Training (Victoria), 'ANZAC DAY for teachers', <https://fuse.education.vic.gov.au/ResourcePackage/ByPin?pin=P7L9D7>.

60. RSL Victorian Branch, 'The History of Anzac Day', <http://www.rslvic.com.au/commemoration/anzac-day/>.

interrogation'.⁶¹ This resistance to critique is reflected in Smith's notion of authorised heritage discourse, in that the discourse 'works to appropriate, obscure or misrecognise the heritage values and knowledge that communities have of the past'.⁶²

Historic military sites in Australia are not immune from the influences of official interpretation. By virtue of being under government control in many cases, these sites and their associated interpretive material—archives, photographic materials, extant moveable heritage—the public image of these sites is controlled through onsite signage, marketing measures, internet presence, publications and the present-day use of the site. This control by an established elite class does not easily allow for alternative interpretations that may be more inclusive of aspects such as Indigenous or women's place in the historical narrative of the site.

EARLY CONNECTIONS BETWEEN THE LOCAL AND MILITARY COMMUNITIES AT POINT COOK

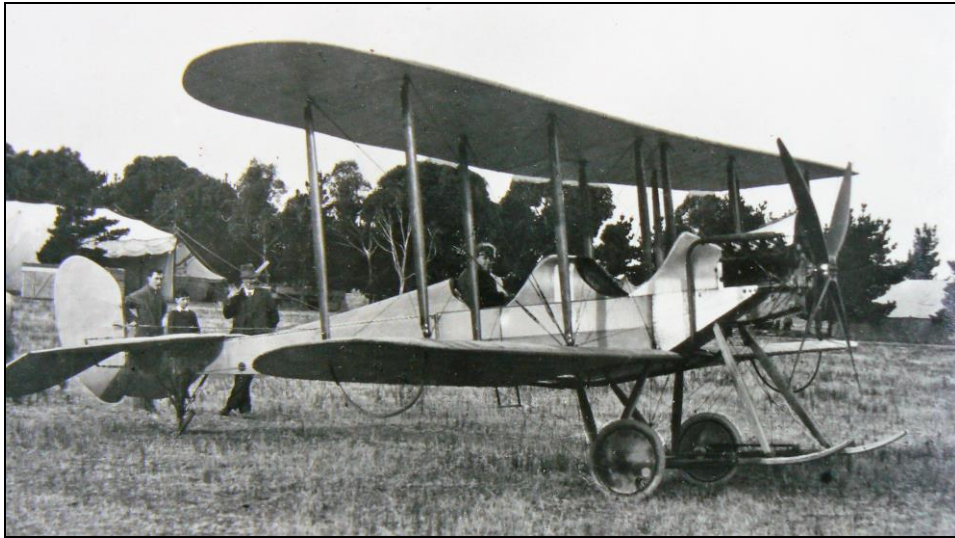
A connection formed between the military at Point Cook and the local community from very soon after the start of military occupation of the site. Photographic evidence appears to depict local farming families engaging with military staff members on the base as early as 1914,⁶³ and members of the local community were taken for joy flights early during World War I.⁶⁴ Figure 71 depicts one such occasion when members of the local community were allowed onto the base in 1914. It shows civilians, one of whom carries a broken shotgun over his shoulder, in close proximity to a BE2a aircraft with Eric Harrison in the pilot's seat near the Chirnside Triangle.

61. Emma Waterton and Jason Dittmer, 'Transnational war memories in Australia's heritage field', *Media International Australia* 158.

62. Smith and Waterton, *Heritage, Communities and Archaeology*, 43.

63. A photograph of one of the two BE2a aircraft being prepared for flight shows the aircraft with people who appear to be local residents, as one carries a shotgun broken over his shoulder.

64. Gardner, discussion with author.



**Figure 71: Scene at Point Cook depicting local residents beside a BE2a aircraft
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, P1030091)**

The best-quality early photographs taken at Point Cook are those by Algernon Darge.⁶⁵ Darge was a commercial photographer and held the concession to take photographs of domestic military activities in Victoria. He is well known for his pre-embarkation portraits of World War I Victorian soldiers taken at the Broadmeadows and Seymour army camps. The work of his Darge Photographic Company also extended to scenes of Melbourne,⁶⁶ with a focus on industry, architecture, motoring, shipping and aviation.⁶⁷ Darge demonstrated a keen interest in aviation and published aerial photographs bearing the name of his studio—notably of the Shrine of Remembrance and University of Melbourne sites.⁶⁸ He photographically recorded important aviation events, such as Gaston Gugnet’s pioneering flights in 1910 at Altona and Melbourne.⁶⁹ Darge also played an important role in publicly promoting the work of the military at Point Cook through the publication of his photographs in

65. Algernon Darge, who signed many of his photographic works simply as ‘Darge’, was born Algernon Charles Gardiner Sharp and changed his name by deed-pole on 2 May 1913. (Government of Victoria, *The Victoria Government Gazette*, vol. CL (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1913), Para 2068.)

66. ‘City History in Photographs’, *Argus*, 3 February 1941.

67. Darge’s obituary, widely syndicated in January 1941, claimed he was a ‘pioneer Melbourne commercial photographer, motorist, flier, squab breeder, and town figure’. (‘Guessed Day of Death, Dictated Obituary’, *Sunday Mail*, 26 January 1941.)

68. ‘Where the War Memorial Will Be’, *Argus*, 21 September 1922.; ‘Growth of Melbourne University’, *Argus*, 29 July 1924.

69. ‘The Aeroplane Fiasco at Altona Bay’, *Punch*, 1 December 1910.

newspapers. The published images range from the mundane delivery of a tender vehicle for use at Point Cook in 1913,⁷⁰ to the more significant, such as the Mesopotamian Half Flight prior to their departure in 1915⁷¹ and the flight taken by the Governor-General in January 1917 (see Figure 72).⁷² Many of his photographs were displayed in his Collins Street, Melbourne studio—some of which were later used to illustrate biographies of military aviators after World War II. Darge’s photographs allowed the local community to gain a glimpse of activities at Point Cook and to appreciate the role that the site played in the development of military aviation in Australia.



Figure 72: Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Fergusson and Eric Harrison, Point Cook 1917 (State Library of Victoria, Melbourne)

Immediately after World War I, the Soldier Settlement Scheme that granted leases to returned soldiers altered the nature of the local community, notably that around the remnant part of the Werribee Park estate to the west of the base that lies between the Werribee River and Diggers Road. Like the base, the land used for soldier settlement

70. 'The Defence Department's Latest Purchase', *Punch*, 4 December 1913.

71. 'Members of the Aviation Corps', *Weekly Times*, 15 May 1915.

72. 'The Governor-General (on the Front Seat)', *Argus*, 18 January 1917.

was acquired by Victorian Premier Thomas Bent under the Closer Settlement Act, and fifty-two land allotments were allocated for soldier settlement by 1919.⁷³ Some leases were on irrigated land in the area known as Werribee South Irrigation Settlement, while others were on dry land closer to the west boundary of the base on Aviation Road—such as the 1919 five-acre lease held by James Stewart Taylor, a local Werribee man prior to the war. He was an experienced farmer and was successful on the land for over twenty years.⁷⁴ The *Heritage of the City of Wyndham Study 1997* traces the population growth in the Werribee South Irrigation Settlement from 427 in 1918, at the beginning of the soldier settlement period, through 625 in 1923 to 1122 by 1932.⁷⁵

During the inter-war years, the connection between the military and local communities was strengthened when the State Government established the primary school on the base. Construction of the school started in 1922, with enrolments commencing in 1923. From 1923, children of farmers and farm labourers in the Point Cook and Werribee South areas attended, while from 1930, children of employees at the salt works to the north of the base also attended, and from 1940, children of Country Roads Board employees also began to attend. The school roll shows that about twenty-five percent of enrolled students on average were from the local community and were not the children of RAAF personnel.⁷⁶ The local community and the RAAF community were therefore connected through the common element of their children's schooling.

During the early 1920s, the RAAF personnel stationed at Point Cook interacted with the local community in a variety of other ways. On 23 November 1923, the base personnel held a sports day at Chirnside Park in Werribee, which was followed by a concert and dance at the Mechanics' Hall in the evening. Mrs Canny and a group of local ladies organised the refreshments for both events, and the profits from the venture were to be donated to the Mechanics' Hall building fund.⁷⁷ On 27 August 1925, the base hosted a dance, which was supported by the 'Flying School

73. 'Irrigation at Werribee', *Age*, 24 March 1919.

74. VPRS 5714/PO unit 971, file 2135/12

75. Wyndham City Council, 'Heritage of the City of Wyndham'.

76. Register of the State Elementary School Point Cook, 1923–53, RAAF Museum Archive.

77. 'Airmen at Play', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 29 November 1923.

Orchestra'.⁷⁸ The orchestra had supported many local dances and other social events from mid-1924, such as the annual Duncan's Road 'Tennis Ball', held on 5 November 1924.⁷⁹

From at least as early as 1921, the base fielded a team in the local cricket competition, which comprised teams entitled Werribee, Laverton, Altona, Little River, Duncan's Road (in the soldier settler area), IOR (Independent Order of Rechabites), Metropolitan Farm and Flying School.⁸⁰ The RAAF played its home games on the grounds at the Point Cook base, and visiting teams came onto the base in turn to play.⁸¹ The Werribee District Cricket Association, formed in 1921, elected a serving member of the staff at Point Cook as one of its vice-presidents.⁸² These social interactions show a willingness of the RAAF personnel to integrate into the community and not remain in a form of social, self-sufficient isolation that would have been possible by relying exclusively on base resources.

A willingness for members of the RAAF at Point Cook to retire and remain in the local area indicates an enduring connection formed with the local community. The 1927 retirement of Sergeant Major Nicholson is a good example. He left the RAAF after a long period of service that included service in World War I and took over Bridge Motors, a motor garage and dealership in the main street of Werribee.⁸³ He renamed the business Nicholson's Garage and proudly traded on his status as an ex-RAAF member.⁸⁴

In another direct connection between those serving on the base and the local community, the handful of Air Force tradesmen qualified as trumpeters provided a service by playing *Last Post* at the funerals of ex-servicemen and at Anzac Day commemorations.⁸⁵ One such example is the funeral of Patrick John Canty, who died

78. 'Dance at Flying School', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 3 September 1925.

79. The orchestra was also known as the 'Aviation Orchestra' during 1924. 'Advertising', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 30 October 1924.

80. 'Cricket', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 17 February 1921.

81. 'R.A.A.F v. Altona', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 23 October 1924.

82. 'The Werribee Shire Banner', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 21 July 1921.

83. 'Valedictory', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 10 February 1927.

84. 'Werribee Shire Banner', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 September 1929.

85. 'ANZAC Day', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 29 April 1926.; 'Anzac Memorial Service', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 25 April 1929.

on 16 September 1926 at his residence on Diggers Road, Werribee South.⁸⁶ Canty took up his twelve-acre soldier settlement block in March 1918 at the age of forty-seven, after returning wounded from service in France and had been a farm labourer in the Werribee area for a time prior to his war service.⁸⁷ He died suddenly of a heart attack, and his well-attended funeral was held at the Werribee cemetery, where a newspaper report stated that ‘Trumpeter Thomas, of the Point Cook Flying School’ sounded *Last Post* as the coffin was lowered.⁸⁸ The connection between the military members serving on the base and the ex-military members of the local community was a natural one, especially noting the short period of time elapsed since the war.

However, the contribution to the community extended beyond the connection with ex-serving members of the military, as in the case of members of the RAAF Band who offered to performed in a private capacity to raise funds for the Werribee Methodist Church in June 1927.⁸⁹ Also, the RAAF Band performed at the Werribee Agricultural Society annual show in 1929,⁹⁰ and in the same year, Pilot Officer Cully played Father Christmas for the children of Werribee.⁹¹ On 21 February 1929, members of the RAAF based at Point Cook mounted a variety show for the people of Werribee at the town’s theatre, with proceeds devoted to the Werribee Amateur Swimming Club. The program comprised a theatrical scene, songs, magic tricks, a one-act farce, musical items, and sound and lighting effects, with the local newspaper report noting the focus on humour and that ‘hits at local citizens brought down the house’.⁹² The level of interaction and familiarity between the military and local communities is evident from such reports and shows the acceptance of the military community—often derived from interstate and international origins—within the broader local community. That acceptance extended to pride by the local community, as evidenced by a brief annual review of the same swimming club, which stated:

As a representative club, Werribee would be hard to surpass as its list of members includes two doctors, three bank managers, post master, station master, shire

86. ‘Death’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 12 September 1926.

87. VPRS 5714/PO unit 2477, file 2021/12

88. ‘Obituary: Patrick John Canty’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 23 September 1926.

89. ‘A Musical Treat’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 2 June 1927.

90. ‘Werribee Shire Banner’. *Werribee Shire Banner*, 26 September 1929.

91. ‘Father Christmas Visits Werribee’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 5 December 1929.

92. ‘R.A.A.F. Concert Party’, *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 February 1929.

secretary, officers of the R.A.A.F., members of the police force and many others too numerous to mention.⁹³

As the war diminished in living memory, the RAAF needed to make broader, deliberate attempts to maintain connections with the Australian public. For any technology-based organisation, demonstrating the effectiveness of newly-acquired technology is a very good means of achieving positive public relations, and the RAAF embarked on this approach during the inter-war years. On a national scale, the RAAF undertook civil assistance projects of national importance, such as aerial photography for a variety of government departments, bushfire patrols, crop-dusting experiments, aerial survey and mapping tasks.⁹⁴

In 1928, the RAAF played host to a flight of four modern Southampton II flying boats from the Royal Air Force Far East Flight. The aircraft were on a long-distance tour to promote British interests in Southeast Asia and flew anti-clockwise around the coast of Australia after making landfall at Broome, Western Australia.⁹⁵ The Far East Flight based itself at Point Cook for two months from July 1928, and base personnel overhauled the aircraft at Point Cook.⁹⁶ The RAAF invited the public to inspect the aircraft during open days over the weekend of 28–29 July, and large crowds turned out to see the Southampton aircraft. Barriers allowed viewers to get close without touching the aircraft, and an aerial viewing platform was provided to allow visitors to see inside the cockpits (see Figure 73). Senior politicians visited, as did a party of engineering students under Professor Payne, dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Melbourne.⁹⁷ The RAAF allowed visitors to inspect hangars and view other aircraft over the weekend.

93. 'Swimming', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 28 March 1929.

94. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 374 passim.

95. 'British Flying Boats: bound for S. Australia', *Advocate*, 21 June 1928.

96. 'British Flying-Boats: shelter for first time', *Argus*, 2 July 1928.

97. 'Flying-boat on View', *Argus*, 30 July 1928.



**Figure 73: Members of the public viewing an RAF Southampton aircraft, Point Cook 1928
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, Southampton box file)**

The RAAF continued to use Point Cook as the site for further major public relations activities into the 1930s, notably with open days. The open day held on 4 May 1930 was styled as an ‘at home’, which mirrored the social custom of being ‘at home’ to receive visitors. The base commander, Wing Commander Rolf Brown, invited the wives and friends of RAAF personnel to an afternoon of tea and aerobatics. Over one-thousand- two-hundred guests, including the Minister for Defence, were served afternoon tea in the hangars and treated to a flying display that included a V formation flypast of forty aircraft, mock dogfights, bombing displays by Wapiti aircraft and handling displays by Bulldog aircraft.⁹⁸ To complete the afternoon tea theme, as one newspaper report noted, the Air Force Band ‘played cheerily’ on the day.⁹⁹

The concept of demonstrating Australia’s military capabilities to the public continued into the early stages of World War II. In an example from 1941 at the Werribee

98. ‘Air Force At Home: display at Point Cooke’, *Argus*, 5 May 1930.

99. ‘A Woman’s Letter: news from the south’, *Cairns Post*, 29 May 1930.

racecourse, RAAF aircraft contributed to a demonstration of military tactics by army personnel based there. The role of the aircraft was to provide a mock attack with flour bombs, coordinated by wireless communications.¹⁰⁰ During the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, the local community and the RAAF personnel stationed at Point Cook formed strong connections that centred on the site of the base for the most part. The base was the locus for connection with the RAAF, and it entered the public memory of the local community.

However, World War II severed that connection. From 1942, with a genuine fear of direct attack on military facilities from Japanese forces, media reporting of local military activity was severely reduced, and Point Cook went onto a war footing. The RAAF excluded the local community from the base, including reporters—who previously had good access, especially during significant events—and families of serving members vacated the base. The vacant married quarters were used as additional accommodation for the highly-transient staff and students under the Empire Air Training Scheme.¹⁰¹ Despite the lack of direct connection with the base, the local community likely retained Point Cook in its public memory due to the potential threat it posed to the community's safety.

The RAAF gradually began to re-establish community relations after the large and highly-transient base population of the war period reduced and stabilised after the war. Early efforts centred again around demonstrations of capability, such as the first flight of a military helicopter in Australia in September 1947 at Point Cook. The Sikorski S51 helicopter was imported from the United States of America, and the RAAF planned to use it for community assistance roles, such as bushfire spotting, air-sea rescue and jungle rescue.¹⁰² The base opened to the public again when the Australian Grand Prix was held at the site on 26 January 1948 (see Figure 74). The race involved forty-two laps of an almost-four-kilometre circuit along taxiways, with the runway as the main straight. Forty-thousand visitors viewed the race.

100. 'Military Sports at Racecourse', *Werribee Shire Banner*, 10 April 1941.

101. Base Squadron Point Cook Routine Orders, 1942.

102. 'Airport News'. *West Australian*, 4 September 1947.



**Figure 74: 1948 Motor Grand Prix, Point Cook
(RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)**

Point Cook was one of four sites used for the 1951–57 RAAF component of the National Service training scheme in response to the Korean War and Malaya Emergency, and the base hosted No 6 National Service Training Unit.¹⁰³ The compulsory scheme was a means of maintaining a trained reserve to supplement regular forces if major expansion was needed urgently, and it brought young adult males onto the base for a six-month training period. So, the largely-professional workforce on the base interacted with young members of the community who may not have had a connection with the military in the normal course of events. In some cases, the trade training provided under the scheme led to lifelong careers.¹⁰⁴

The RAAF hosted two major ceremonial occasions involving the wider community at Point Cook in the 1950s. The first was the parade to celebrate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 3 June 1953, to which the public was invited. The second occasion was during the Queen’s visit to Australia in 1954, when the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh inspected the guard of honour at the Queen’s Colour parade on 6 March 1954. Unlike the coronation parade, the public was not admitted; and the

103. ‘Air Force Recruits in Camp Soon’, *Examiner*, 21 July 1951.

104. Discussion: author with Neil Ferguson, May 2011.

eight-thousand people in the audience were invited guests, mostly RAAF families and friends. However, newspapers published the route to be travelled by the royal entourage, and thousands of members of the local community unexpectedly lined the road between Laverton's Aircraft railway station and Point Cook.¹⁰⁵

In a ceremonial event that was directly aimed at forming a link between the RAAF and local communities, the Freedom of the Shire of Werribee was granted to Point Cook and Laverton bases on 1 February 1963 and first exercised on 4 March of that year.¹⁰⁶ The military tradition of freedom of the city is symbolic of the strong bonds between a community and its resident military force. Its basis lies in mediaeval times, when it was granted to the military force that protected a city to allow that favoured force to enter and receive shelter and hospitality, which was denied to enemy forces. In modern times, exercising the freedom of the city is a way of showing a force's pride in its connection with the local community and visa-versa. The RAAF has exercised freedom of the city at Werribee at infrequent intervals since 1963.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the RAAF Museum hosted many flying days at Point Cook, and these were popular with the aviation-minded public and the local community. Historic aircraft were towed from the storage hangars and placed on display beside operating aircraft, such as the Canberra bomber, Dragon navigation trainer and Meteor jet fighter. Cessna and Piper aircraft dealers gave flying demonstrations, and Mirage fighter jets gave flypasts, while an Ansett DC3 Dakota gave joy flights on some occasions. These special occasions supplemented the more-routine connections with the local community through concessions such as golf club and flying club associate membership and access to cinema screenings, along with access to the on-base Scout Group, childcare, kindergarten and playgroup. These connections were augmented in the 1990s by the annual Beating Retreat ceremonies (later called the Twilight Spectacular)—which attracted audiences of up to ten-thousand—and the Air Force Week cocktail parties that actively sought the company of the leaders of the local civic community.

105. 'Queen rests', *West Australian*, 8 March 1954.

106. Royal Australian Air Force, *Presentation of the Freedom of The Shire of Werribee to the Royal Australian Air Force Bases Point Cook and Laverton*, 4 March 1963.

In 1989, the RAAF bases at Point Cook and Laverton amalgamated under the administrative control of the entity titled RAAF Williams. A booklet printed in 1991 to provide information for personnel and their families posted to the bases made the claim that the amalgamated bases ‘will build on the traditions of Point Cook and Laverton...and on being an active supporter of the City of Werribee’.¹⁰⁷ The publication included a section on the facilities available from the City of Werribee to help personnel and families settle more-readily within the local community. By the 1990s, the commanders at Point Cook and Laverton envisaged the inhabitants of the bases as residing within the local community, rather than separate from, but physically within, the local community. The local community reciprocated, in the case of the booklet, by contributing paid advertisements—with at least one business advertiser offering discounts to RAAF personnel.¹⁰⁸

One medical and dental practice in Hoppers Crossing, near Werribee, further demonstrates the visible ongoing presence of RAAF members in the community after discharging from the service. Retired officers Wing Commander Rosemary Patten and Squadron Leader Bill Patten¹⁰⁹ established their practice in the early 1990s to serve the people of the community. They were later joined by Squadron Leader Nader Abou-Seif¹¹⁰ and Wing Commander Russell Searle¹¹¹ to establish one of the first group medical practices in the district and continues to serve the community. In a similar contribution, administration officer Squadron Leader Wilson Turnbull retired from the RAAF and served as the chief administrator of the Shire of Werribee during the late 1990s.

In 1994, the Werribee Tourism Association attempted to bring tourists to the area by reinforcing that Werribee was only half an hour’s drive from Melbourne and

107. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Base Williams 1991*, 2.

108. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Base Williams 1991*, 42.

109. General practitioner Rosemary Patten and her husband, dentist Bill Patten, retired from the Permanent Air Force in 1988 to form the practice at Hogans Road Medical and Dental Surgery. (Royal Australian Air Force, *Defence Instruction (Air Force) AAP5130.002—The Air Force List 1987* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1987).)

110. Squadron Leader Nader Abou-Seif retired from the Permanent Air Force in 1991. (Royal Australian Air Force, *Defence Instruction (Air Force) AAP5130.002—The Air Force List 1990* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1990).)

111. Wing Commander Russell Searle retired from the Permanent Air Force in 1998. (Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Air Publication 5130.002—The Air Force List 1998* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 1998).)

describing the area as ‘an intriguing mix of urban progress and rural tradition’ with many historically-important sites.¹¹² The Association’s tourism pamphlet allowed the RAAF Museum to share equal prominence with Werribee Park Mansion, the Werribee Safari Zoo and the State Equestrian Centre. The zoo and equestrian centre are located within the mansion precinct, so the association, in effect, ranked the base only second to that of the mansion in local importance.

In the 1997 vision statement by the Wyndham City Council, the RAAF Museum again shared equal prominence with the mansion, zoo and equestrian centre, but the list was expanded to include the State Rose Garden and K Road golf course—both within the mansion precinct—along with the Werribee Racecourse, the Point Cook Metropolitan Park and the original Point Cook homestead of 1857 contained therein.¹¹³ The Point Cook Metropolitan Park—renamed the Point Cook Coastal Park in 2001—abuts the northern boundary of the RAAF base. So, putting aside the Werribee Racecourse, which is not significantly different from many other racecourses in Victoria, the Council’s vision affirms the area that contains the RAAF base and the adjoining homestead site as second in significance only to the mansion Werribee Park Mansion precinct. The mansion’s primacy was affirmed at the time by the incorporation of a graphic representation of the mansion in the city’s corporate logo, which featured representations of the coast, the hills, the mansion and the plains, all under an arc of an industrial gear motif (see Figure 75).¹¹⁴

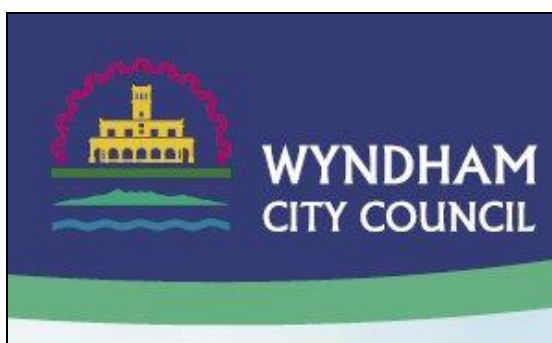


Figure 75: *Wyndham City Council logo, circa 2008* (Wyndham City Council)

112. *Werribee and Point Cook: A Welcome Change*, (Werribee: : Werribee Tourism Association Inc., 1994).

113. Wyndham City Council, *Our Vision of Wyndham in 2015*, Wyndham City Council (Werribee, 1997), 6.

114. The logo has since been replaced by one that does not feature the mansion and contains the wording ‘wyndhamcity – city. coast. country’.

During the early 1990s, as a cost-saving measure, the Australian Defence Force ceased employing uniformed personnel as base entry guards and employed private security contracting firms to fulfil these roles. In a subsequent cost-saving measure, the contracts were cancelled for Point Cook, on the basis that the risks posed by an ‘open base’ were sufficiently low. For the first time in living memory, members of the local community were allowed unfettered access to the base. For the first few months, they explored—usually by car—and there were very few security problems, indicative of the mutual respect that was held between the military and local communities. However, the television series ‘Rex Hunt’s Fishing World’ popularised the pier at Point Cook as a fishing spot, and this brought anglers from a wide distance, with little or no previous connection to the base. Some of these visitors mistreated the pier, which suffered a number of fires that destroyed parts of the pier’s structure. Eventually, the pier was closed for reasons of safety. The pier in sound condition, shortly before being used for RAAF operations, is shown in Figure 76.



Figure 76: *RAAF pier, Point Cook* (RAAF Museum, Point Cook, PCK Base box file)

In 1992, as a further cost-saving measure, the RAAF contracted its initial flying training to a contractor based at Tamworth, New South Wales and ceased flying

training at Point Cook. This decision was followed by the Federal Government's decision in 1998 to identify the base for disposal by 2001.¹¹⁵ Heritage campaigners Mark Pilkington and David Francis identify that the planned closure 'resulted in great concern in the community regarding the future of the airfield, its heritage buildings and the RAAF Museum'.¹¹⁶ While these concerns may have been true for the aviation community, the effect for the local community over the following few years was more direct. Many services provided for RAAF personnel and families were also enjoyed by the local community, and these were gradually removed. The post office, National Bank branch and dry-cleaning agency closed, and the Defence Force Credit Union branch moved to Laverton RAAF base. Telstra removed the public phones, and the convenience store and cinema ceased operations. However, the child care facility, playgroup, Scout group and primary school remained open while their new locations were negotiated. The local community found itself deliberately excluded after a long period of relatively-free access to the base and its services.

The gradual exclusion of the local community from the base from 1998 coincided with the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States of America. The Federal Government placed access controls on all Defence facilities from the morning of 12 September 2001.¹¹⁷ The RAAF issued access passes, to be renewed every thirty days, to members of the local community with remaining interactions with the base, such as attendance at the primary school and Scouts group. The effect was to increase tension between the local and military communities.

The period from 1998 and into the new millennium heralded a fundamental change in the relationship between the base and the local community. The planned rapid expansion of the new suburb of Point Cook commenced, and the demographic composition of the local community altered significantly. That new community holds different connections with the base from its predecessors.

115. Commonwealth of Australia, *Senate Report into Defence Property Disposal*.

116. Pilkington and Francis, *Point Cook RAAF Base*.

117. In the case of Point Cook, those access controls have remained in place from 12 September 2001 to the date of publication of this thesis and have been bolstered by improved perimeter fences and gates that are locked at night, requiring the contracted 24-hour staff to unlock them to provide access after hours.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK TO THE PRESENT-DAY LOCAL COMMUNITY

The present-day local community primarily comprises residents who reside or work close to the base. The base lies within the boundaries of the Wyndham City Council, which is the local government body responsible for the land surrounding the base. The city covers an area of 542 square kilometres.¹¹⁸ The suburbs within the council boundary include Werribee, Hoppers Crossing, Point Cook, Werribee South, Laverton North, Williams Landing, Tarneit, Wyndham Vale, Manor Lakes, Cocoroc, Quandong and Mambourin, as well as those suburbs that are shared with neighbouring councils—Truganina, Mount Cottrell, Little River, Laverton and Eynesbury (see Figure 77). Most residents within the council boundary live at such a distance from the base that they are not directly affected by it. However, all living and working within the council boundaries are affected by the collective posture determined by the council regarding local image, marketing, public relations and tourism development—which, in turn, is affected by the base.



Figure 77: *Map of Wyndham City showing suburbs (Wyndham City Council)*

118. Wyndham City Council, 'Demographics & Population Overview', <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/about-council/wyndham-community/research-and-statistics/demographics-population-overview>.

The most-recent data, available from the 2011 national census, indicates that the population in the local council area is 168,932.¹¹⁹ For 2016, the council estimates the official population of the city to have been 213,911¹²⁰ and states an annual growth that averaged 6.8 percent over the preceding ten years.¹²¹ The council estimates that, by the twenty years to 2036, the population of the city will double to a total of approximately 424,476.¹²² Research commissioned by the city in 2016 indicates that this rate of growth averages 194 new residents arriving per week.¹²³

More specifically, for the suburb of Point Cook, the 2016 estimated resident population is 50,616, and the projected population estimate for the year 2036 is 71,371.¹²⁴ The once-rural locality of Point Cook has become a substantial suburb, and the RAAF base at Point Cook now lies on the boundary of the urban development to its north and the still-rural grazing and market-garden land to its west and south-west. To the north, buffer zones of sparsely-populated private land and the Point Cook Coastal Park—managed by Parks Victoria—provide the safety margins necessary for an operational airfield. Medium population density starts abruptly beyond the edge of these buffer zones.

The housing estate of Homestead Run, towards the north end of Point Cook Road, commenced in 1998; and, as developers released further land, other estates opened in a generally-southerly growth pattern along Point Cook Road. The Homestead Run estate was followed by a further twenty-five housing estate developments that arose along the east and west sides of Point Cook Road as they progressed southwards. Significant amongst these are: Sanctuary Lakes on the site of the former Cheetham Salt Works; Innisfail and Featherbrook on the sites of the farms of those names;

119. Wyndham City Council, 'Know Your Councillor & Ward', <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/about-council/councillors-wards/know-your-councillor-ward>.

120. Wyndham City Council, 'City of Wyndham: population forecast', <https://forecast.id.com.au/wyndham/Population-households-dwellings>.

121. Wyndham City Council, 'City of Wyndham Estimated Resident Population', <https://profile.id.com.au/wyndham/population-estimate>.; This estimated population and annual growth rate exceeds the Council's 1997 estimate of 164,922 residents and an annual growth rate of four percent. (Wyndham City Council, *Our Vision of Wyndham*, 7.)

122. Wyndham City Council, 'November 2016: a snapshot of Wyndham', 2016, [https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-11/Wyndham Snapshot-November 2016 \(A1512377\).pdf](https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2016-11/Wyndham%20Snapshot-November%202016%20(A1512377).pdf).

123. Wyndham City Council, 'Snapshot of Wyndham'.

124. Wyndham City Council, 'Demographics & Population Overview'.

Lincoln Heath, abutting the site of the Indigenous artefact scatter field discussed in Chapter Four above;¹²⁵ Alamanda; and most recently, Saltwater Coast. Jack Harrower, a RAAF member who travelled between Laverton and Point Cook on a regular basis before World War II, noted that the number of houses along Point Cook Road could be counted on two hands, while the same journey in 2019 passes thousands.¹²⁶

In contrast to the rapid development to the north of the base, the nature of the area abutting the base to the southwest in the old soldier settler and European-immigrant market garden district is largely unchanged. The exception is the relatively-small development at Werribee South known as Wyndham Harbour, which commenced construction in 2011 and is planned to comprise six-hundred and fifteen dwellings.¹²⁷

The present-day local community that surrounds the Point Cook base is a community that arose in the post-September 11 era and, for the most part, arrived in the area only recently from various previous locations. Many new arrivals to the city were born overseas, with most migrating from India, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Philippines and China.¹²⁸ This new community has rapidly supplanted the previous farming community that existed, especially to the north of the base. The new community is one of high cultural diversity, and most residents have no historical or long-term connection to the area and, therefore, are likely to be unaware of its past.

In a manner not common to most other long-standing military sites in Australia, the base—primarily through attempts to close it in the late twentieth century—effectively caused its own disconnection from the local community. Thus, the establishment of the new suburb of Point Cook and the reinvigoration of the base after attempts to dispose of it coincide. There appear to be no directly-parallel cases of this situation in Australia, where an almost-dormant military base re-establishes itself alongside a genuinely-new local community.

125. Hislop and Rhodes, *360-438 Point Cook Road*, 13–14.

126. Jack Harrower, interview by Steve Campbell-Wright, 1999.

127. Wyndham Harbour, 'Wyndham Harbour Fact Sheet', <http://www.wyndhamharbour.com.au/docs/wyndham-harbour-fact-sheet.pdf>.

128. Wyndham City Council, 'Snapshot of Wyndham'.

The RAAF base at Tindal, near Katherine in the Northern Territory, has some parallels with the Point Cook situation. The base was built during World War II in 1942 and was largely dormant until 1984, when the Federal Government decided to re-establish the base as part of strengthened defences of Australia's northern approaches.¹²⁹ The Department of Defence redeveloped the base, which was officially re-opened in 1988, and the RAAF personnel and their families form almost twenty-five percent of the community of the nearby town of Katherine.¹³⁰ The town of Katherine had a long-standing civil community before the RAAF redevelopment of the base, and the people of the town had a firm knowledge of its heritage and culture, dating back to the overland telegraph operations during the late nineteenth century. As an example of the social connection between the base and the local community, the RAAF claims:

Tindal personnel have always shown a keen interest in supporting local sports, and they account for a large number of administrators and competitors. The people of Katherine are also extremely supportive of the base and its personnel and the close relationship is a feature of a posting to Tindal.¹³¹

The established town of Katherine made connections with the newly-arrived RAAF community, rather than developing alongside it, as in the case of present-day Point Cook.

Another possible parallel case to Point Cook is that of Bungendore, New South Wales. The Department of Defence established the headquarters of Joint Operations Command fifteen kilometres south of the town of Bungendore in 2008 as the operational headquarters for Australia's local and deployed defence operations.¹³² Despite the distance from the township, Australian Defence Force personnel colloquially refer to a posting to the establishment as a posting to Bungendore. Approximately five-hundred and fifty personnel serve there. Since 2002, the small

129. Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF Base Tindal', <https://www.airforce.gov.au/Bases/Northern-Territory/RAAF-Base-Tindal/?RAAF-hHBYVzFK6EsZI++TiITQwfB6YNnQZ/Lc>.

130. Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF Base Tindal'.

131. Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF Base Tindal'.

132. Australian Government, 'Joint Operations Command', http://www.directory.gov.au/directory?ea0_lfz99_120.&organizationalUnit&aa9b454c-f5e2-46f3-8493-c3be4d5b8dae.

local community of Bungendore has grown from fewer than two-thousand residents to 3874 residents in 2015.¹³³ Therefore, there are similarities to Point Cook in the growth of the military presence in recent times and the growth of the nearby local community. However, the major difference from Katherine—apart from that of scale—is that the local community at Bungendore has resisted its growth in an attempt to preserve its rural sense of place.¹³⁴ Further, by contrast with Katherine, Bungendore is not a ‘company town’ and is not proud of its proximity to, or possible connections with, the military community due to the changes such connections are likely to bring to the rural nature of the local community.

Point Cook’s circumstances lie between these two examples of the connection between local and military communities. Point Cook is not a company town, nor is it viewed with a degree of disdain by the local community. Unlike Bungendore, Point Cook’s military presence predates the local community’s presence; but unlike Katherine, the local community of Point Cook does not rely heavily on the military community. Bungendore and Katherine’s local communities are overwhelmingly Australian-born.¹³⁵ Thus, with all factors considered, the circumstances at Point Cook are unique, and no parallel cases in Australia exist for meaningful comparison of the connections between military and local communities that are within the context of rapid growth of a local community.

The balance has shifted from one where ‘Point Cook’ was synonymous with the RAAF base prior to the turn of the twenty-first century, to one where many new local residents do not become aware of the base’s existence until after their arrival. Urban encroachment has overturned the previous almost-equal relationship between the military and local rural communities. This is a natural consequence of the rapid increase in the population size of the local community and the shift from a local, rural community that largely sustained itself within its own boundaries to one that provides living accommodation for workers, often outside of its boundaries—a

133. Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council, ‘Community profile’, <http://profile.id.com.au/queanbeyan-palerang/population?WebID=110>.

134. ‘Major residential development’, *Canberra Times*, 8 December 2015.

135. Eighty-three percent of the population of Bungendore was born in Australia. (Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council ‘Community profile’)

dormitory suburb and in no way akin to a company town that might exist, in part, to support its local corporate or military activity.

The suburb of Point Cook's nascent sense of community has nonetheless grown and evolved since the suburb's inception in the early twenty-first century. The social and cultural indicators of a mature community have begun to appear, such as the establishment of service clubs that operate within a broader framework—Rotary and Lions clubs and Country Women's Association branches for example—and represent the community of Point Cook beyond the local community.

Pride in a new community takes time to grow, and in the absence of contemporary shared community purpose—as may perhaps be found in many mining towns—heritage can act as a basis for community pride. Despite propensity to be unreliable, Wikipedia articles on an area are a common source of information that is widely used in the community, and the information contained therein can reflect the impression a community wishes to make—a reflection of its pride. The 'Point Cook, Victoria' article published by WikiProject Australia opens with the statement 'Point Cook is the home of RAAF Williams, Point Cook, the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force, and is the current home of the RAAF Museum'. The anonymous article may well have been drafted by a person with strong links to the RAAF; however, it can be moderated by members of the local community.¹³⁶ After a decade since publication, that opening statement remains extant, indicating that there is no strong disagreement with the statement in the local community and that the community is prepared to accept the RAAF as a substantial part of its environmental heritage. The website lists the Point Cook Homestead, the Point Cook Coastal Park and the RAAF Museum as the three main tourist attractions in the suburb of Point Cook in that order.

The website 'Life in Victoria' provides forums for potential British migrant families to discuss suitable places to reside in Australia,¹³⁷ and it serves as an example of use in the community of the Wikipedia article on Point Cook. One enquiry posted in 2011 about choosing to reside in Point Cook was met, in part, with the entire

136. Sara Javanmardi and Cristina Lopes, 'Statistical Measure of Quality in Wikipedia' (Workshop on Social Media Analytics, Washington DC, 2010).

137. Australian Migration Forums, 'Life in Victoria', <http://www.lifeinvictoria.com/>.

contents of the Point Cook Wikipedia article transcribed into the response, as a way of providing information on the suburb. The statement that ‘Point Cook is the home of RAAF Williams, Point Cook...’ remained prominent in the response,¹³⁸ as an example that the local community recognises a connection with the RAAF base and exhibits a sense of pride in that connection. The connection with a RAAF base may, however, resonate solely with British migrants, due to their potential exposure to the high number of Royal Air Force bases in the United Kingdom.

Wyndham City Council is responsible for the broad tourism stance adopted by the local community, and the high profile given to the RAAF base—and the RAAF Museum in particular—that was evident in the late twentieth century and remains in the present day. However, the move from attracting tourists via print-based advertising to a web-based approach has shifted the primary means of tourism communication to the internet. Typical of the Council’s stance is the webpage ‘Experience Wyndham’, which lists Werribee Park Mansion in prime place, followed immediately by the Point Cook RAAF base. The webpage describes the base as telling ‘one of Australia’s most important aviation stories’.¹³⁹ As Werribee Park Mansion predominated and, to a large extent, defined the local area from the late nineteenth century, its primacy in the present-day tourism stance is natural; so, the placement of the base immediately after the mansion shows an acceptance—at least at the local political level—that the RAAF base is a significant and enduring part of the cultural life of the Wyndham community.

Wyndham City Council proclaims the heritage of the community through a variety of means, notably a print publication by Geoff Hocking entitled *Wyndham: Our Story* and the website of the same title, for which the publication forms the nucleus.¹⁴⁰ The RAAF base at Point Cook features prominently in these heritage publications in its guise as a World War I military base and subsequent RAAF base. Unfortunately, the publication and website are prone to errors caused by inadequate research. For example, the webpage titled ‘Point Cook’ repeats the incorrect claim that the Federal

138. Australian Migration Forums, ‘Life in Victoria (Forum post: Point Cook)’, <http://www.lifeinvictoria.com/forum/suburbs-real-estate/355-point-cook-print.html>.

139. Wyndham City Council, ‘Experience Wyndham’, <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/experience-wyndham>.

140. Wyndham City Council, ‘Wyndham: Our Story’, www.wyndhamhistory.net.au.

Government bought the land from George Chirnside in 1912.¹⁴¹ As explained in Chapter Two of this thesis, this error often arises due to repeating previous published histories;¹⁴² however, Hocking's error of stating that the military rank abbreviation of 'ACW' stands for 'Air Control Wing', rather than the correct 'aircraftswoman' requires firmer criticism.¹⁴³

Positive connections between the RAAF and local communities exist in a variety of ways, especially involving local residents visiting the base. The RAAF Museum receives between one-hundred-and-ten-thousand and one-hundred-and-twenty-thousand visitors annually.¹⁴⁴ While many come from further afield in Australia and overseas, a number of visitors are hosted by members of the local community, who take their personal guests to the museum.¹⁴⁵ Wyndham City Council describes the RAAF Museum as one of 'the unique selling points of the region'.¹⁴⁶ Together, these factors demonstrate a sense of connection with the RAAF base and a sense of pride within the local community at having the base within their local area.

The RAAF Museum's interactive displays are especially popular. Held most Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoons, the events involve an aircraft being prepared for flight in front of an audience, which is positioned close to the aircraft on and beside tiered seating behind a safety barrier. The pilot conducts the aircraft pre-flight checks, starts the engine and taxis away from the audience to commence a flying display after describing the aerobatic manoeuvres he or she is about to undertake. The pilot's voice continues to be relayed through speakers during the flight. A commentator on the ground hosts and interprets the pilot's radio communications and further describes the flight. After landing and taxiing back to the audience, the

141. Wyndham City Council, 'Wyndham: Our Story, Point Cook', <http://www.wyndhamhistory.net.au/items/show/1049>.

142. Jessie Serle makes the same error by stating: '[A] [p]ortion of George's holding was sold to the RAAF in 1907'. (Serle, *Point Cooke*.)

143. Hocking, *Wyndham*.

144. EducationHQ Australia, 'RAAF Museum', <http://au.educationhq.com/directory/10258/raaf-museum/#>.

145. Much of the communication between members of the local community about special events on the base, such as air pageants, occurs through social media—notably Facebook's 'Point Cook Residents' and 'Sanctuary Lakes Residents' pages. The groups have 8852 and 1987 members respectively as at February 2017.

146. Wyndham City Council, *Tourism and Events Strategy 2011/12 – 2015/16*, 13, <https://www.wyndham.voc.gov.au//var/files/uploads/pdfs/50569f1ce428d.pdf>.

pilot answers questions from the audience. School groups from across Melbourne often attend the interactive displays as part of a visit to the museum. The RAAF aerobatic display team, the Roulettes, based at East Sale, Victoria usually makes its first away-from-home demonstration practice, as part of its annual season preparation, at Point Cook, due to its close proximity and the availability of services from the RAAF Museum flight line. This special interactive day attracts a very large crowd (see Figure 78). The museum also holds biennial air pageants, which attract variously between ten and twenty-thousand attendees. These have fallen into a regular pattern to alternate with the Avalon International Air Show, held about thirty-five kilometres to the southwest.



Figure 78: RAAF Roulette Display Team visit to Point Cook (S. Campbell-Wright)

Opportunities to volunteer at the RAAF Museum provide a strong connection between the military and local communities. Analysis of the membership records of the Friends of the RAAF Museum shows that, of the approximately one-hundred volunteers at the museum, thirty-three reside in the local community.¹⁴⁷ Noting that opportunities for volunteering in the field of aviation heritage are not common generally, and that volunteers often travel large distances to do so, the high

147. Friends of RAAF Museum database query: 'Volunteers by postcode', generated 15 Feb 2017.

proportion of volunteers from the local community shows that the connection between the military and local communities is strong.

A visit to the museum provides the easiest means of access to the base by members of the local community. It also allows them to use the picnic areas and a barbecue provided for public use. These areas provide long-range vistas that are not available from within the suburban settings of the homes of most visitors from the local area; the site provides a different perspective from that available generally in the area—thus reinforcing that the base is a special site within the local context.

The RAAF community has held an Anzac Day dawn service at Point Cook since as early as the 1970s. The ceremony was originally held for RAAF members and their families only, with occasional participation from members of the RAAF veteran community. Since 2012, the RAAF has invited the local community to participate, and the event has grown from one with about fifty participants to one that peaked at over five-hundred in 2014. The increased participation reflects the desire in the broader community to commemorate major military events. There is a choice of dawn services in the Wyndham area—such as in the main streets of Werribee and Altona¹⁴⁸—but many local residents choose the base. This connection demonstrates that the local community feels comfortable and safe in accepting an invitation to attend the base and to take part in a ritual that has its basis in the military way of life—a situation outside of the normal knowledge and experience of most of the participants from the local community.

In a similar demonstration of the local community's ease with the base, parents allow their children to enrol in and attend the No 404 Squadron of the Australian Air Force Cadets.¹⁴⁹ The cadet scheme provides aviation and leadership training to youths as young as twelve-years-and-six-months old.¹⁵⁰ The squadron meets on most Thursday nights throughout the year and holds additional activities, such as

148. Government of Victoria, 'Werribee', <http://anzacentenary.vic.gov.au/anzacday2016services/werribee/>; Hobsons Bay City Council, 'ANZAC Commemorative Service Altona 25 April', http://www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au/Council/Parking_roads_transport/Road_works/ANZAC_Commemorative_Service_Altona_25_April.

149. Australian Air Force Cadets, '4 Wing AAFC – VIC', <http://www.aafc.org.au/wings/4-wing/>.

150. Australian Air Force Cadets, 'Cadets', <http://www.aafc.org.au/how-to-join/cadets/>.

promotion courses and flying training, on weekends and during holiday periods. Parents require a very high level of trust in the military, and the RAAF community at Point Cook in particular, to leave their children in the hands of military staff and, at times, to take part in activities with a high degree of risk, such as flying training.

With the terrorist events of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America more than a decade and a half in the past, the local community and visitors to the base have come to accept that stringent entry controls are a normal part of gaining access. Visitors to the RAAF Museum, for example, must stop at the front gate and explain their reason for visiting the base to a security guard. When they state their intention to visit the museum, the guard notes their driver's licence and car registration numbers before issuing them with visitor identification passes that they wear for the duration of their visit. The connection between being on a military base and wearing a pass, like all who work on the base, is not lost on many visitors; and this may add to the sense of a military experience by museum visitors. The same security procedures apply to community members of the congregation who attend the Protestant Sunday worship service, held in the RAAF Chapel on Sunday mornings.¹⁵¹ This arrangement with the local community reflects the similar use by the Catholic congregation who used the chapel in the 1990s and is reflective of an ongoing association between the community and the site.

However, not all relations between the military and local communities are so harmonious. The Point Cook Residents Association formed in 2002,¹⁵² and its stated intent was 'to act as a catalyst for creating a greater sense of community within Point Cook'.¹⁵³ The majority of the association's early actions were focussed on the provision of services to the growing community, such as school and pedestrian crossings, traffic management and safe play areas for children. The association's organ, the monthly newsletter 'The Point' provided the community with information and advice from April 2003. By late that year, the association claimed itself as likely

151. 'Information Circular 04/17', RAAF Williams

152. The Association applied for ABN registration on 15 October 2002 (ABN 69 948 896 327).

153. 'Point Cook Residents' Association', <https://www.ourcommunity.com.au/directories/listing?id=25170>.

to be the largest residents' association in Australia.¹⁵⁴ The base received little or no attention in the newsletter until September of 2003, when some members of the local community began to agitate about the future of the base.¹⁵⁵ That issue advised the local community of an upcoming public information day to be held at the base on 4 October 2003 and that:

Mr Joe Schembri and other concerned Point Cook residents will be at...[a public venue on]...the three preceding evenings...in order to advise interested residents of information pertinent to the sale.¹⁵⁶

The announcement belied the negative stance adopted by some members of the community and their attempts to influence others.¹⁵⁷

The November issue of 'The Point' reported on the public information day and that leases for current users of the base were to be extended by up to two years, and the base was to remain in Government hands and continue as an operating airfield, stating: 'But all is not lost!'.¹⁵⁸ The report advised that up to one-hundred-thousand aircraft movements per annum were to be allowed 'at this stage', which, while not stating explicitly, inferred that the number of aircraft movements would increase. The report posed a series of questions:

Do you want to see a fully fledged commercial airport in your Point Cook?
Do you want night and weekend flying to continue over your suburb?
Do you want an increase in noise and pollution levels in your community?
Do you want your children to be forced to change their primary school or kindergarten in the next few years?¹⁵⁹

154. Point Cook Residents Association, *The Point: The Newsletter of the Point Cook Residents Association Inc.*, (September 2003), 3.

155. Point Cook Residents Association, *The Point: The Newsletter of the Point Cook Residents Association Inc.*, 2.

156. Point Cook Residents Association, *The Point: The Newsletter of the Point Cook Residents Association Inc.*, 2.

157. The Point Cook Residents Association sought sponsors willing to make a financial contribution to the production costs of 'The Point' in August 2003, and announced Joe Schembri as one of those sponsors in the September 2003 issue—the same month that agitation about the sale of the base began.

158. Point Cook Residents Association, *The Point: The Newsletter of the Point Cook Residents Association Inc.*, (November 2003), 7.

159. Point Cook Residents Association, *The Point: The Newsletter of the Point Cook Residents Association Inc.*, 7.

Agitators began to influence opinion within the local community in an attempt to force the closure of the airfield. One of the effects of a possible closure was that private land abutting the base and acting as buffer zones would no longer be subject to planning controls that prohibited development. While this issue was not raised during the period that the locality of Point Cook was rural, urban encroachment and the possibility for local landowners to profit from development formed a powerful motive for community agitation by some landowners.

The 2001 Victorian Government Ambidgi Report into airfield capacity had recommended retention of Point Cook as part of the wider network of general aviation operations. In May 2001, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Defence, Dr Brendan Nelson, announced the retention of the Point Cook as an operating airfield, due mainly to the view expressed by Victorian Parliamentary Secretary for State and Regional Development Tony Robinson that, ‘... Point Cook must retain an operating capacity for the long-term benefit of general aviation in the state’.¹⁶⁰

One result that eventually emerged from the first attempt to dispose of the base during the late 1990s was the establishment of Point Cook Consultative Forums, which allowed for discussion of issues between the Department of Defence, aviation interest groups and the local community. The forums were organised by the Defence Support Group, which managed Defence infrastructure on behalf of the armed forces. The forums were chaired by the regional manager for Victoria and Tasmania of Defence Support Group, and local representatives of Defence Support Group sat with local RAAF representatives behind a long table before a seated audience in a series of venues on the base. Participation was open to all, but advertising was scant—mostly by email invitation only to those who had attended previously. The forums ran with decreasing regularity during 2010–15.¹⁶¹ The Defence Support Group used the forums to impart mostly-positive information to the audience and to allow aviation groups and local residents to voice their concerns. Issues raised included agitation to continue with the sale of the base, complaints about aircraft

160. ‘Point Cook Saved’. *Werribe Banner*, 16 May 2001.

161. Defence Infrastructure Division, ‘Point Cook Community Forum’, <http://www.defence.gov.au/id/pccf.asp>.

noise, local council building overlays and the false promises by real estate agents that the base was to close. The situation was often adversarial, with aviation interest groups seeking greater access to the base and an increase in aviation activity, while local residents and potential land developers sought to cease flying altogether. For their part, Defence representatives listened politely, took notes and promised to act where appropriate. However, few actions resulted; and, as the local community gradually accepted the base as a normal part of life in the newly-formed suburb of Point Cook, the perceived need for the forums dissipated.

That acceptance manifests itself in some readily-identifiable cultural practices of the local community. For example, the Point Cook Soccer Club, which formed in 2008 to serve Point Cook and the surrounding areas, adopted the moniker variously of ‘The Jets’ and ‘The Point Cook Jets’.¹⁶² The club’s logo (see Figure 79) comprises three silhouetted F/A18 Hornet jet fighters flying above clouds within a roundel inscribed with the name of the club and date of establishment, augmented by two gunsight motifs.¹⁶³ The references to the RAAF in the club’s logo are inescapable and, while not alluded to in the club’s official publications, can only have been influenced by the proximity of, and respect for, the Point Cook base. Hornet jet fighters never operated from Point Cook, but some licence might be allowed a football club, which needs to portray a powerful image—and a Tiger Moth aircraft, or even the most-modern aircraft to operate at the base, the CT-4 trainer, does not portray such an image. The roundel form of the club logo mirrors the roundels painted on all RAAF aircraft, and the gunsight motifs are typical of those encountered in operating ballistic weapons in aircraft of all ages.

162. Point Cook Soccer Club, *Members Information Book*, (2015).; Point Cook Soccer Club, ‘Point Cook Soccer Club: The Point Cook Jets!’, <http://www.pointcooksoccerclub.org/home>.

163. Point Cook Soccer Club, *Members Information Book*.



Figure 79: *Point Cook Soccer Club logo, circa 2015 (Point Cook Soccer Club)*

In a further example of the assimilation of RAAF culture into that of the local community, the school houses of Point Cook Senior Secondary College—established in 2007—are named after RAAF aircraft: Sabre, Iroquois, Dragon and Demon. Each of these aircraft types is displayed in the RAAF Museum. These two examples demonstrate the use of heritage by a new community in generating community pride and a sense of place in the absence of an overarching, contemporary shared element that identifies the community as one apart from those that surround it. The heritage of the RAAF retains a stronger presence—and a stronger sense of connection with the new community—than the Indigenous or rural heritages that predate the arrival of the military at Point Cook.

In common with many urban places in Australia, the Indigenous heritage of the Wyndham area is scarcely known by its local residents.¹⁶⁴ The Wyndham Council webpage ‘Wyndham’s Aboriginal Culture & History’, after paying respect and acknowledgement, states:

There are five different language groups in the Kulin Nation that are particular to this region. ... These groups operated within their own tribal boundaries.

164. Flight Lieutenant Aimee McCartney, discussion with author, 14 February 2020. (Indigenous Liaison Officer, RAAF Williams)

However, with the shifting of natural boundaries over the years and the growth of Australia's population, the old tribal boundaries are not so widely known.¹⁶⁵

The language used by the Council obfuscates the removal of the Indigenous population in the 1840s and the subsequent reuse of the land for agriculture and the effect this has had on the transmission of the once well-known knowledge of tribal boundaries. Such language might not go unchallenged by Indigenous groups in the community; however, as the same website notes, 'For the Eastern side of the Werribee River [where the RAAF base is located], there are no Registered Aboriginal Parties, though this [status] has been sought by individual groups/tribes at different points in time'.¹⁶⁶ This situation is confirmed by the RAAF Indigenous Liaison Officer for the region.¹⁶⁷

During National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week in 2016, the personnel of the RAAF base at Laverton—who also administer Point Cook—held a ceremony to recognise the prior ownership by the Kulin at Laverton, in conjunction with Kulin elders, and placed a plaque below three flagpoles, which fly the Australian National Flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag. The ceremony at Laverton was part of a nationwide effort by Defence to promote the recognition of Indigenous culture within its own culture.¹⁶⁸ The placement of plaques recognising the original inhabitants of the land on which Air Force bases now exist is one of the few tangible means by which the Air Force seeks to demonstrate its commitment to the recognition of Indigenous culture. However, the personnel at Point Cook did not hold a similar ceremony when they erected flagpoles and a plaque at Point Cook in 2017, illustrated in Figure 80.¹⁶⁹ This was due to the perception of duplication of the ceremony at Laverton and also to avoid complications that might arise from known Indigenous sites at the base.

165. Wyndham City Council, 'Wyndham's Aboriginal Culture & Heritage', <https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/about-council/wyndham-community/wyndhams-aboriginal-culture-history>.

166. Wyndham City Council, 'Wyndham's Aboriginal Culture & Heritage'.

167. McCartney, discussion with author.

168. Department of Defence, *Defence Indigenous Handbook: For Commanders, Managers and Supervisors* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2014).

169. Discussion with Wing Commander Nigel Leurs, Commanding Officer No. 21 Squadron, in July 2016 foreshadowed the low public profile of this occurrence. (Nigel Leurs, discussion with author, July 2016.)



Figure 80: *Flagpoles at the entrance to the RAAF base at Point Cook (S. Campbell-Wright)*

The RAAF, as an organisation founded on technology, is forward-looking in many of its attitudes. Heritage, as a construct that retains and values the past, is often seen by the RAAF generally as an impediment to progress.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, any action that may detract from the acquisition and use of new technology may be viewed with cynicism, or even hostility in some cases. Such was the case when the previous commander at the Laverton base in 2015 refused to hold the recognition ceremony. His successor in 2016 held a more enlightened view; however, the funding of a recognition ceremony and infrastructure for flagpoles was unlikely to have replaced more-urgent capital or maintenance facilities requirements without the need to comply with the Defence-wide Indigenous recognition program.

Notwithstanding, the erection of flagpoles at the entrance to the base goes some way to providing Indigenous recognition in the local community. Site recognition of

170. Andrew Earl, discussion with author, 25 March 2019.

Indigenous heritage is rare in the suburb of Point Cook,¹⁷¹ and recognition of the Indigenous heritage by the RAAF, as a national institution, provides a high level of credibility and helps to assure local residents of the importance of such recognition and, in turn, of the seminal part played by Indigenous peoples in the continuum of land use at Point Cook.

The former RAAF base at Canberra International Airport—which was known as RAAF Base Fairbairn until its sale in 2007 displays a singular example of recognition of Point Cook by a community remote from the site. Fairbairn has been developed into a publicly-accessible business park with a RAAF flight operations area beside the runway, which is also the main runway of the civilian airport. Reflecting the business park’s former role as a RAAF base, its streets are named after historical RAAF bases, with the road nearest the runway named Point Cook Avenue. The nearby carpark is named Point Cook Carpark to distinguish it from other carparks at the site. The public accessibility of the former base places the site within the public domain and the street name of Point Cook Avenue within common knowledge in the Canberra region, being visible on local maps and, significantly, on searches of computer and mobile device applications such as Google Maps.

In conclusion, the significance attributed to the RAAF base at Point Cook by the local community has changed as the composition and nature of the local community has changed over time. From the establishment of the base in 1914, the sparse local and military communities held a somewhat-equal and mutually-supportive relationship due to their remoteness from main population centres and their use of marginal rural land. The relatively-stable population of the base allowed personal connections with the local community to form, which reinforced the shared nature of land use. With the increase in the number of RAAF personnel during and subsequent to World War II, the nature of the connection between the two communities shifted, with the military community being predominant to the extent that the locality name of Point Cook and the RAAF base became synonymous. The

171. The Victorian State Government provided Wyndham Council with a \$1.5 million grant (to be matched by the Council) to establish the Wyndham Aboriginal Community Centre. Planning commenced in 2014, but a site was not determined by June 2019. (Wyndham City Council, ‘The WACCC (the Wyndham Aboriginal Community Centre Committee)’, [https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/community-support/waccc-wyndham-aboriginal-community-centre-committee.](https://www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/services/community-support/waccc-wyndham-aboriginal-community-centre-committee))

type of connection shifted again with the urban encroachment that affected the base in the post– September 11 era to a situation where the new local community initially rejected connections with the base but has eventually come to embrace it as a part of its heritage—at least by local political and civic institutions.

This century-long connection has no direct parallels in Australian society; however, the connection acts as a microcosm of Australian society from the beginning of the twentieth century, in that it highlights the shift from a strong rural societal basis, through the wartime and post-war mutual reliance, to the predominance of urban culture, strongly influenced by a new wave of migration. Overall, the site of the RAAF base has changed from a place of operation to a symbolic place. That is, the base has shifted in its understanding by the local community from a place that was significant for its contribution to the sustainment of the nation and the local community to one that holds symbolic significance as an important part of the heritage of the area. The base has become a site that the local community relies on, in part, for symbolic meaning and for symbolic occasions.

The site provides a sense of continuity for the present-day local community—something that existed before that community and that provides a link to previous human activity—rather than a sense that the new suburb of Point Cook was formed on virgin land. This unfortunately denies the Indigenous heritage of the land; but the subsequent farming activity is, at least, reflected in the names of some of the housing estates. If, like the industrial site of the Cheetham Salt Works at Point Cook, the base was no longer extant and a tangible entity, it too may not form a significant part of the conscious heritage of the local area. The existence of the base has significant value to the local community, even for those who never visit or use the site. It adds a sense of green space within the community, and this contributes to the community's broader attachment to its environment. This, in turn, marks the local community in the Wyndham area apart from other communities, such as those located in saturated suburban settings with other high or medium-density suburbs abutting on all boundaries—often where vistas are limited to distances well short of the natural horizon.

The relationship between the local community and the base is an example of anthropologist Setha Low's definition of place attachment, in that it is 'the symbolic

relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land'.¹⁷² The local community's relationship to the base is one formed through narrative,¹⁷³ in that the relationship is created by learning about the place through frequently-repeated narrative elements. In turn—and over time as the local community continues to reshape itself—the base has become a part of the innate local narrative that forms the public memory of a newly-defined Point Cook—as a suburb and as a place with a significant military past. Philosopher Edward Casey claims that public memory 'is there to be *invoked*' and that an invocation can mean the revival or revalorisation of the past.¹⁷⁴ The public memory that the local community now holds for the RAAF base is one such example.

The RAAF base at Point Cook, as a physical and symbolic place, is significant beyond the local community and plays a part in the broader context of national and international significance of aviation sites, notably those early sites that lay a claim to primacy, longevity or continuity.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK TO AUSTRALIA

Beyond the local community understanding and recognition of Point Cook, the site holds significance for the nation. In addition to lingering personal or familial connections held by many individual Australians, the place is significant for its enduring heritage values at a national level. As a framework for discussing this significance, the Australian Heritage Council's *Guidelines for the Assessment of Places for the National Heritage List* provides an applicable set of principles.¹⁷⁵ The guidelines allow for consideration of a site to be placed on the National Heritage List, based on a number of significance criteria and thresholds. Places may meet more than one of the criteria in many cases.¹⁷⁶ In each case for consideration, the threshold must meet or exceed the level of outstanding heritage value when compared with similar sites in

172. Low, 'Symbolic Ties that Bind', 2.

173. Cross, 'Short What is Sense of Place?'. 2.

174. Casey, *Public Memory*, 29–30.

175. Australian Heritage Council, *Guidelines for the Assessment of Places for the National Heritage List* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2009).

176. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 6–7.

Australia. Using terminology distilled from the National Heritage List guidelines, Point Cook best demonstrates outstanding heritage value to the nation through its:

- importance in the course, or pattern, of Australia’s cultural history (also referred to as events and processes)¹⁷⁷
- possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Australia’s cultural history (also referred to as rarity)¹⁷⁸
- importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of Australia’s cultural places (also referred to as principal characteristics of a class of places)¹⁷⁹
- strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons (also referred to as social value).¹⁸⁰

The events and processes criterion applies to:

historic environment places...that may be of national importance for their ability to define an activity important to the nation demonstrating a key political, economic, scientific or social process that has significantly shaped Australia’s development.¹⁸¹

The guidelines cite Defence as one of the national historic themes that demonstrate the development of Australia’s culture.¹⁸²

Historian Geoffrey Blainey identified aviation, in his seminal work *The Tyranny of Distance* in 1966, as a defining feature of the national character of Australia, claiming that: ‘Australians became more accustomed to flying than the people of probably any other country’.¹⁸³ As outlined in Chapter Three of this thesis, Point Cook was instrumental in the development of civil aviation in Australia. Likewise, the site’s role in the foundation of military aviation in Australia makes it a site centrally associated with another activity important to the nation—the ability to project military force to protect Australia’s national strategic interests.

177. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 15.

178. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 23.

179. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 29.

180. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 42.

181. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 15.

182. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 21–2.

183. Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966), 302.

The rarity criterion applies to ‘a place that is the only and/or the only extant nationally important example with integrity or authenticity’.¹⁸⁴ Point Cook developed from a land-plane military base at the start of military aviation in Australia in 1914 and continued to develop as the sole operating military aviation land- and sea-plane base until the mid-1920s. By that time, aviation had advanced considerably, and the character and manner of flying had evolved. As a result, Point Cook is the only example in Australia—extant or otherwise—of a military aviation base that was active before, during and after World War I. While the site continued to evolve after the creation of other bases, its integrity is not diminished by its subsequent development, due to the single purpose of the site—military aviation—that endured development aligned to evolving needs of military aviation. The site manifestly retains its authenticity by the survival of much of its built landscape from all periods of its development. Given the defence of Australia as a nationally-significant theme in the consideration of heritage significance under the guidelines, and Point Cook’s centrality to military aviation in the defence of the nation, the site is significant to the nation.

The principal characteristics of a class of places criterion considers assemblages of buildings or cultural landscapes that denote a particular technology and, in particular, its evolution over time. Specifically, ‘the place may capture the seminal or optimum period of a style development’, according to the guidelines,¹⁸⁵ and the criterion identifies military sites within this framework.¹⁸⁶ Point Cook is exemplary, for similar reasons to its rarity, as Australia’s first military airfield. The technology of aviation is demonstrated by the site throughout a continuous timeline of technical development. The site played a significant part that ranged from the first military flight, through developments such as instrument and night flying, to the introduction of jet aircraft in the country. Significantly, the site reflected Australia’s first responses to new technological needs, such as the nation’s first aircraft hangar and first sea-plane

184. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 23.

185. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 32.

186. The National Heritage Council specifically identifies defence sites as potentially having principal characteristics of a class of places, with the statement: ‘This criterion will define places that are exemplars of an industrial or technological process. The places may include sites, built structures, cultural landscapes or complexes, being expressions of industrial processes practiced in Australia, such as, a water harvesting complex, a railway workshop complex, a defence base complex.’ (National Heritage Council, 32)

jetty—both of which remain on the site. As a class of place, the nation’s first military airfield remains substantially intact and is the most capable of interpretation as a national heritage site due to its integrity and authenticity.

The National Heritage List guidelines employ the social value criterion to identify sites that have a strong or special association with a particular community, particularly where that association is ‘enduring and contain[s] a deep sense of ownership or connectedness’.¹⁸⁷ The RAAF community is a disparate range of individuals and groups that includes currently-serving members, ex-serving members, retired and veterans’ groups, including the Royal Australian Air Force Association, the Returned and Services League and similar groups, as well as a host of aviation heritage organisations, such as the Aviation Historical Society of Australia and many of Australia’s aviation museums and heritage centres. In accordance with the definition in the guidelines, this community has a common loyalty or cultural background and has a strong connection with the site of Point Cook as a place of significant events to the community.¹⁸⁸

The notion of social value to the RAAF community will be addressed in considerable detail in Chapter Six of this thesis. However, in brief summary, the RAAF community recognises Point Cook as the birthplace of the community, being the founding site of military aviation, the Australian Flying Corps and the RAAF. The community views the site as its *alma mater* and spiritual home. Placing considerable value on the Australian Flying Corps Memorial—a national memorial to all who died for Australia during war in military aviation services—the community commemorates many of its significant events at the memorial.

This assessment under the framework of the Australian Heritage Council for determining national heritage significance indicates that Point Cook substantively meets at least four of the criteria by which the significance of heritage places is assessed officially by the nation.¹⁸⁹ While not a household name in Australia to the

187. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 43.

188. Australian Heritage Council, *Assessment of Places*, 42–43.

189. The criteria of ‘creative or technical achievement’ and ‘significant people’ may also apply.

extent of places such as Uluru or the Melbourne Cricket Ground,¹⁹⁰ Point Cook ranks alongside many other places of significance for the nation's defence and industrial heritage, such as Point Nepean Quarantine Station, Victoria and Hyde Park Barracks, New South Wales.¹⁹¹

Regarding the degree of significance, Point Cook may be compared with other significant sites for aviation in Australia. The first successful powered heavier-than-air flight in Australia took place at Diggers Rest, Victoria in the hands of Ehrich Weiss (Harry Houdini) on 18 March 1910; the first successful Australian-built aircraft first flew at Mia Mia, Victoria in the hands of inventor John Duigan on 16 July 1910; and Australia's first qualified aviation pilot, William Hart, operated one of the first aircraft in Australia at Ham Common, Richmond, New South Wales.¹⁹² Arguably, these sites hosted seminal events of greater significance in Australia's aviation heritage; however, none of these sites is entered on the National Heritage List.¹⁹³

THE INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK

Point Cook is not entered on the World Heritage List. While this may reflect the comparatively-lesser part it played in the development of military aviation, and defence forces more generally, on an international scale, no claims have yet been made for its inclusion. The majority of Australian places on the World Heritage List are places with unique environmental significance, and the built heritage sites are mainly those associated with the nation's convict past.¹⁹⁴ However, World Heritage

190. These two sites are entered on the National Heritage List.

191. Department of the Environment and Energy, 'Australia's National Heritage List', <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/national-heritage-list#googlemap>.

192. Museums Victoria, 'Centenary of Australian Aviation', <https://collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/3105>.

193. While Flemington Racecourse played a significant part in early Australian aviation and is entered on the National Heritage List, the statement of significance does not reflect the site's aviation heritage, rather focusing on its significant horse racing heritage. (Department of the Environment and Energy, 'Flemington Racecourse', www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/ahdb/search.pl?mode=place_detail;place_id=105922.)

194. Australian built heritage sites on the World Heritage List total fourteen, twelve of which are identified as convict sites. (Department of Agriculture Water and the Environment, 'Australia's World Heritage List', <https://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world-heritage-list>.)

Listing is not the only means by which international significance can be measured. Point Cook can be assessed for its international significance in the narrower domain of military sites, and those sites associated with aviation in particular.

Military organisations, by their nature, strive for uniformity. It allows for easy replacement of personnel and equipment against attrition, and it allows for interoperability within the force, and in certain circumstances, with associated forces. Set against that military imperative is the natural human need for individual and group identity—that is, the need to identify and celebrate points of difference from other, similar groups within military organisations and the wider community. Military organisations allow this to an extent, as a form of *esprit de corps* that contributes to morale, and therefore effectiveness, of a fighting force. This construct operates at all levels from groups smaller than a dozen to entire national military forces. Reflecting this notion, historian Richard Holmes describes the British Army as a collection of tribes rather than a unified entity, with each tribe holding to its own rituals and forms of identity.¹⁹⁵

Uniforms can form an important part of identity. In the context of school uniforms, fashion researcher Jennifer Craik argues that uniforms seek to control ‘the bodies, mind and even language’,¹⁹⁶ and this is no less so for military uniforms. Cultural critic Nina Edwards argues that:

Uniforms can create a sense of communality and pride, but they can also be demeaning to the wearer. It is sometimes argued that uniforms do away with economic and class discriminations, and yet we are all familiar with the ingenuity with which a school tie can be worn, high or low and with large or small knot.¹⁹⁷

Edwards adds that, in the military context, a ‘certain rivalry between factions fighting on the same side could boost morale’.¹⁹⁸ An example from the Australian Army illustrates this concept, wherein a coloured lanyard that denotes the corps in which the wearer serves is worn on the right shoulder, while individual regimental lanyards

195. Richard Holmes, *Tommy: the British soldier on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (London: Harper Collins, 2004), 75.

196. Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From conformity to transgression* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 65.

197. Nina Edwards, *Dress for War: Uniform, civilian clotting and Trappings, 1914 to 1918* (London: IB Tauris, 2015), 22.

198. Edwards, *Dressed for War*, 27.

are worn on the left shoulder. Thus, members of the artillery corps wear a white lanyard on the right; however, members of 'A' Battery, 1st Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery wear the identical white lanyard on the left signifying their unique regimental status as the only extant element descended from the pre-federation coastal artillery batteries of New South Wales—the oldest unit of the Australian Army.¹⁹⁹

The notion of birthplace is important to many, but not all, military organisations. Military organisations can view the place where they began as a mark of distinction, and often as their spiritual home. The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service was formed at HMAS *Harman*²⁰⁰—a 'stone frigate' or land-based 'ship' close to Queanbeyan, New South Wales. The community associated with that non-extant branch of the navy considers that site as its birthplace. Objects that remind visitors of the significance of the base for the service, formed in 1941, adorn the officers' mess and mark recognition of the need to accept women into military service during World War II. A framed needlepoint tapestry declares the site to be the 'birthplace of the W.R.A.N.S.'. The base also hosts the memorial cenotaph that recognises the service and dedication of those who served in the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service.

The United States Navy has six places commonly referred to as its birthplace, all dating from 1775–76. These include: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Machias, Maine; Providence, Rhode Island; Beverly and Marblehead, Massachusetts; and Whitehall, New York.²⁰¹ Each site played a significant part in the establishment of the present-day navy, and proponents for each site make cogent claims. The Naval History and Heritage Command states that, 'Perhaps it would be historically accurate to say that America's Navy had many "birthplaces"'.²⁰² Despite this statement, the need for claims to primacy appears to be strong within that naval community. The United States Navy celebrates 13 October as its birthday—the date associated with

199. Australian Army, 'Lanyard', <https://www.army.gov.au/our-history/traditions/lanyard>.

200. Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1984), 210.

201. Whitehall Chamber of Commerce, 'Whitehall, New York: birthplace of the U.S. Navy', <http://www.whitehall-chamber.org/>.

202. Naval History and Heritage Command, 'Birthplace of the U.S. Navy', <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/commemorations-toolkits/navy-birthday/OriginsNavy/birthplace-of-the-u-s-navy.html>.

Philadelphia²⁰³—despite the claim that the navy does not recognise a single site as its birthplace and that many sites are important to the service.²⁰⁴

Archaeologist Martin Brown explains that a connection exists between current and previous users of a military site:

[T]he land's users have added their own layers to the palimpsest, but the older military heritage can also excite interest from users of a training area because...of the perceived connection between soldiers across the centuries.²⁰⁵

Referring to twentieth century military sites, Brown observes that, 'there is an immediate interest in and identification with a military experience different enough to have a fascination but recent enough to have points of commonality'.²⁰⁶ The connection with place that Brown describes holds a strong fascination when the site is linked to a seminal, often founding, event—thus forming a notional birthplace that allows for claims of longevity and continuity. However, not all military institutions celebrate a birthplace. Some, as in the case of the Australian Army, celebrate their connections with the sites of major battles or campaigns. Gallipoli and Kokoda, in foreign lands, are amongst the seminal places in the Australian Army's formation narrative. This narrative can transcend the military context, as historian Kate Darian-Smith notes:

In the collective memory of Australian society, participation in international wars holds a revered but contentious position, and has assumed the status of a founding myth of nation and national identity.²⁰⁷

So, differentiation in the military context usually manifests itself as claims to superlatives of primacy, longevity or continuity. Such claims may refer to a capability, a skill, a practice or a place. Claims to be the first, the only, the oldest, the largest, the most-highly recognised, and so on are staple rhetoric of military units around the

203. Naval History and Heritage Command, 'The Birth of the Navy of the United States', <https://www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/commemorations-toolkits/navy-birthday/OriginsNavy/the-birth-of-the-navy-of-the-united-states.html>.

204. Naval History and Heritage Command, 'Birthplace of the U.S. Navy'.

205. Brown, 'Whose Heritage?', 129.

206. Brown, 'Whose Heritage?', 130.

207. Kate Darian-Smith, 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front During the Second World War' in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and History*, 138.

world. Two such claims are made for Point Cook as international superlatives and therefore claims to international military distinction. These claims are that the site is the world's oldest continuously-operating military airfield and that it is the home of the world's second-oldest air force. The RAAF frequently makes these claims and takes their veracity for granted. However, they have not been examined in detail.

The RAAF official website for RAAF Williams states that Point Cook is 'the birthplace of the Air Force and the oldest continually operating military airfield in the world'.²⁰⁸ The Department of the Environment and Energy makes the same claim on the National Heritage List website, which states:

The story of Point Cook, as the oldest continuously operating military airbase in the world, is an essential part of the story of the RAAF and the development of military and civil aviation in Australia.²⁰⁹

Other publicly-accessible sources, such as TripAdvisor Australia and Wikipedia,²¹⁰ which cite the Department of Defence website on RAAF Base Williams,²¹¹ repeat the claim. Statements of the claim by these websites are closely linked to information about the RAAF Museum, and in such cases, the value of the claim lies in the use of superlative to entice visitors to the museum.

The claim further demonstrates a sense of pride by the RAAF in Point Cook and the feeling that the site has significance beyond the national level and beyond the confines of international military differentiations, in that, while the claim is to a military distinction, it is held on behalf of the nation. However, the claim is simply made and not justified in the public sphere, leaving the claim open to possible completion.

208. Royal Australian Air Force, 'RAAF Williams', <https://www.airforce.gov.au/about-us/bases/victoria/raaf-williams>.

209. Department of the Environment and Energy, 'National Heritage Places - Point Cook Air Base'.

210. TripAdvisor, 'At the world's oldest operating military aerodrome', https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g659928-d257183-r346432924-RAAF_Museum-Point_Cook_Greater_Melbourne_Victoria.html.

211. Department of Defence, 'Defence Aircraft Noise: RAAF Base Williams', <http://www.defence.gov.au/AircraftNoise/Williams/default.asp>.

Sites in the United States of America and the United Kingdom have had similar claims made about them. College Park Airport in Maryland, United States is generally regarded as the world's oldest continuously-operating airport and is included in the National Register of Historic Places in the United States of America. Pioneer aviator Wilbur Wright established the first aviation training school for the United States Army there in August 1909, and the Department of Parks and Recreation refers to the site as 'the Cradle of Aviation'.²¹² Similarly, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics considers Pearson Field in Vancouver, Washington to be 'the home of the United States Army Air Service'.²¹³ Aviation began there in 1905, with the landing of an airship at the site's military barracks. College Park and Pearson Field opened to civil air traffic in 1911 and 1912 respectively. Both sites are no longer in military control, and while they have operated continuously, they do not affect the claims made about Point Cook.²¹⁴

London's Hendon aerodrome was established in 1910 and commandeered by the military in 1916. The last military flight at the site took place in 1968, by which time urban encroachment began to force the conversion of much of the airfield to housing. In a parallel to Point Cook, Hendon is the site of the Royal Air Force Museum. Hendon also carries the military aviation birthplace epithet,²¹⁵ which is somewhat incongruous, because the first British military aerodrome was founded at Larkhill, Wiltshire in 1910²¹⁶—as opposed to the commandeering of Hendon in 1916—but Larkhill's closure in 1914 led to the handing of the claim to its younger sibling at Hendon. The birthplace claim for Hendon relates to the military use of

212. The Maryland–National Capital Park and Planning Commission, 'College Park Airport', <https://web.archive.org/web/20090531180243/http://pgparks.com/places/historic/cpairport.html>.

213. American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, 'AIAA Historic Aerospace Sites', <https://www.aiaa.org/HistoricAerospaceSites/>.

214. Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, was officially opened for military use on 27 March 1914 and has operated continuously since that date. It remains a joint civil–military airport. By postdating the commencement of military aviation at Point Cook, the site also, but narrowly, does not affect the claims made about Point Cook. (Airport of Thailand, 'Histories', http://www.airportthai.co.th/ewtadmin85_aot/ewt/aot_web/ewt_news.php?nid=1&filename=map__EN.)

215. Andrew Renwick, *RAF Hendon: the birthplace of aerial power* (East Yorkshire: Flight Recorder, 2012).

216. Noel James, *Plain Soldiering: A History of the Armed Forces on Salisbury Plain* (Salisbury: HobNob Press, 1987), 163.

balloons at the site in 1862.²¹⁷ Such details aside, Hendon's possible claim against Point Cook is negated by its lack of continual use as a military airfield.

Farnborough airport in the county of Hampshire, United Kingdom, is the site of the first sustained, controlled and powered flight in the United Kingdom. That significant event took place on 16 October 1908, when showman and American citizen Samuel Cody flew his British Army Aeroplane No 1 at the field used by the British Army's Balloon Section and Balloon Factory.²¹⁸ In a parallel to Point Cook, the first military flight in the United Kingdom—which was also the first of any flight in the nation—took place at a military airfield. However, military ownership of the site ceased in 1991, when the Ministry of Defence declared the site surplus to military requirements.²¹⁹ So, military aviation at Farnborough, despite its auspicious start, is not extant.

The former airfield at Eastchurch, Kent holds the reputation of the being the birthplace of British aviation and was the site of the first Briton to fly an aircraft in Britain, as well as being the locations of the first aerodrome of the Royal Aero Club and the Short Brothers' aircraft factory—the first aircraft production factory in the United Kingdom.²²⁰ The site is the location of the Memorial to the Home of Aviation.²²¹ Civil aviation commenced at the site in 1909, and the Royal Naval Air Service commenced aviation there in 1911. However, military aviation ceased in 1946, when the Royal Air Force—which took over the site from the Royal Naval Air Service in 1918—ended operations at the site. While commencing military aviation before Point Cook, the site is no longer extant and has been converted to a prison.

The Royal Flying Corps established Netheravon airfield in Wiltshire in 1913 as the corps' first operational (as opposed to training) airfield, and the site operated as a military airfield from that date to 2012, with a gap in military aviation operations

217. Renwick, *RAF Hendon*.

218. Graham Rood, *A Brief History of Farnborough Aviation Part 1 : the early days 1901–1914*, (Farnborough: 2011).

219. 'History of Farnborough Airport', TAG Farnborough Airport, <https://www.tagfarnborough.com/about/history/>.

220. Alfred Gollin, *The Impact of Air Power on the British People and their Government, 1909–14* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 168.

221. Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, 'Memorial to "The Home of Aviation"', <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1258069>.

from 1963 to 1966.²²² So, military aviation at Netheravon was not continuously-operating and is not extant.

The first training airfield of the Royal Air Force was established at Upavon, also in Wiltshire, on 12 May 1912 when the Central Flying School established itself at the site to train military pilots.²²³ The site holds the reputation as the birthplace of the Royal Air Force. It has remained in military control since its inception and, while the site passed from Royal Air Force to British Army control in 1993, it has remained an operating airfield for all of that time.²²⁴ Therefore, those associated with the site may rightly make the claim that it is the oldest continuously-operating military airfield, but the claim is not made publicly to any great extent. Instead, the organisation with the strongest links to the site, the Central Flying School Association, chooses to celebrate the alternative superlative that: ‘The Central Flying School is the longest serving flying school in the world’.²²⁵ As the school moved from the site in 1946, the longevity of the school is not directly associated with the site, and the claim to longevity of the school as an entity is stronger. The lack of willingness to make the claim publicly about the longevity of the site is exacerbated by the Royal Air Force having handed control of the site to the British Army. Notwithstanding, the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England makes the statement that Upavon ‘is thought to be the oldest active airfield in the country’.²²⁶ Therefore, the military airfield at Upavon is the longest continuously-operating airfield in the United Kingdom; however, this point of distinction is not marked by the Royal Air Force or others associated with the site. So, aside from considerations such as land purchase dates or administrative control of sites, the operation of military aircraft commenced at Upavon in the year preceding that of Point Cook and continues to the present. Point Cook is not the oldest continuously-operating military airfield.

222. ‘Airfield Camp, Netheravon 1912–2012’, *Army Air Corps Journal*, no. 52 (2012): 40.

223. Rod Priddle, *Wings over Wiltshire: an aeronautical history of Wiltshire* (Sheffield: ALD Design & Print, 2003), 311.

224. Central Flying School Association, ‘Central Flying School History’, <http://www.centralflyingschool.org.uk/history/History.htm>.

225. Central Flying School Association, ‘Central Flying School History’.

226. Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, ‘Upavon Airfield’, www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1430889.

For military forces as newly-formed as air forces—a construct that is only one-hundred years old—claims to primacy are important. These claims indicate an early willingness to adopt technology and to understand the importance of air power as a contributor to national power. They reflect pride as a nation that is modern in its approach to world affairs. As the single operational base of the RAAF at its formation and the notional birthplace of the RAAF, Point Cook is central to the claim that the RAAF is the second oldest air force. The oldest air force is the Royal Air Force, which was formed on 1 April 1918 as a service apart from the Royal Navy and the British Army. This claim to primacy is clear and uncontested; however, the claim to be the first to follow is contested.

Historian André Wessel asserts that the South African Air Force is the world's second oldest air force. Wessel's claim is that the appointment of Colonel van Ryneveld as Director of Air Services—backdated to 1 February 1920 from June 1920—marks the birth of the South African Air Force. Wessel notes however that 'the Air Force was only officially listed as a unit of the reorganised UDF [Union Defence Forces] on 1 February 1923'.²²⁷ The counterclaim by the RAAF is that van Ryneveld remained a member of the army and only established and commanded a viable flying element from 26 April 1921—some eight weeks after the formation of the RAAF on 31 March 1921. The South African air element was not independent of the army and, like the various army flying corps of World War I, was not an independent force,²²⁸ which is the primary claim to being an air force as opposed to an air corps or some lesser organisational element.

The Royal Canadian Air Force also claims to be the second oldest air force—although not as strongly as the South African Air Force does.²²⁹ Canada established the Air Board in February 1920, which used ex-military aircraft for aerial-survey work, forestry spotting and anti-smuggling patrols, but not widely for national defence. The claim to be the second oldest air force is based on the fact that the Air Board established a part-time air force, the Canadian Air Force, which provided

227. Wessels, 'South African Air Force', 224.

228. Air Power Development Centre, *Pathfinder Issue 114: The Second Oldest Air Force*, (Canberra: 2009).

229. South African Air Force, 'History of the South African Air Force', http://www.af.mil.za/about_us/history.html.

refresher training to demobilised military pilots in July 1920, operating from Camp Borden, Ontario,²³⁰ with a headquarters element in Ottawa.²³¹ The government disbanded the Canadian Air Force in March 1922 due, in part, to the political climate.²³² While the Canadian Air Force was re-established very soon after in 1922 as a militia force, with a change to a permanent force on 31 March 1924, it remained under the control of the Canadian Army until November 1938.²³³

While Canada no longer pursues its claim to be the second oldest air force with vigour, South Africa and Australia both maintain their claims with full knowledge, and apparent disregard, of the strength of each other's argument and no attempt to reconcile their competing claims. This situation, largely based on the semantic definition of an air force, is likely to continue unresolved.

These two claims to superlative—that Point Cook is the oldest continuously-operating military airfield and, as the birthplace of the RAAF, is the home of the world's second-oldest air force—do not necessarily bear close scrutiny. However, they illustrate the strong role that narratives of connection with place play in the culture of military organisations internationally. That the claims are not necessarily true does not detract from their ability to generate pride in a military organisation as claimed marks of differentiation. This pride is even stronger when linked with the organisation's foundation narratives.

CONCLUSION

Point Cook has not existed in isolation, and a mutual relationship has always existed between the site and the local communities that have surrounded it since initial military occupation. This relationship has endured despite the significant changes in the demographic nature and social character of the local community. The relationship is an example of place attachment, which ascribes culturally-shared

230. Larry Milberry, ed., *Sixty Years: The RCAF and CF Air Command 1924–1984* (Toronto: Canav Books, 1984), 17.

231. Air Power Development Centre, *Pathfinder Issue 114: The Second Oldest Air Force*.

232. Leslie Roberts, *There Shall Be Wings* (Toronto: Clark, Irwin and Co, 1959), 33.

233. Air Power Development Centre, *Pathfinder Issue 114: The Second Oldest Air Force*.

affective meanings to a place, and it has been formed through narrative and created by the local community becoming familiar with the site through frequently-repeated narrative elements. The site has become a part of the innate narrative that forms the public memory of the local community, which has constantly redefined itself as the locality, and later the suburb, that surrounds Point Cook.

At the national level, the base, as a physical and symbolic place, is significant in that it has played a part in the broader context of national development—in particular, in the roles that military and civil aviation have played in Australia's development. The site has remained associated with many claims to primacy, longevity or continuity regarding significant national aviation themes and concepts. While the site is regarded as important enough to Australia to have been entered on the National Heritage List, its significance internationally does not extend beyond the realm of military aviation, and it has not been afforded formal international recognition. Nonetheless, the site holds a recognisable and important place amongst international military sites, especially those associated with aviation at the beginning of the twentieth century. The site therefore holds significance for communities that are not necessarily in close proximity, but are nonetheless associated through shared cultural understanding.

CHAPTER SIX – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK TO THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living.

Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BC)¹

In the 1962 Lees Knowles Lecture given at Trinity College, Cambridge, Lieutenant-General Sir John Hackett outlined that the function of the profession of arms is ordered application of force in the resolution of a social problem.² Somewhat imaginatively, Hackett declares that there is an element of religious vocation in those who serve in the military and that, in certain times and places, the calling resembles a priesthood.³ Nonetheless, military service demands a unique obligation from its adherents: being prepared, on behalf of the nation and in the most-extreme circumstances, to take the life of another human. Members of the profession of arms therefore form a distinct community within any society.

However, as archaeologist Martin Brown explains, citing the case of the British Army, the profession is not a single entity; rather it is ‘just a collection of tribes..., each with their own identities and rituals’.⁴ In the same way, the Australian Defence Force is not a single entity, and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and its associated wider community is a tribe that has its own distinct identity, separate from those of the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Army—despite all three services understanding their common and primary purpose. That purpose, as outlined by the Australian Government is ‘to deter, deny and defeat any attempt by a hostile country or non-state actor to attack, threaten or coerce Australia’.⁵

1. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Selected Orations of Marcus T. Cicero: together with The Treatises on Old Age and Friendship*, trans. M'Kay, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 1855), 138.

2. John Hackett, *The Profession of Arms* (London: Times Publishing, 1962), 3.

3. Hackett, *The Profession of Arms*, 3.

4. Brown, ‘Whose Heritage?’, 130.

5. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), 17.

Due to the unique position of the military in society, *esprit de corps* and the reinforcement of cultural difference are important factors in the military cultural context. The RAAF's *Leadership Companion*, published in 2013, defines *esprit de corps* as a 'sense of common interest and shared responsibilities, team spirit and regard for honour and traditions'.⁶ The RAAF therefore argues that there are cultural differences between the three services and that the elements that constitute, and differentiate between, Australian military cultures are the different technologies used, the way they fight in combat environments and the individual histories and heritage they maintain.⁷ For the RAAF, Point Cook plays an important part in its sense of cultural difference and acts to store institutional memory.

This chapter seeks to answer the research question: how and to what extent has Point Cook influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF? It will discuss and provide a critical appraisal of the significance of Point Cook for the RAAF community, placing that significance within the broader context of the use of place in identity formation by other military communities.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF POINT COOK BY THE RAAF COMMUNITY

Psychologists McMillan and Chavis propose that a sense of community is:

a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together.⁸

In the case of the RAAF community, that commitment to be together is more emotional than physical. For the purposes of this study, the RAAF community is therefore defined as the disparate range of entities—individuals and groups—that includes currently-serving members, ex-serving members, retired members and veterans' groups, such as the Royal Australian Air Force Association, the RAAF

6. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Leadership Companion*, 104.

7. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Leadership Companion*, 14.

8. David McMillan and David Chavis, 'Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory', *Journal of Community Psychology* Vol. 14 (January 1986): 9.

Vietnam Veterans Association, the Returned and Services League of Australia, Legacy Australia, the Royal Air Forces Association, the Air Crew Europe Association, the Odd Bods' Association and similar groups. To this list may be added the research organisation, the Williams Foundation, as well as Australian aviation heritage organisations, such as the Aviation Historical Society of Australia and many of Australia's aviation museums and heritage centres. The RAAF community's understanding of Point Cook is informed by its public memory and the place attachment it holds for the site—a symbolic relationship described by anthropologist Setha Low, as one 'formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for the individual's or group's understanding of and relation to the environment'.⁹

This place attachment is exemplified by the many memorial and commemorative activities that the RAAF community holds at Point Cook, including the Anzac Day dawn service, a Remembrance Day wreath-laying ceremony, the RAAF Association Annual Pilgrimage and a range of other commemorative events held by ex-service groups such as the RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association and the National Servicemen's Association. Figure 81, taken in 2019, shows the walls constructed behind the Australian Flying Corps Memorial for groups to affix plaques during significant commemorative events. The RAAF also uses Point Cook for its own events of significance, such as the Centenary of Military Aviation air show in 2014. On such occasions, Point Cook acts as the storehouse of institutional memory for the RAAF.

9. Low, 'Symbolic Ties that Bind', 2.



Figure 81: Walls for commemorative plaques, Australian Flying Corps Memorial, Point Cook (RAAF History and Heritage Branch, Canberra)

As outlined in Part One of this thesis, Point Cook was the RAAF's first operating base, and all of the service's first operational activities were conducted there.

Therefore, by default, all new members inducted into the RAAF from 1921 to 1939 spent time under training, conducting training or supporting training and operations at Point Cook. Until the turn of the twenty-first century, the majority of officers and many non-commissioned personnel underwent training there on initial or advanced training courses. As a result, every workplace in the RAAF to the present day contains members who have had a physical connection with Point Cook. With the cessation of formal RAAF training at the site in 2010,¹⁰ the default physical connection with the site has lessened. Instead, physical connection must be individually sought by serving RAAF members in most cases, usually through private attendance at the site to visit the RAAF Museum or to attend commemorative events.

Away from the site, the RAAF uses Point Cook in its doctrine, education and public affairs. The RAAF has two principal works of philosophical-level doctrine. These are *The Air Power Manual*, which is 'a professional guide to assist Air Force personnel... to gain the understanding necessary to generate, employ and sustain military air power',¹¹ and *The Australian Experience of Air Power*, which 'identifies the major

10. Officers' Training School relocated from Point Cook to RAAF Base East Sale in 2008, but its Gap Year Program remained at Point Cook to provide a one-year training and induction course for high school leavers over the period 2008 to 2010 inclusive.

11. Royal Australian Air Force, *Air Power Manual*, 3.

influences upon the development of Australian air power as well as how our current Air Force has developed over time'.¹² Both works were written to be studied by all members of the RAAF to provide foundational knowledge prior to subsequent, more-specialised training and education. They provide, in the words of a former Chief of Air Force, the knowledge of 'the family business'.¹³ The latter work makes numerous references to Point Cook and states: 'Today, Point Cook is acknowledged as the home of the RAAF and the birthplace of Australian military aviation'.¹⁴ These doctrinal publications formalise and reinforce the role of Point Cook in the public memory of the RAAF.

These doctrinal publications are complemented by an annual publication entitled *Chief of Air Force's Reading List*. The 2015 edition includes a section of 'Enduring Works for Professional Mastery', which the list states 'can form the foundation of a professional library for every Air Force member, as well as those in the broader community with an interest in air power'.¹⁵ The list includes a history of Point Cook.¹⁶ So, the head of the RAAF has determined that knowledge of Point Cook's past is an important element in becoming a fully-proficient member of the service and its culture. Further, RAAF members undergo a career-long program after initial training, known as Professional Military Education and Training. The program provides courses of study to be passed by RAAF members for promotion to higher rank,¹⁷ and these courses include a component of RAAF history, which addresses Point Cook.

Despite the extensive use of Point Cook by the RAAF for its internal education and memorialising, the RAAF makes limited use of the site in external communication. References to Point Cook by the RAAF on its websites usually relate only to reports on recent significant events held at the site or advertise the existence and activities of

12. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Experience of Air Power*, iii.

13. Geoff Brown, 'Unmanned Air Systems and Australia's Air Power' (Williams Foundation Seminar, Canberra, 3 July 2013).

14. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Experience of Air Power*, 8.

15. Royal Australian Air Force, *Reading List 2015*, iii.

16. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*.

17. Education and training for higher ranks is conducted in combined courses that include army, navy and foreign personnel.

the RAAF Museum.¹⁸ This situation appears incongruous with an organisation that invests effort in internal education about the place, including site visits by many of its trainees.

Explanation for this incongruity lies in the legacy of the efforts to dispose of the site from 1998. During the period of complex negotiations and political manoeuvres to reverse the decision to sell the site to 2004 and the subsequent negotiations to return the site to operating capability, the RAAF provided very few public statements about Point Cook in order not to risk compromising its interests. Therefore, for almost two decades, the RAAF only made essential public comment about Point Cook—that is, comment about public activities at the site. However, the RAAF is aware that its impending centenary in 2021 requires change to the way in which it portrays Point Cook externally. Its public consultation process for the centenary advises that: ‘We’ve received many public submissions related to the birthplace of Air Force: Point Cook’. It notes also: ‘We’re looking at options to recognise the significant role of Point Cook throughout our history and today’.¹⁹

The RAAF began planning the various ways it will mark and commemorate the centenary in 2016. Significant in the planning was the need, stated by the Deputy Chief of Air Force, to develop a ‘cogent narrative for Point Cook’.²⁰ The intention of the narrative is to provide a concise, unambiguous discursive framework that allows public discussion and public affairs statements without conflicting interpretations—at least by the RAAF.

Drawing Point Cook’s links to Australian Defence Force capability helps to establish a publicly-defendable rationale for retaining and redeveloping Point Cook and subsequently centring many of the RAAF centenary events at the site. Australian Defence Force doctrine defines capability in the military context as ‘the capacity or

18. Department of Defence, ‘Military aviation history takes flight at RAAF Museum’, news release, 19 September 2013, news.defence.gov.au/2013/09/19/military-aviation-history-takes-flight-at-raaf-museum/ ; Royal Australian Air Force, ‘RAAF Museum Point Cook’, www.airforce.gov.au/raafmuseum/.

19. Royal Australian Air Force, ‘Air Force 100: Public Consultation’, <https://www.airforce.gov.au/our-mission/air-force-2021/public-consultation>.

20. David Richardson, email to Ron Tilley: Re: For RHAC meeting FRI 19 Feb - Suggestions to DCAF for Next Meeting in April at Point Cook, 10 March 2016.

ability to achieve an operational effect'.²¹ The *Air Force Capability Management Manual* identifies eight factors that contribute to capability, which it defines, under the term Fundamental Inputs to Capability,²² as personnel, organisation, collective training, major systems, supplies, facilities and training areas, support, and command and management.²³ Point Cook, as a physical site, is clearly a facility and training area. However, in the development of a comprehensive cogent narrative, the RAAF identifies Point Cook as also contributing, over time, to the remaining seven Fundamental Inputs to Capability. Therefore, a suitable working catchphrase for the development of the cogent narrative is that Point Cook is 'the crucible of Air Force capability'.²⁴ This phrase differs significantly from 'the birthplace of military aviation' and 'the cradle of the RAAF' outlined in Chapter One of this thesis, in that it establishes a link between present-day capability and the origins of the RAAF that occurred at Point Cook—rather than simply recognising Point Cook as the notional birthplace.

Beyond identifying RAAF capability and its links to Point Cook, the term 'crucible' must also be examined to appraise the catchphrase critically. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines crucible as, 'a situation...in which different elements interact, leading to the creation of something new'.²⁵ The definition is relevant, in that the different capability elements at Point Cook from 1921 had either not previously existed or not previously interacted—leading to the establishment of the RAAF—and Point Cook was the place where that interaction occurred.

The Fundamental Inputs to Capability provide a conceptual framework for discussion of the contribution of Point Cook to the capability of the RAAF, especially noting their importance in the development of a cogent narrative for the site. The *Air Force Capability Management Manual* defines the 'personnel' fundamental input in terms of recruiting, individual training, professional development and

21. Royal Australian Air Force, *Australian Air Publication 1005—Air Force Capability Management Manual* (Canberra: Royal Australian Air Force, 2012), Sect 1, Ch 3, 1.

22. The term is also used by the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Army.

23. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 1.

24. The RAAF uses the shortened term 'Air Force' in reference to itself for all public communication within Australia.

25. 'Oxford English Dictionary'. www.oxforddictionaries.com

personnel retention.²⁶ As the predominant RAAF establishment from 1921 until 1925—after which the second and third establishments were formed at Richmond, New South Wales and Laverton, Victoria—Point Cook was the place where nearly all RAAF personnel were employed.²⁷ For most personnel in the RAAF in its formative years—approximately 350 in number²⁸—Point Cook would have been synonymous with the service as a whole. It was the place where new recruits first served and where the majority of training was conducted. From the start of RAAF, civilian tradespersons and those who had served with other services entered the crucible of Point Cook and emerged as new members of a new service.

The manual defines the ‘organisation’ fundamental input as ‘the appropriate personnel establishment, balance of competencies and structure’.²⁹ These organisational elements were inherent in the employment structures of RAAF personnel from the beginning of the service; and as most personnel were employed at Point Cook, it was the place where the organisational structures were most apparent. After the closure of the two minor, outlying elements of the RAAF at Spotswood and North Fitzroy by 1922, all structural elements of the RAAF were located at Point Cook, with the exception of the small overall service headquarters.³⁰ The organisational units were No 1 Flying Training School, No 1 Aircraft Depot and No 1 Squadron, which encompassed the three relevant arms of the RAAF at the time of training, maintenance and operations respectively—all of which remain relevant to present-day RAAF organisational structure.³¹ Again, Point Cook served as the crucible from which the organisational structure of the RAAF, in actuality, emerged.

26. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

27. A stores depot at Spotswood and a transport depot at North Fitzroy were established in 1921, employing fifty-six personnel in total. These two depots closed in 1921 and 1922 respectively and moved to Point Cook. A small headquarters element existed at Victoria Barracks, Melbourne from 1921 employing thirteen personnel. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 41.

28. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 43.

29. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

30. Coulthard-Clark, *The Third Brother*, 41.

31. Before the major restructure caused by the Defence Reform Program in 1996, the RAAF was organised in broad terms as Air Force Headquarters overseeing Air Command (previously named Operational Command), Support Command and Training Command. This organisational structure mirrored that of the service in 1921.

The ‘collective training’ fundamental input outlined in the *Air Force Capability Management Manual* refers to training beyond individual training or development, including training at unit and single-service levels, as well as jointly with other services.³² Joint training was infrequent when the RAAF was formed,³³ but unit training was very much a part of daily activity. Notably, the flying carried out by No 1 Flying Training School and No 1 Squadron at Point Cook was in the form of collective, as opposed to individual, training—where small groups of aircraft practiced operational tactics and procedures. The collective training that occurred in the crucible of Point Cook soon after the formation of the RAAF was the first of a long succession of collective training that reaches its current zenith in exercises such as the two-week multi-nation collective training exercise known as Exercise Red Flag.³⁴

The ‘major systems’ fundamental input is defined in the manual as fleets of significant equipment and operating systems.³⁵ For the nascent RAAF, major systems were its aircraft. Point Cook was the only RAAF airfield until the establishment of the RAAF bases at Richmond and Laverton in late 1925, so the major systems input to capability was intrinsically linked to Point Cook from the beginning of the RAAF. The ‘supplies’ fundamental input refers to stocks of equipment and provisions and their distribution.³⁶ Once again, until the establishment of the RAAF base at Laverton to accommodate No 1 Aircraft Depot, Point Cook was the major storage and distribution point for all RAAF stores, ranging from aircraft parts to office furniture and clothing. Expertise in these fundamental inputs took time to acquire and develop, and aside from the physical element of the maintenance and storage of aircraft and equipment, the acquisition of skills occurred at Point Cook, making the place inextricably linked with the intangible aspect of the carriage of highly-specific RAAF skills.

32. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

33. The RAAF did conduct some training and operations with the Royal Australian Navy during the 1920s, in particular for seaplane operations that mapped the Great Barrier Reef.

34. Exercise Red Flag is conducted at Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada, USA primarily between air force units from the USA, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia.

35. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

36. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

The ‘facilities and training areas’ fundamental input of capability is defined in the *Air Force Capability Management Manual* as including ‘buildings, structures, property, plant, equipment, training areas, civil engineering works, base support’ and associated utilities and maintenance.³⁷ While it appears axiomatic that the land and built environment of Point Cook comprise this element of RAAF capability, the space above, and in the vicinity of, Point Cook must also be considered as a training area. The land and the space above the site comprised the first flying training areas for the RAAF; and portions of the site were used for military drill training, field-craft training, aerial bombing practice, and as a rifle range, while some buildings were used as classrooms. In a similar vein, the ‘support’ fundamental input—which includes facets such as transport, housing, health and medical support, communications and research and development³⁸—manifested itself at Point Cook in entities such as the small motor transport fleet, hospital, housing for married personnel and living accommodation for single personnel, as well as the early experimental and developmental work in aircraft building and modification. These types of facilities, training areas and support, while in some aspects not dissimilar to those of the other military services, developed their unique RAAF character, styles of structure and modes of operation in the crucible of Point Cook.

The final fundamental input of ‘command and management’ is defined in the manual as, ‘command and control mechanisms, doctrine, processes and procedures’.³⁹ These facets of RAAF capability pervaded operations at Point Cook in the formative years of the RAAF. While short on formal, written, philosophical doctrine, employment and work practices at Point Cook were carried out in accordance with rigid operational-level policies and procedures and under clear lines of command.⁴⁰ Air operations are inherently dangerous, and the RAAF has a strong culture of safety and risk-aversion. This culture goes beyond actual flying and is highly evident in maintenance procedures and record keeping. Those skills, attitudes and processes developed at Point Cook.

37. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

38. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

39. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

40. No 1 Flying Training School Routine Orders

So, in seeking a catchphrase to accompany a cogent narrative for Point Cook as the RAAF approaches its centenary, defining Point Cook as the ‘crucible of Air Force capability’ provides a discursive framework that is relevant to RAAF and wider Australian Defence Force doctrine and allows for a simple and repeatable statement to guide public discussion—as best the RAAF can—and to frame RAAF public affairs. The catchphrase does not conflict with the previous ones of ‘the birthplace of military aviation’ and ‘the cradle of the RAAF’—instead providing an approach that is in accordance with the current need to view actions in line with doctrine in the Australian Defence Force. While the notion of birthplace remains, the establishment of a link, and subsequent cogent narrative, between Point Cook and present-day capability provides an argument for the retention and interpretation of the site beyond the present cognitive connection and limited physical use.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POINT COOK FOR THE RAAF COMMUNITY

If, as historian Greg Denning claims, institutions require a memory to create precedent and order,⁴¹ and, as argued by various theorists outlined in Chapter Five, memory is shared within an institution through the mechanism of narrative, that narrative must have a starting point. Further, philosopher Edward Casey argues for the existence of a memorial horizon that ‘not only engirdles its subject matter but actively subtends it, giving it its own shape, its cast and characters, its characteristic physiognomy’.⁴² This section of the thesis seeks to explain how the Australian military uses place in remembering, the problem of the use of place in remembering for aviation, and how the RAAF uses its outlined understanding of Point Cook to endow the place with significance.

The social and public memory of all three services of the Australian Defence Force relies on place. Casey argues that place subtends community memory, ‘being the ground and resource, the location and scene of the remembering we do in common’.⁴³ However, the characteristics of the major systems element for each

41. Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language*, 147.

42. Casey, *Public Memory*, 30.

43. Casey, *Public Memory*, 36.

service's Fundamental Inputs to Capability affect how place is used in remembering by each service.⁴⁴ As the different technologies employed, in part, differentiate the services,⁴⁵ their effect on the use of place in remembering differs between the three services.

For the Royal Australian Navy, ships are its most-significant major system.⁴⁶ For a ship, place can be ambivalent. In port, the place occupied by a battleship is well-defined, but that place is usually of little enduring significance for the ship and can alter depending on operational or strategic requirements. Each ship holds a largely self-sustaining community, and home ports are in many ways notional. However, at sea—where ships are usually involved in their most notable actions—place is less well-defined. For example, the first Australian naval victory at sea is marked by the defeat of Seiner Majestät Schiff (SMS) *Emden* by His Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) *Sydney* on 9 November 1914. The actions in the battle took place in the ocean around the Cocos Islands in a series of running manoeuvres typical of naval battles. While the scuttled *Emden* remained as an object on the beach of North Keeling Island for many years, the *Sydney* sailed from the site and conducted other actions during World War I. After decommissioning in 1928, the foremast of HMAS *Sydney* was installed on a saluting station at Bradleys Head in Sydney Harbour, New South Wales, a place with no direct relevance to the ship.⁴⁷

For the Australian Army, tanks are its most-recognisable major system.⁴⁸ Serving, as they do, as the evolution of the horse-based cavalry of the past, tanks participate in battles within range of the base or camp that sustains them. This is in marked contrast to ships, which are largely self-sufficient and can be sustained from many major ports. Australian Army tanks took part in major battles of the Vietnam War, such as the Battle of Coral-Balmoral in 1968 and the Battle of Binh Ba in 1969—each from the base at Nui Dat, Phuoc Tuy Province. Place is more specific and more relevant in the context of tanks, in that the location of their battle engagement is more-readily identifiable and accessible and, therefore, more tangible.

44. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

45. Royal Australian Air Force, *RAAF Leadership Companion*, 14.

46. Royal Australian Navy, *Plan Blue 2006* (Canberra: Royal Australian Navy, 2006), 16.

47. HMAS *Sydney* did, however, pay off in Sydney in 1928 before being broken up.

48. Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: the fundamentals of land power* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2008), 6–8.

For the RAAF, aircraft are the predominant major system.⁴⁹ Unlike ships, but very much like tanks, aircraft need to operate from a base. However, the level of support and sustainment for aircraft from such a base is markedly greater for aircraft than tanks. Aside from the common needs of human sustainment, equipment maintenance, refuelling and ammunition resupply, aircraft require runways and the means to protect those runways. So, unlike highly-mobile navy ships and relatively-mobile army operating bases for tanks, the operation of aircraft requires considerable investment in land and infrastructure. Therefore, place plays a central and fixed role in operating aircraft, and as flying is characterised by the physical act of departing the ground, the initial point of every significant aviation achievement can be identified as a known and accessible place.

As a result, aviation-related cultures are able to identify their own notional birthplace; and the RAAF does so by marking the first flight of an Australian military aircraft at Point Cook on 1 March 1914. The single, unambiguous event that allows the RAAF to claim a birth act and place is not present in the heritage of the Royal Australian Navy and Australian Army. Further, the era during which any potential, notional birth events for the navy and army took place is important as to whether such an event is marked in the present. Australia's pre-federation governmental structure of six separate, self-governing colonies allowed, in the case of naval forces, for the formation of five separate colonial navies. Those naval forces were amalgamated as a result of the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The present-day Royal Australian Navy, therefore, has multiple points of origin and competing events that might be claimed as origin events. Without an agreed birth event, the notion of birthplace is not relevant to the navy's culture. Instead, the navy chooses to mark 'coming of age' events, such as the defeat of SMS *Emden* by HMAS *Sydney*, as the events that help to define its culture.

The case is similar for the Australian Army, which was created through the amalgamation of the colonial forces extant at the time of federation. Like the navy, the army has multiple potentially-competing origin events; and the army does not identify a single birth event or birthplace. Instead, the army's culture places significance on 'coming of age' events, which—to an even greater extent than the

49. Royal Australian Air Force, *Capability Management Manual*, Sect 1, Ch 3, 2.

navy's significant events—are associated with place. The clearest example is that of the Anzac landings at Gallipoli, Turkey in 1915. In a tangential form of commemoration, the three accommodation huts reserved for important visitors, including government ministers and senior Australian defence officials, at the main operating base in the Middle East are named 'Lone Pine', 'Creswell' and 'Point Cook'—celebrating a place of battle, a person of great significance and a birthplace for the Australian Army, Royal Australian Navy and RAAF respectively.⁵⁰

The post-federation origin of the RAAF allows for a narrative with a national context, not complicated by colonial state rivalries, that is relevant in present-day Australia. The single point of origin of the RAAF allows for a linear narrative, which is not possible in the cases of the navy and army, for which more complex narratives are difficult to explain and are less-readily accepted and embraced. Complex narratives seldom assist in the formation and reinforcement of cultural identity, and the RAAF's relatively-simple origin story is easily told and repeated. Further, by contrast with the navy and army, personal connection with some participants in the RAAF's founding events is within the living memory of many older members of the RAAF community. The first military pilot to qualify at Point Cook, Richard Williams, maintained a connection with the RAAF community until his death in 1982; and at least one other World War I pilot, Arthur Morgan, did so until almost a decade later.⁵¹

However, place presents a special problem for remembering in the context of aviation. In order to sustain flight, aircraft require movement. So, there is intrinsic ambivalence about place in remembering for aviation culture. The example of Alcock and Brown's trans-Atlantic flight highlights this problem. The two aviators made the first non-stop trans-Atlantic crossing by air in 1919. In achieving their heroic feat, the most dramatic elements of the flight took place mid-ocean after taking off from Canada and landing in Ireland. Their flight is most remembered for overcoming serious engine problems and icing of the wings at low altitude over the Atlantic Ocean. However, the most tangible element of their achievement—their aircraft—is

50. Their location cannot be stated more specifically due to security restrictions.

51. The author of this thesis hosted Arthur Morgan at the Australian Flying Corps Pilgrimage to Point Cook in 1990.

displayed in England. The problems of remembering their highly-significant flight parallels the problems of remembering great naval battles at sea. Even if a ship from the battle survives and is interpreted, visitors to the mooring where it is interpreted cannot see the same vista that the ship encountered in battle and, most likely, will see a very-distracting vista not appropriate to remembering the events for which the ship is most significant.

In the case of aircraft, points of departure and landing—or crashing—are the only places readily available for interpretation and remembering. As already discussed, aircraft require a high investment in infrastructure for their operating base—in contrast to ships and tanks—and the terminology used to describe such places is telling. The two most-commonly used terms to describe a place permanently set aside for aviation in the military setting are station and base. Point Cook was known by its functional title of Central Flying School from its inception and through World War I and subsequent occupation by the Australian Air Corps, prior to the establishment of the RAAF. It acquired the denotive title of ‘No. 1 RAAF Station’ when the RAAF was formed in 1921, and it kept that title until after World War II. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a station in the military context as, ‘the place where someone or something stands or is placed on military or other duty’ and as, ‘a place...where a specified activity...is based’.⁵² The term is used for land-based aircraft establishments of the Royal Navy, Royal Australian Navy, United States Navy, United States Marine Corps and United States Coast Guard, as well as the Royal Air Force.⁵³ It is not clear why the Royal Air Force and Royal Naval Air Service—whose terminology the RAAF adopted in 1921—used this term for their permanent aviation establishments. However, as aircraft are designed to move when in operation, there may be no coincidence that the chosen term describes a place where aircraft are kept stationary.

From about 1957, Point Cook was redesignated as ‘RAAF Base Point Cook’.⁵⁴ The change of title was common to all major RAAF establishments and appears to be

52. ‘Oxford English Dictionary’.

53. Royal Air Force, ‘Stations’, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/organisation/stations.cfm>.

54. Campbell-Wright, *An Interesting Point*, 179. The first Unit History Sheet for Base Squadron Point Cook (June 1950) records that ‘R.A.A.F. Station Point Cook ceased to function as such and Headquarters Training Group was formed’ and that Base Squadron

part of a general shift by the RAAF to realign elements of its culture with those of the United States Air Force, which was formed after World War II in 1947. The term base is not used for the official titles of establishments of the Australian Army and is not used generally by the Royal Australian Navy, which denotes its major shore facilities as establishments.⁵⁵ The United States Air Force uses the term base to designate its major air force establishments.⁵⁶ Like the term station, base connotes a place where aircraft are kept safe when they are not performing their primary function of flying.

While not exclusively so, battles are highly significant in the narratives that help to define the public memory of each of the services. However as discussed, for navies and aviation services, the location of those battles is not always readily accessible. This has an influence on the role of place in public memory for aviation services—and aviation more generally. So, the types of places used for acts of remembering are different for aviation—with the exceptions of crash sites and the take-off or landing sites of important flights—which accounts for the RAAF's stronger connection with bases than with specific aviation places of battle. The need for remembering is no less vital for aviation communities than for land and sea-related cultures, but the form of remembering in aviation communities is influenced by the places available for remembering. Further, with the detachment between aviation bases and the places of battle or other significance, there is scope for influence on the types of events that are remembered. Place is easier to define and interpret for an aircraft launch, landing or crash than for the actions during the flight itself. In turn, and noting the linear origin narrative of the RAAF, a birth event and place is easy to

Point Cook was formed as a separate unit. However, the name of the base itself does not appear to have changed to RAAF Base Point Cook at that time, reverting to RAAF Point Cook in clerical usage.

55. The two exceptions are Fleet Base East (Sydney, New South Wales) and Fleet Base West (Perth, Western Australia). Royal Australian Navy, 'Establishments', www.navy.gov.au/establishments. The Australian Government has adopted the term 'base' to refer to all major Australian Defence Force establishments in Defence White Papers since as early as 1976. (Department of Defence, *Australian Defence* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1976).)

56. The United States Air Force uses the term 'base' to denote major establishments, with or without runways, and the term 'station' to denote minor establishments, with or without runways, operated by Reserve forces. Previously, the terms were differentiated by the presence of runways (bases) or not (stations). (Scott Murdock, 'When does "Air Force base" have a Capital "B"?', 2003, <http://www.airforcebase.net/usaf/capitalb.html>.)

identify and is readily accessible for interpretation. Point Cook is, as noted by Casey, a clear example of public memory that ‘is there to be *invoked*’.⁵⁷

Two short case studies of current practices serve as a basis for explaining how the RAAF invokes Point Cook as a place in remembering. The first involves present-day members of the RAAF community early in their attachment to Point Cook, and the second involves those with a long-standing attachment.

Instructors at the RAAF Officers’ Training School in East Sale, Victoria take students undergoing initial officer training to Point Cook as a component of their induction course. The two-day site visit is known as Exercise Boxkite, during which the students on each successive course visit the RAAF Museum, take part in a heritage walking tour, inspect the RAAF Chapel and perform military drill on the parade ground. The exercise—designed to ensure that a large cohort of newly-trained RAAF officers does not complete its induction training without forming a connection with Point Cook—provides, as stated in the text of the governing instruction, ‘a firsthand opportunity for students to tangibly experience Air Force history and traditions’.⁵⁸ Students on the single service phase of their training at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra are also provided with the exercise.⁵⁹ Of note, the experience of a site visit to Point Cook is only afforded to commissioned officer entrants, and not to enlisted entrants to the RAAF. The performance of drill on the Point Cook parade ground by Officers’ Training School students aligns with archaeologist Martin Brown’s observation that ‘identity and *esprit de corps* are also inculcated and reinforced by other rituals, including formal parades’.⁶⁰

Brown, in his article ‘Whose Heritage? Archaeology, Heritage and the Military’, discussed a project planned to be carried out at a Royal Air Force station in the United Kingdom, in which trainees were to excavate and reconstruct practice trenches made by trainees of the Royal Flying Corps during World War I. The purpose of the project was to ‘foster team spirit and to introduce the trainees to the

57. Casey, *Public Memory*, 29.

58. Royal Australian Air Force, *Officers’ Training School Standing Instruction (Operations) 02–04—Exercise Boxkite*, (East Sale: Royal Australian Air Force).

59. Tanya Evans, discussion with author, 21 March 2016.

60. Brown, ‘Whose Heritage?’, 131.

origins of their service and its early history'.⁶¹ In a similar manner, the drill practice carried out by Officers' Training School students on the parade ground at Point Cook is intended to engender a sense of connection by the newest members of the RAAF with their forebears, who had marched in that same place since the formation of the RAAF in 1921. The connection with place is deepened by the knowledge that the parade ground is also the site of the first flight by a military aircraft in Australia.

The second case study regards an event known as the Pilgrimage to Point Cook, held annually by the Australian Flying Corps and Royal Australian Air Force Association (Victorian Division) in November.⁶² The event evolved from a former annual event known as the Australian Flying Corps Pilgrimage and is conducted as close as practicable to the anniversary of the armistice of World War I, reflecting its original purpose to commemorate the members of the Australian Flying Corps who had served in that conflict.⁶³ The event has been conducted at Point Cook since 1953.⁶⁴ That first Pilgrimage featured the newly-formed RAAF Central Band, an eighty-voice commemoration choir and a flypast in the form of a Christian cross.⁶⁵ Often presided over by 'the Father of the RAAF', Sir Richard Williams, the event brought back many World War I officers and men, with many attending until well into their nineties.

The term pilgrimage has described the event since its inception. A pilgrimage typically is a journey to a location of importance to a person's culture or beliefs, often marked by a shrine or other physical indicator.⁶⁶ Victor and Edith Turner outline, with reference to French folklorist and ethnographer Arnold van Gennep, three essential phases of pilgrimage that progress from separation, through transformation

61. Brown, 'Whose Heritage?', 132.

62. Air Force Association Victoria, 'Pilgrimage to Point Cook', 2015, <http://raafavic.org.au/pilgrimage-to-point-cook/>.

63. Air Force Association Victoria, 'Pilgrimage to Point Cook'. The present-day Pilgrimage also combines the National Servicemen's Association (Victorian Branch) RAAF Nasho's Memorial Day.

64. 'News of the Day: Pilgrimage', *Age*, 9 November 1953.

65. 'Pilgrimage to Point Cook', *Argus*, 2 November 1953.; 'Pilgrimage to A.F.C. memorial', *Advocate*, 16 November 1953.

66. Ian Reader, 'Introduction', in Ian Reader and Tony Walter, eds., *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1993), 4–5.

to aggregation.⁶⁷ That is, pilgrims are changed by their experience of pilgrimage. In this sense, the Australian Flying Corps Pilgrimage is a misnomer, and it is more akin to a homage or, for some, simply a reunion—despite any ritual elements involved. Their annual frequency and repeat attendees attest to this. There would have been little likelihood of liminality for those attending.

Historians and memory researchers Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton note that ‘the Australian war experience, with almost no combatant sites on national soil and major wars fought overseas, is distinctive’ and that monuments acted as a place of commemoration after both major world wars.⁶⁸ The Pilgrimages to Point Cook—past and present—reflect this situation for the RAAF, with a commemorative service recognising the sacrifice of those who died in wars through military aviation. The service is clearly focused on place and centres on the Australian Flying Corps Memorial beside the parade ground and near the site of the first flight of an Australian military aircraft: the RAAF’s *sanctum sanctorum*. During the 1954 Pilgrimage, artefacts from the Australian Flying Corps used during World War I—referred to as relics in the press—were handed to the care of the RAAF Museum.⁶⁹ This practice reinforces the argument by historian Ken Inglis that war memorials are sacred places in Australian secular society.⁷⁰ However, for most regular attendees of the Pilgrimages, an element of homage appears to prevail over one of pilgrimage.

The placement of the stone memorial near the site of the first military flight is highly significant and reflects the wish of those who erected it to form an everlasting connection between the place and the cultural heritage of the RAAF, in the manner argued by Casey:

In cases such as these, the perduringness of the construction itself acts to guarantee the intimate tie between past and future as if to say: just as the stone from which I’m made stems from time immemorial and will, as sheer material, last into an indefinite future, so the event here signified, though stemming from a quite

67. Victor Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 2.

68. Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, ‘Memory and history in twenty-first century Australia: A survey of the field’, *Memory Studies*, no. 6 (3) (2013): 372.

69. ‘Relics for Museum’, *Age*, 10 November 1954.

70. Darian-Smith and Hamilton, ‘Memory and history’, 373.

particular past, will be remembered forever. Thus the monument does not merely embody or represent an event (or person, or group of persons), but it strives to preserve its memory in times to come—at the limit, times beyond measure.⁷¹

Pilgrimages back to the sites of World War I battles became commonplace around the time of the tenth anniversary of the end of the war, notably by those involved in land battles.⁷² Within Australia, present-day examples parallel to the Pilgrimages to Point Cook exist for the navy and army but relate more frequently to specific battles and do not have an element of birthplace associated with the commemoration. Further, they are frequently at a site detached from the originating events. The Royal Australian Navy Recruits Pilgrimage is a good example, during which new recruits to the navy travel from the Navy Recruit School at Crib Point, Victoria to the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Victoria and lay wreaths in the sanctuary of the Shrine.⁷³ The visit combines a tour of the Shrine. Similarly, a wide range of Australian Defence Force training establishments visit the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and conclude their educational tour by participating in the daily Last Post Ceremony.

In these two examples, the sense of connection by participants with past significant events in the culture of their community is very strong, and the need for ritual to forge that connection more deeply is evident. As Darian-Smith and Hamilton argue, ‘forms of remembering and commemoration have become the central mode through which constituencies understand history’.⁷⁴ However, the form of commemoration and the physical detachment from the sites of actual events do not allow participants in these two examples of pilgrimage—typical of many in Australia—to gain, or reinforce, as deep a connection within their organisation as in the case of Point Cook and its constituencies.

Point Cook stands as a clear example the three-component model of sense of place outlined by psychologist Richard Stedman and others, exhibiting a physical setting, human activities in that setting, and social and psychological processes rooted in the

71. Casey, *Public Memory*, 17–18.

72. ‘1918-1928 Ex-Soldiers’ Pilgrimage to Western Battle Fields’, *Age*, 4 August 1928.

73. Shrine of Remembrance, ‘Ceremonies Archive’,
<http://www.shrine.org.au/Remembrance/Ceremonies/8/2016/Archive/>.

74. Darian-Smith and Hamilton, ‘Memory and history’, 371.

setting⁷⁵—Lewicka’s tripartite model of person, process and place.⁷⁶ The physical setting and the past human activities at Point Cook can be the subject of historical enquiry and simply described; however, the psychological processes that the present-day RAAF community applies to Point Cook contribute to a sense of place attachment.

The RAAF community endows Point Cook with symbolic meanings, which strengthen attachment to the site. The attachment is as much to the meanings as to the site itself. As Stedman explains: ‘We attribute meaning to landscapes and in turn become attached to the meanings’.⁷⁷ The two predominant culturally-shared meanings for Point Cook by the RAAF community are that the site was the location of many significant events in the formation and development of military aviation in Australia—especially the first occurrence of many such events—and that the site is, in part as a result, the birthplace of the RAAF. The place attachment process is reinforced, as identified by Low, by the practices and cultural beliefs that link people to place.⁷⁸ The training visits and pilgrimages are examples of the practices used by the RAAF community to form place attachment.

In the case of visits by officers under initial training, the practice is deliberately contrived to form place attachment to Point Cook. A variety of factors account for this situation, and the factors may also apply more broadly regarding place attachment within the RAAF community. The RAAF is the youngest of the services of the Australian Defence Force, with a comparatively-short past. The RAAF effectively originated from within the Australian Army and is keen to distance itself from that connection, especially noting the now-long-standing difference in attitudes between the two services. To a diminishing extent, the RAAF still bears the unwelcome hierarchical position of the youngest sibling. However, that relative youth has beneficial characteristics, in that connection with those involved in the birth of the RAAF is within living memory, and the single point of origin of the service occurred in post-federation Australia, which is a context better understood by those currently serving in the RAAF. context and is not clouded by an increasingly less-well

75. Stedman, ‘Social Psychology of Place’, 562.

76. Lewicka, ‘Place Attachment’.

77. Stedman, ‘Social Psychology of Place’, 563.

78. Low, ‘Symbolic Ties that Bind’, 2.

understood colonial appreciation. Place attachment to Point Cook, therefore, is not difficult to attempt to achieve and contributes directly to the public memory of the RAAF community.

CONCLUSION

As Casey notes, public memory—while the events remembered may be subject to potential revival and revalorisation⁷⁹—acts to ensure further remembering of the events deemed significant.⁸⁰ The RAAF community, consciously and otherwise, uses this process to help create identity and to ensure continuity of its preferred identity traits and therefore its differences from the other military services and from the wider community. In a similar manner, and citing the example of threats from structural change to The Black Watch Regiment in the British Army in 2008, Brown notes that '[h]eritage may therefore be regarded as an anchor in times of stress, be that on the battlefield or in the face of reorganisation under budgetary constraints'.⁸¹

Casey argues the centrality of place in the formation and continuation of public memory, noting that physical landscapes and their attributed meanings may change.⁸² Point Cook has changed from being the place where almost all members of the RAAF served at one time in their career into a symbolic place for the RAAF community, encompassing layers of meaning—birthplace, inauguration place, launching place, landing place, workplace, place of tragedy and commemoration place. It is, in the conception of Pierre Nora, a *lieu de mémoire*—the embodiment of memory in a place where historical continuity persists.⁸³

So, Point Cook has influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF significantly; the site pervades the public memory of the organisation, infusing itself into its birth narrative and acquiring attributed layers of meaning that act, in part, to form the identity of the present-day RAAF. The meanings attributed to the site at Point Cook

79. Casey, *Public Memory*, 30.

80. Casey, *Public Memory*, 17.

81. Brown, 'Whose Heritage?', 132.

82. Casey, *Public Memory*, 39.

83. Nora, 'Les Lieux de Mémoire', 7.

have become tenets of the narratives that the RAAF uses to describe itself and to understand its role as a military organisation, as well as its contribution to Australian society and national development.

CHAPTER SEVEN – CONCLUSION

What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.

Pericles (c495–429 BC)¹

The national public consultation process to consider ways the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) might celebrate its centenary in March 2021 reported that it had ‘received many public submissions related to the birthplace of Air Force: Point Cook’.² The connection between the site and its associated communities—local, national and aviation-related—has been significant for over a century and remains so. The small group of Australian military aviation pioneers who set up camp in a cluster of trees at the site on the coast of Port Phillip in February 1914 and conducted the first flight by an Australian military aircraft were unlikely to have foreseen the effect of their actions on future generations of Australian aviators and the communities associated with the site.

This thesis has used the military occupation of the site known as RAAF Base Point Cook as a case study to investigate the effect of a site on the cultural heritage of an institution and its associated community. It has provided a comprehensive descriptive history of more than a century of military occupation of the site, followed by an assessment within a cultural heritage framework that has analysed and assessed the significance of the site internationally, nationally, for the local community, and finally for the RAAF and its associated communities. The thesis makes an original contribution through being the first comprehensive history of the site and provides a case study, in a military setting, that shows the effect of place on the cultural heritage of a community.

1. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (London: Dent, 1910), 2.43.3. (Paraphrase of close translation: ‘For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast a record unwritten with no tablet to preserve it, except that of the heart.’)

2. Public suggestions exceeded three-hundred-and-twenty. (Royal Australian Air Force, ‘Air Force 2021: Public Consultation’, <https://www.airforce.gov.au/our-mission/air-force-2021/public-consultation>.)

Existing writing on the history of Point Cook has been cursory and contains some often-repeated inaccuracies that do not align with the evidence that has been examined in this thesis. This thesis has sought to address those inaccuracies, as well as to place Point Cook within the broader historical narrative of the development of military aviation in Australia and, more-particularly, to examine the role of Point Cook in the heritage of the RAAF. The research has been presented in two parts: the first part has examined the history of the military occupation of Point Cook, and the second part has interpreted that research to examine the cultural heritage of the site.

The thesis has posed a series of research questions: What events and practices of significance for Australian aviation, military and civil, occurred at Point Cook during the military occupation of the site? What contribution did the environment at Point Cook make to human existence prior to military occupation? How has the built environment of Point Cook developed during the period of military ownership? How has Point Cook influenced the local community that surrounds it since military occupation of the site? What significance does Point Cook hold for Australia or internationally in the present day? How and to what extent has Point Cook influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF?

FINDINGS

This thesis has found that many of the most-highly-significant occurrences for Australian military and civil aviation—those that have strongly contributed to present-day Australian civil and military aviation capabilities—occurred at Point Cook during the military occupation of the site. The site has not existed in isolation, and examination of its influence on the local community that has surrounded it since initial military occupation has found that a mutual relationship has always existed, in spite of significant changes in the demographic nature and social character of the local community.

This study has found that the RAAF base at Point Cook, as a physical and symbolic place, is significant in that it has played a part in the broader context of national development—in particular, in the roles that military and civil aviation have played in

Australia's development. The site has significantly influenced the cultural heritage of the RAAF, and it pervades the public memory of the organisation, infusing itself into its birth narrative and acquiring attributed layers of meaning that act, in part, to form the identity of the present-day institution. This thesis therefore has concluded that the cultural heritage of an organisation can be influenced by place and therefore that place has a significant effect on culture.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The role assigned to the land that adjoins the base at Point Cook has changed from Indigenous food source, to European exploration and agricultural settlement, occupation under the Closer Settlement Act, and ultimately to a dormitory suburb on the fringe of Melbourne's development. A constant factor has been each community's response to the land's ability to provide for evolving human needs; and the patterns of military and civil aviation use of the site itself display a developmental series of responses to the evolution of aviation training and operations. The built environment that emerged during military occupation remains largely intact; and the base at Point Cook therefore is unique in Australia for its completeness as an aviation site and as the setting for some of the most-important past events for Australian aviation.

The evolving local community that has surrounded the site since military occupation formed its relationship with the site through a shared understanding and mutual respect of the role, civil and military, that each played over time. For the present-day local community, which comprises a large number of people born overseas—mostly from Indian and China—the base at Point Cook can act as a strong element in the place attachment they form with their new home. The base can provide a sense of connection with a past, which is constant and significant in the culture of their adopted locality and country. The site can act as an entry point to understanding the complexity of Australian culture and the links between the past and the present.

The narrative of the land providing for changing human needs over time is an important one that can be told by the local community—one that assists in the

development of place attachment by new residents that ascribes culturally-shared affective meanings to a locality. The narrative can reinforce that the newly-developed suburb of Point Cook was not created on a seemingly-blank slate of unused ground. Rather, the suburb is the latest development in a series of land uses that sustains human activity. Further, instead of the new suburb fully supplanting previous uses, the base—as one element of previous use remains a tangible connection with the past. This connection can help to provide a sense of understanding of the part new residents play in the evolving use of the land, and consequent development of community, at Point Cook.

The site therefore is rich in narrative elements that help to differentiate Point Cook's wider region of Wyndham from other regions in Melbourne, especially those that have similarly experienced rapid growth based on the release of large amounts of rural land for residential development. The potential for place attachment by the local community that surrounds the base—built on the knowledge of past land use and expressed through narrative—is very high and may act as a model for other regional authorities in similar situations, not necessarily with a military past.

At the national level, the base at Point Cook acts as both a physical and symbolic place that contributes to the nation's collective memory. In particular, the site contributes to themes that reflect Australia's endeavours: to overcome the challenges presented by distance; to achieve technical expertise and reduce technical reliance on other nations; and to train and educate itself in essential skills. The example of Point Cook therefore stands ready for inclusion in the national narrative of Australia's development and in asserting its place in the world. It stands alongside many sites, including Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney and the Royal Exhibition Buildings, Melbourne, as tangible and largely-intact reminders of the past that allow for national storytelling. Due to the site remaining under military control and the consequent lack of adaptation to other, non-military-aviation-related purposes, it is significant as an intact industrial archaeology site—one that reflects a continuity of purpose in the nation's efforts to introduce and master new and evolving technologies.

The site is associated with many claims to primacy, longevity or continuity regarding significant national aviation themes and concepts. While the site is regarded as important enough to Australia to have been entered on the Nation Heritage List, its

significance internationally does not extend beyond the realm of military aviation, and it has not been afforded formal international recognition. Nonetheless, the site holds a recognisable and important place amongst international military sites, especially those associated with aviation at the beginning of the twentieth century. It therefore holds significance for communities that are not necessarily in close proximity, but are nonetheless associated through shared cultural understanding.

As an international military heritage site, Point Cook contributes to the narrative of the widespread, and almost-simultaneous, adoption of aviation for military purposes by the Western world early in the twentieth century. While the site only contributes to this narrative in a minor way, it helps to demonstrate the globalisation of important new technologies that was only possible with the advent of rapid global communication at the end of the nineteenth century. As a military site, Point Cook acted as an outpost of British imperial military capability, operating the aircraft of the Imperial Gift immediately after World War I and, later, training personnel under the Empire Air Training Scheme during World War II. As a site strongly associated with the development of civil aviation, Point Cook formed part of a network of sites globally that has led to the modern ability for people to travel and move goods around the world. Point Cook therefore has contributed to globalisation.

The Indigenous heritage of the site is especially important to acknowledge, as the first and longest connection with, and use of, the land. The erection of flagpoles to fly the trio of the Australian National Flag, the Australian Aboriginal Flag and the Torres Strait Islander Flag—with an accompanying explanatory plaque—at the entrance to the base goes some way to providing that acknowledgement. Site recognition of Indigenous heritage is rare in the suburb of Point Cook, and acknowledgement at the base allows for community discussion on the place Indigenous peoples have played at the site and in the broader area. Recognition by the RAAF, as a national institution, provides a high level of credibility and helps to assure new local residents of the importance of such recognition and, in turn, of the seminal part played by Indigenous peoples in the continuity of land use at Point Cook.

Point Cook is not considered a site of high significance for Indigenous culture at the national level; however, the site has latent potential for interpretation as an

Indigenous heritage site. While accepting that Indigenous activities are no longer conducted on the site, and that the land does not remain in Indigenous ownership, it is important to recognise prior ownership by the Yalukit-Willam clan at sites where they lived and in landscapes that would have been recognised by them³—even if only for ease of interpretation. An important example of where this is not possible is the site now occupied by the Melbourne Cricket Ground, which was a significant Indigenous meeting place, and which is not easily possible to envisage as it would have been during Indigenous ownership. By contrast, the south-eastern foreshore of Point Cook—where Indigenous artefacts have been found—remains largely unaffected by current and previous military use and is largely as it was in the time of the Yalukit-Willam clan. The area may be used to interpret and draw a sense of connection between the inhabitants and the land. This, in turn, may engender an appreciation for the continuity of land use as a response to the changing needs of communities while recognising past users.

Further to the themes of national development and Indigenous heritage, Point Cook contributes to the national narrative as a place of special significance to the aviation community within Australian society, as the birthplace of military aviation in Australia and as a significant site in the development of civil aviation in the country. The broader military community recognises Point Cook as a site of significance to its cultural heritage that reflects the rise of the third arm of the Australian Defence Force. Place attachment plays a role in the cultural heritage of Australia's navy and army, and Point Cook takes its place alongside Cockatoo and Garden Islands in Sydney for the navy, and the two Victoria Barracks in Sydney and Melbourne for the army, as significant sites associated with their foundation and development.

Further, this thesis documented Point Cook's home front experience during World Wars I and II, which allows insights into the interplay between Australian non-deployed military wartime activity and civilian wartime experience. This contrasts with the greater body of research and literature that exists for the overseas separation

3. The people of the Yalukit-Willam clan ranged over the area containing the base, from the Werribee River to St Kilda, prior to European occupation, and urban encroachment has obliterated almost all surface evidence of their presence.

of Australians during wartime. As such, it can add depth to the work of scholars who have written about this aspect of the collective national experience.

The recognition of Point Cook as a significant site for Australian civil aviation is not as widespread as it should be, including within the civil aviation community. Many sites in Australia hold significance for the civil aviation community, and while Point Cook is but one, its strong association with military aviation has an overshadowing effect that means it is not as readily associated with civil aviation as it should be. For example, the training of civilian airline pilots in the 1920s and again in the late 1940s at the base contributed significantly to the skills required to develop Australian civil aviation to a high standard but is little known or celebrated in the general community.

Point Cook represents an example of community-building through place attachment that is not confined to a physical community—rather, it is an example of communities comprising members who are not in close proximity to the site, but are brought together through common attachment to place. The respect for, and acknowledgement of, Point Cook as a significant place in Australian aviation is shared by a wide range of aviation communities across the country, and it even extends to the interaction within emerging virtual communities, such as the Facebook groups entitled ‘RAAF Point Cook - history’, ‘Old RAAF Photos’ and ‘ADF Serials Military Aircraft Group’.

This thesis has found that Point Cook’s greatest influence has been on the RAAF, and many implications exist for that institution and its associated communities. The meanings attributed to the site have become tenets of the narratives that the RAAF uses to describe itself and to understand its role as a military organisation, as well as its contribution to Australian society and national development. The historical evidence and cultural interpretation in this thesis allow the RAAF to have a deeper understanding of how Point Cook affects its culture, and the RAAF can therefore choose to recognise and celebrate its achievements at the site in a more-nuanced and meaningful manner.

By gaining an understanding that place can affect culture, the RAAF will be able to appreciate that other physical entities may have a similar effect. For example, the

community may examine what effect certain aircraft have on its culture. Of the greater than one-hundred aircraft types operated by the RAAF and the Australian Flying Corps, only a small number of those that no longer operate remain in the collective memory of the RAAF. Such aircraft include the Spitfire fighter, Lancaster bomber, Tiger Moth trainer,⁴ F-111 bomber and Iroquois helicopter. Examination of the effect of these aircraft types on collective memory—and the lack of effect by others—may help to understand the culture of the RAAF and to appreciate some of the organisation’s behaviours.

Interest in a deeper understanding of, and sense of connection with, Point Cook exists in current RAAF members and public servants working at the site and the nearby RAAF Base Laverton. Bi-annual guided walking tours for staff, capped at twenty participants, are oversubscribed. Beyond a narrative connection with the site, local staff feel a need for a direct connection, one that allows them literally to walk in the footsteps of their forebears, to enter the buildings they lived and worked in and to stand on the launch site of the first military flight. Tour participants imbue themselves with a sense of place that links them directly to the foundation of their culture. They are akin to pilgrims visiting their *sanctum sanctorum*.

Further, there is considerable interest in tours of the site by the local community. Two guided tours of the base, organised by a local events organiser in 2017 and subsequently cancelled due to inability to gain permission from the Department of Defence, were over-subscribed beyond their anticipated capacity of fifty participants each. The RAAF therefore would benefit from expanding and developing its own bi-annual tours to encompass the local community and help to maintain the community’s connection with the site and the RAAF.

This study sought to dispel myths regarding the foundation of the precursor the RAAF, the Australian Flying Corps, especially those associated with Point Cook. The

4. The RAAF’s faithful initial trainer, the Tiger Moth, was gradually replaced by the Australian-made Winjeel trainer, and the first three of sixty-two Winjeels were handed over by the general manager of the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation, Sir Lawrence Wackett, at Point Cook on 16 September 1955. The last Tiger Moth left Point Cook in early 1957 to join others at Tocumwal, NSW for disposal to the public. (‘Now It’s the Winjeel for Our Young Airmen’, *Argus*, 17 September 1955.; ‘R.A.A.F. Farewells “Old Timer”’, *Canberra Times*, 7 February 1957.)

site is not the world's oldest continuously-operating military airfield, the land was not purchased directly from the well-known Chirnside family, and Henry Petre did not survey the south-east of Australia on his motorcycle to select the site. These myths have persisted primarily due to lack of hitherto-demonstrated evidence to the contrary and the repeating of early research that drew conclusions not supported by evidence, which was available at the time. The claim of longevity as a military airfield is especially persistent, as it appeals to a military propensity for parochial differentiation within a largely-unified culture. Nonetheless, Point Cook's significance as a central part in the birth narrative of the RAAF is not diminished by correcting the myths.

Much of the detail of Point Cook's past is not known to the majority of members of the RAAF community, including many events significant to Australia's military aviation heritage. Nonetheless, members of the RAAF community consider the site to be the organisation's most-significant place. However, the reality of Point Cook does not compare with the way that it is remembered. Its symbolic significance outweighs the significance of the sum of events that occurred at the site, and it stands for the RAAF community, devoid from time, as a symbolic place.

Point Cook, with its layers of significance and meaning, ranging from a site that contributed to globalisation to a place of almost-spiritual significance for the RAAF community, demonstrates that place can transcend pure-historical connection with communities to exert significant effect on culture. In the conceptualisation of French historian Pierre Nora, Point Cook is a *lieu de mémoire*—the embodiment of memory in a place where historical continuity persists.

This thesis contributes to the literature firstly by redressing some of the deficiencies identified in the literature review. It provided a comprehensive history of the military involvement at Point Cook that addresses the myths about the site and reviews previous historical interpretations in light of new evidence. In the process, it coalesced accounts of the site in the biographic literature. Secondly, the thesis provided the inaugural assessment of RAAF cultural heritage, interpreted through the lens of Point Cook.

FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

Possibilities for further research exist beyond the scope and context of Australia, the RAAF and Point Cook. The methodology used in this thesis can be applied, for example, to examine the effect of place on the cultures of the Royal Australian Navy and the Australian Army. In both cases, places of significant battles on foreign land and at sea, as well as locations of shipwrecks in the case of the Navy, may have exerted greater effect on the culture of those organisations than sites in Australia; and, as most of those sites are remote to members of those communities, examination may determine the extent to which place affects culture without physical connection.

Claims exist for sites in the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States of America and Russia as birthplaces for military aviation in those countries. An international comparative study of the effect of place on the cultural heritage of other air forces may add to deeper understanding of the problem. Such a study may examine whether the effect found in this thesis is also found in aviation cultures within other national cultural contexts.

Further research may consolidate the evidence and make a case for greater recognition of Point Cook in the development of civil aviation in Australia. This thesis described the significant events for Australian civil aviation at Point Cook; however, its scope did not allow interpretation of the historical evidence to make such a case.

A broad assessment of RAAF cultural heritage that extends beyond the effect exercised by Point Cook may be warranted. This area has not been researched to any extent. For example, the RAAF's predecessor, the Australian Flying Corps, served in the Middle East and Levant during World War I, and the RAAF returned to serve there in 1993 during the First Gulf War and again in 2003 during the Second Gulf War and operations known as the International Coalition Against Terror. The Middle East is significant to the generation that has served in the RAAF during the past two decades, and it may have an enduring effect on the culture of the organisation. Similar may be observed for the RAAF's presence in Butterworth, Malaysia, where

the RAAF has had an airbase for over five decades and thousands of its past members have served.

The investigation by this thesis of Point Cook—through history and cultural heritage perspectives—has shown that a sense of connection with a place can form a strong part of community identity and that place therefore can have a significant effect on the cultural heritage of a community. The original contribution of this thesis is that it provides the first comprehensive history of Point Cook and a cultural heritage case study in a military setting that shows the effect of place on the cultural heritage of a community.

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APPENDIX A – COMMONWEALTH HERITAGE LISTING



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy

Point Cook Air Base, Aviation Rd, Point Cook, VIC, Australia

Photographs	
List	Commonwealth Heritage List
Class	Historic
Legal Status	Listed place (26/06/2004)
Place ID	105275
Place File No	2/12/053/0006
Summary Statement of Significance	
<p>Point Cook Air Base, including the airfield, runways, jetty, hangars, parade ground, headquarters building, Aeronautics School and training buildings, staff housing and landscaping is important for its association with the establishment of Australia's</p>	

military aviation forces in 1913 by the Commonwealth Government. As a Federation related initiative, Point Cook in Victoria, the temporary home of the new Commonwealth Government, was chosen for the potential to operate both land and water based aircraft.

The Central Flying School and the Australian Flying Corps were based at Point Cook, which in 1921 became the focus of the newly formed RAAF under the influence of Sir Richard Williams. As an expression of the Commonwealth's defence policy Point Cook developed under the influence of Director-General for Public Works P T Owen and Commonwealth Architect J S Murdoch. The planning of the base reflects the early perception of sea planes as integral to the military use of aviation. Subsequent planning developments, seen in the establishment of an Aeronautics School under RAAF control from 1922, expressed the prevailing philosophies based on British ideas. These ideas included the clear separation of functions and expression of the social structure of the airforce. The influence of Murdoch is seen in the continuing use of the Commonwealth Vernacular and Classical Revival styles for single and double storey weatherboard, timber buildings. In common with other pre and early Second World War bases the increased funding made available for defence by the Commonwealth allowed some buildings and service structures to be erected in brick. Style Moderne features, which illustrate this phase of development, are included in the designs for the Officers Mess (Building No. 33).

Point Cook is important for its association with the training of senior airforce officers until the 1960s, when the RAAF Staff College was transferred to Canberra. The importance of the base historically is seen in its use as the starting point for the first transcontinental flight to Darwin in 1920, the first round Australia flight in 1924 and the first non-stop flight to Perth in 1928.

(Criterion A.4)

Point Cook Air Base is important in demonstrating the development of a distinctive way of life on Australian air force bases. The base includes examples of early and seminal buildings and structures, which retain their relationship to each other and to the base as a whole. Buildings and structures of particular importance, both individually and as groups, illustrate the development of functional buildings and

residential accommodation by the Commonwealth in the following periods

1914-1918:

Building 95 the Waterplane hangar of 1915, one of the two oldest defence aviation buildings in Australia; Building 210, the aeroplane hangar of 1914, the earliest example of a defence hangar; Building 104, the battleplane hangar of 1917, one of two surviving World War One hangars; Building 108, the hydroplane and seaplane jetty dating from 1916; Building 488, the single officers quarters erected in 1914; Buildings M004-006, M010 and M026, married officers quarters, which with building 488, are the earliest surviving buildings at the base; Building M011, married quarters, erected in 1915-1916; Building 18, the former Single Officer's Mess dating from 1918; and Building 23, the Single Officers Quarters of 1918 which established the pattern for later development.

Inter War 1919-1939:

Buildings 24 and 27-29, single officers quarters of 1929-1939; Buildings 41, 42 and 46, airmen's quarters, 1928-1939; Building 33, the new Officer's Mess of 1937; Building M027-028, CO's Married Quarters of 1937-38; Building 87, the Base Squadron Headquarters of 1929; the first purpose built headquarters building for the RAAF; and Buildings 91 and 92, the Aeronautics Schools of 1922 and 1939. The Air Navigation School and Wireless School (Buildings 93 and 96) erected in 1939 illustrate the distinctive and primary training role of the Base.

Building 101, the seaplane hangar erected in 1927 is important in illustrating the continuing, and distinctive, role of seaplanes at the base in conjunction with Building 100, the seaplane squadron headquarters erected in 1938.

(Criterion B.2)

The Base is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of air force bases developed in Australia under British influence between 1914 and 1939. These characteristics include the clear separation of functions and expression of the social structure of the airforce. Individual buildings and structures important in illustrating the principal characteristics of the base are outlined under Criterion B.2. Building 88, the Parade Ground of 1930; Building 38, and Building 94, the War Memorial of 1938

are important in illustrating the development and formalisation of planning concepts utilised in other later bases. Supporting buildings which contribute to the characteristics of the base include Nos 21-22, 30, 34, 38, 70, 72, 90, 142, M001-002, M003, 73, 108, 110, 155, 156, 158, 163, 176, 188, 190, 203, 211-214, 225, 228, 241-243, 259, 261, 277, 327, 427, 453, 455, 457-459, 481, 482 and 485.

One and two storey weatherboard housing at the base is important in demonstrating the influence of the Commonwealth Architects Office under John Smith Murdoch and the Vernacular style employed by the Commonwealth between 1914 and 1939. Vernacular weatherboard structures are generally modest, single or double storey, with low-pitched corrugated iron or tile roofs, wide open eaves with exposed rafters, multi-paned double sash windows and a verandah or verandahs under the main roof profile.

The principal characteristics of the Moderne Style are evident in the design of the brick Officers Mess, Building 33, erected in 1937.

(Criterion D.2)

Point Cook Air Base is important for its close association with Sir Richard Williams, one of the first cadets at the base, who was responsible in 1922 for the formation of the RAAF.

(Criterion H.1)

The Base is important as a place, which is highly valued by members, and former members, of the RAAF for its symbolic, cultural and social associations.

(Criterion G.1)

Principal Australian Historic Themes: 7.7 Defending Australia, 8.8 Remembering the fallen,

It is possible that Indigenous cultural values of national estate significance may exist in this place. As yet, the Australian Heritage Commission has not identified, documented or assessed these values.

Official Values

Criterion A Processes

Point Cook Air Base, including the airfield, runways, jetty, hangars, parade ground, headquarters building, Aeronautics School and training buildings, staff housing and landscaping is important for its association with the establishment of Australia's military aviation forces in 1913 by the Commonwealth Government. As a Federation related initiative, Point Cook in Victoria, the temporary home of the new Commonwealth Government, was chosen for the potential to operate both land and water based aircraft.

The Central Flying School and the Australian Flying Corps were based at Point Cook, which in 1921 became the focus of the newly formed RAAF under the influence of Sir Richard Williams. As an expression of the Commonwealth's defence policy Point Cook developed under the influence of Director-General for Public Works P T Owen and Commonwealth Architect J S Murdoch. The planning of the base reflects the early perception of sea planes as integral to the military use of aviation. Subsequent planning developments, seen in the establishment of an Aeronautics School under RAAF control from 1922, expressed the prevailing philosophies based on British ideas. These ideas included the clear separation of functions and expression of the social structure of the airforce. The influence of Murdoch is seen in the continuing use of the Commonwealth Vernacular and Classical Revival styles for single and double storey weatherboard, timber buildings. In common with other pre and early Second World War bases the increased funding made available for defence by the Commonwealth allowed some buildings and service structures to be erected in brick. Style Moderne features, which illustrate this phase of development, are included in the designs for the Officers Mess (Building No. 33).

Point Cook is important for its association with the training of senior airforce officers until the 1960s, when the RAAF Staff College was transferred to Canberra. The importance of the base historically is seen in its use as the starting point for the first transcontinental flight to Darwin in 1920, the first round Australia flight in 1924 and the first non-stop flight to Perth in 1928.

Attributes

The whole of Point Cook Air Base, including the airfield, runways, jetty, hangars, parade ground, headquarters building, Aeronautics School and training buildings, staff housing and landscaping plus Officers Mess, Building 33.

Criterion B Rarity

Point Cook Air Base is important in demonstrating the development of a distinctive way of life on Australian air force bases. The base includes examples of early and seminal buildings and structures, which retain their relationship to each other and to the base as a whole. Buildings and structures of particular importance, both individually and as groups, illustrate the development of functional buildings and residential accommodation by the Commonwealth in the following periods.

1914-1918:

Building 95 the Waterplane hangar of 1915, one of the two oldest defence aviation buildings in Australia; Building 210, the aeroplane hangar of 1914, the earliest example of a defence hangar; Building 104, the battleplane hangar of 1917, one of two surviving World War One hangars; Building 108, the hydroplane and seaplane jetty dating from 1916; Building 488, the single officers quarters erected in 1914; Buildings M004-006, M010 and M026, married officers quarters, which with building 488, are the earliest surviving buildings at the base; Building M011, married quarters, erected in 1915-1916; Building 18, the former Single Officer's Mess dating from 1918; and Building 23, the Single Officers Quarters of 1918 which established the pattern for later development.

Inter War 1919-1939:

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Air Navigation School and Wireless School (Buildings 93 and 96) erected in 1939 illustrate the distinctive and primary training role of the Base.

Building 101, the seaplane hangar erected in 1927 is important in illustrating the continuing, and distinctive, role of seaplanes at the base in conjunction with Building 100, the seaplane squadron headquarters erected in 1938.

Attributes

The particular buildings identified above.

Criterion D Characteristic values

The Base is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of air force bases developed in Australia under British influence between 1914 and 1939. These characteristics include the clear separation of functions and expression of the social structure of the airforce. Individual buildings and structures important in illustrating the principal characteristics of the base are outlined under Criterion B.2. Building 88, the Parade Ground of 1930; Building 38, and Building 94, the War Memorial of 1938 are important in illustrating the development and formalisation of planning concepts utilised in other later bases. Supporting buildings which contribute to the characteristics of the base include Nos 21-22, 30, 34, 38, 70, 72, 90, 142, M001-002, M003, 73, 108, 110, 155, 156, 158, 163, 176, 188, 190, 203, 211-214, 225, 228, 241-243, 259, 261, 277, 327, 427, 453, 455, 457-459, 481, 482 and 485.

One and two storey weatherboard housing at the base is important in demonstrating the influence of the Commonwealth Architects Office under John Smith Murdoch and the Vernacular style employed by the Commonwealth between 1914 and 1939. Vernacular weatherboard structures are generally modest, single or double storey, with low-pitched corrugated iron or tile roofs, wide open eaves with exposed rafters, multi-paned double sash windows and a verandah or verandahs under the main roof profile.

The principal characteristics of the Moderne Style are evident in the design of the brick Officers Mess, Building 33, erected in 1937.

Attributes

The buildings identified under criterion B that illustrate major phases of development, plus the additional buildings identified above, the one and two storey weatherboard buildings, and the new Officers Mess, Building 33.

Criterion G Social value

The Base is important as a place, which is highly valued by members, and former members, of the RAAF for its symbolic, cultural and social associations.

Attributes

Not clarified.

Criterion H Significant people

Point Cook Air Base is important for its close association with Sir Richard Williams, one of the first cadets at the base, who was responsible in 1922 for the formation of the RAAF.

Attributes

Not clarified.

Description

History:

Defence in general had been high on the agenda for those pursuing Federation before 1901. Following the development of the first aircraft after the turn of the century, military authorities began to consider the formation of air forces in addition to the development of munitions industries and naval facilities. Britain created its Royal Flying Corps in 1912, by which time Australia too was planning a military flying school. In 1911 the Government gazette sought 'two mechanists and aviators' to form a military aviation corps in Australia. Sites were considered at Langawarrin, Cribb Point, Altone and Point Cook in Victoria and at Fairbairn, Narrabundah, Jerrabomberra and Tuggeranong in the ACT. The Australian Government announced its decision to form the Central Flying School and Australian Flying Corps in March 1913. In December that year the site at Point Cook was purchased taking into account the need to accommodate seaplanes in the training program. The

base opened in 1914 on the eve of World War One.

Due to an early emphasis on seaplanes, the early development was in the Southern Tarmac area on the seashore, with accommodation and mess facilities inland. Plans for the Aeroplane Workshop (Building No 95) and Hangar (Building No 210) were complete by August 1913. A site plan of 1913 indicates that the intention was to build six seaplane sheds on the foreshore as well as an office/surgery (Building No 72W), four land plane hangars and an oil store. However one year later the base was still not properly established. The intention to use the base for seaplanes was not achieved until much later. This ten-hangar scheme was not proceeded with during World War 1, 1914-1918, with only two seaplane hangars completed in addition to the office/surgery. Concurrently at the landward end of the site work proceeded on accommodation and service buildings. By June 1915 the following buildings had been completed: the Single Officers Quarters (Building No488), the Single Mechanics Quarters (Building No 35 demolished) and three Married NCOs Quarters (Building Nos M004-M006). Additional accommodation included the Warrant Officers Quarters (Building No M010) and by July 1916 further Married Officers Quarters and a garage. By July 1916 the Point Cook base resembled a small country town. Other major buildings erected in the period 1914-1918 included the New Battleplane Hangar (Building No 104) in 1917 and the Jetty (Building No 108).

Many airmen who served in World War One, 1914-1918, were trained at Point Cook which was the focal point of Air Force activities given the location of Army Headquarters in Melbourne.

A master plan for development of the Base had been conceived as early as 1917 under the Director-General of Public Works, P T Owen, for the Minister for Defence In 1918 Cabinet authorised the expenditure of three million pounds. In 1921, due mainly to the efforts of Sir Richard Williams, a former trainee of the base, World War One veteran and, by 1922, Chief of Air Staff, the RAAF came into being, stimulating the establishment of an Aeronautics School at Point Cook. Richard Williams has a significant place in Point Cook's and the RAAF's history; the current name for the Point Cook and Laverton bases, RAAF Williams, reflects this

association. Between 1918 and 1930 an ambitious master plan was formulated. New water and electricity supply lines were established by 1919, including the Electrical Sub Station (Building No 81) and the Pump House (Building No 82). Contracts for the Airman's Mess (Building No 18) and the first two-storey accommodation block (Building No 23) were let by April 1918. Six new NCO's cottages (M104, M070-M074) were built on what is now Dalzeil Road. The Workshop (Building No 95) and two new wooden hangars were erected east of the Battleplane Hangar. The Aeronautics School was the first of its kind in Australia. Other buildings erected after 1922 include eight NCO's cottages (Buildings M075-M082), the children's school (Building No 74), Sergeants Mess, recreation hall and Airman's Gymnasium (Building No 38). By 1925 the first substantial phase of building had finished. Construction was completed by the use of extensive planting of trees in particular Cupressus macrocarpa during the 1920s, reflecting the successful use of the species in Canberra. A Commanding Officers residence was built in 1927-1929 as were additional accommodation blocks, the Administration building (Building No87) and the flagpole and parade ground (Building No88), in addition to new works on the jetty. The office of Commonwealth Architect, John Smith Murdoch, played a major role in the design of Point Cook buildings from the base's inception. A squadron was also established at nearby Laverton to the north, which had begun as a stores area in 1921. Financial cutbacks in Defence however, slowed building during the Depression years of the early 1930s.

From 1934 anticipation of another war led to an increase in development after the slow years of the Depression. The original master plan at Point Cook was now nearing completion. RAAF growth was seen elsewhere too, for in addition to Point Cook, Laverton and Richmond, by the eve of World War Two there were RAAF bases at Pearce, Darwin and Brisbane. Planning and design of these bases, and further work at Point Cook, was influenced by British expertise and contemporary Australian experience. In the Parliamentary session of 1937-1938 additional funding was to be provided for Defence. Over 30% was to be spent on the airforce. Major capital works were envisaged with the construction of many architecturally impressive buildings. In common with other pre, and early wartime, bases many structures were erected in brick. This expansion can be seen in the new buildings

erected including a New Aeronautics School (Building No 93), the Wireless School (Building No 96) and an Armament School now the Museum. In 1937 new entrance gates were added and a new Officer's Mess (Building No 33). During the war years eight new Service Flying Training Schools were established at Point Cook. These were housed in portable iron huts north of Dalzell Road, with new satellite airfields established to cater for the increased numbers. Fourteen Bellman Hangars were also erected at Point Cook (Buildings 178-187 and 211-214 extant). The development of surrounding areas as training centres reduced the impact of wartime construction on the base. During the war women worked in the newly formed WRAAF, but were segregated from the men on the base.

During the war over 10,000 airmen died, indicating the vital role played by the RAAF in the conflict and the role of Point Cook as a training base. The training role was also reflected in the use of the airfield as a golf course during the 1930s.

After the war Point Cook remained the RAAF's most important training facility but its pre-eminence declined over time. This is reflected in the large numbers of brick veneer and prefabricated housing units at the base. The Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) took over some training responsibilities during the 1960s, including the RAAF Staff College functions initially established at Point Cook. There has been some redevelopment of the Base however, including demolition of early buildings and the construction of new ones. In 1992 the Base closed as a pilot training area.

Physical Description:

Setting

Point Cook Air Base is a level site running from Port Phillip Bay in the south to Point Cook Road in the north. There are two major built up areas located in the northern and southern sections of the site. In the north various functional zones and precincts include accommodation, community and administrative facilities and some hangars. In the south, closer to the seashore, are the major hangar and workshop areas. The two major built up areas are separated by the airfield, and a golf course. In the two built up areas the base displays a functional layout which stems from the

need to clearly separate functions. The early focus on seaplanes closely associated the hangars and maintenance areas with the beach and required the construction of a jetty 1915-1916. Officers quarters and single men's barracks and married staff quarters were located to the north at the approaches to the base at this time. Within this housing, and later administrative, area the hierarchical system of housing reflects the ranks of the personnel at the base. The axial location of the parade ground separates the housing from the operational areas of the base to the south. The parade ground of 1924-1930 acts as a functional element interfacing with the airfield to the south, which was formalised into the present runway system 1930-1939.

The functional zones of the base include several phases of building which illustrate the planning and development of the base. These functional zones contribute to an understanding of the operation and planning of the base and contribute to the landscape and streetscape values of the base. Areas of particular importance include the original accommodation area, the Officers Compound, Community facilities and Accommodation, the Parade Ground area and the main hangar areas to the south, the Southern Tarmac area. Cole and Dalzell Streets are the focus of early housing which was developed under the influence of J S Murdoch using an architectural idiom similar to that employed in other early Commonwealth housing such as that at the Lithgow Small Arms Factory and in 1913 in the new Federal Capital Territory. Houses of particular importance include 1-8 Cole Street and 1(a, b)-5 and 8 Dalzell Street erected between 1914 and 1939 which impart a domestic scale and character to the streetscape. The base features a range of plantings, put in predominantly to act as windbreaks, which contribute to the maturity of the landscape. The dominant species is *Cupressus macrocarpa*, first planted in the 1920s.

Pre World War One and World War One 1914-1918:

- Building 95, the waterplane hangar, dates originally from 1915 (later altered) and is one of the two oldest aviation buildings in Australia. The oldest section is steel framed with iron cladding and there are weatherboard extensions built a few years later. The early roof is gabled, the later is sawtooth.

- Building 210, the aeroplane hangar, dates from 1914 and is the oldest RAAF

aircraft hangar and one of the oldest structures at the Base. It has been relocated. It is twin gabled, clad with corrugated iron.

- Building 488, single officers' quarters, was built in 1914 and extended shortly after.

One of Point Cook's earliest buildings, the quarters structure is single storey, weatherboard, with an iron roof.

- Building 104, battleplane hangar, was erected in 1917 and is one of two surviving World War One hangars in Australia. It has a steel and timber frame, is gabled and is clad with corrugated iron.

- Building 108 is the hydroplane and seaplane jetty. Dating from 1916 and extended in 1927 and 1937, the jetty relates to the significant early use of seaplanes. It has timber piles, is now 415m in length and has a slipway and a landing.

- Early Commonwealth Vernacular weatherboard buildings are well represented in the base and some are among the earliest examples of the style. They are generally modest, single or double storey, with low-pitched iron or tile roofs, with wide eaves and exposed rafters, multi-paned double hung sash windows and a verandah under the roof slope. (Examples are also seen at other military establishments, eg HMAS Creswell). Buildings M004-006, M 010 and M026, married officers quarters, date from 1914-15 and along with building 488 are the earliest surviving buildings at the base. They are again weatherboard with hipped roofs clad with corrugated iron. The houses form part of an important streetscape group on Cole and Dalzeil Streets

Building M011, married quarters, was erected in 1915-16. An early residential building, it is weatherboard, single storey and a broad hipped roof clad in iron. Like a number of others it has a verandah under the same roof slope. The incorporation of emphasis into the verandah posts is typical of the refined nature of their detailing.

Building 18, the former single officers' mess, dating from 1918 and later, was the focal point of the officers' precinct. It is a distinctive single storey weatherboard building with a gabled iron roof and was the first separate mess building erected for Air Force Officers in Australia.

Other early timber structures include the Single Officers Laundry (Building No.21) and the Servants Quarters (Building No. 22).

Single Officers Quarters, Buildings 23 is a two storey structure erected in 1918, which set the pattern for new quarters erected in the Inter War years, and which now form a strong grouping. External staircases lead to first floor bedrooms. Buildings

24, 27, 28 and 29 were erected between 1928 and 1935 in the Inter War period.

Inter War:

Inter War buildings were erected in two phases, 1919-1924 and 1928-1939, reflecting post First World War consolidation and development in the build up to the Second World War.

- Buildings 24, 27, 28 and 29, single officers' quarters, date from 1928, 1935 and 1939 (altered 1952). They are weatherboard, double storey and each is planned around a central common grassed area imparting a sense of community.

- Buildings 41, 42 and 46, airmen's quarters, dating from 1928-1939, are the survivors of the airmen's precinct. They are weatherboard, with a hipped iron roof and are sited around a central common green similar to earlier accommodation.

- Building 86, the flagpole and saluting base, built about 1920, was later relocated and later still was altered unsympathetically. It is a ceremonial focus for the base.

- The Modern Style is seen in the 1930s brick buildings at Point Cook. These are symmetrical buildings, restrained in their design. Building 33, the new Officers' Mess, was erected in 1937 (extended 1959). It represents the improved facilities for the RAAF at the time and has some Art Deco and Neo-Classical details. It is symmetrical, red brick, with a tiled, hipped roof. The entrance is emphasised.

- Buildings M027-028, new commanding officer's residence/married quarters, date from 1937-38. The designs combine the Early Vernacular and Georgian Revival styles and reflect differences between ranks. It is weatherboard and the only two storey weatherboard individual house built at the base. The hipped roof is tiled.

- Sentry boxes and stone wing walls, dating from 1937, were the first permanent entrance gates to the base. The sentry boxes are brick and adjoin the stone walls.

- Building 87, Base Squadron Headquarters, was built in 1929 and was the first purpose built headquarters building constructed for the RAAF. It has an axial siting to the parade ground and flagpole and is an impressive double storey weatherboard building with a transverse gabled main roof (and other hipped sections) clad with corrugated asbestos cement.

Building 88, the Parade Ground, was formed in 1930 and is central to the Base's ceremonial life. It is surfaced in coarse sand and defined by a white post and chain fence.

- Building 91, the aeronautics school, was erected in 1922 (altered 1927) and was an early base building and directly connected with the Base's training role. It plays an important streetscape role and is single storey weatherboard, with a main iron gabled roof flanked by hipped projections.

Building 92, the new school of aeronautics, was constructed in 1936. Again weatherboard, it is single storey with an iron hipped roof.

- Building 93, air navigation school, dates from 1939. Historically significant for its date and training role, the building is weatherboard and has a hipped iron roof.

- Building 94, the War Memorial, was erected in 1938 and commemorated Australian airmen who died in World War One. It is built of carved stone.

- Building 96 is the wireless school, dating from 1939. Important in the South Tarmac streetscape, the building is single storey, weatherboard and has an iron clad hipped roof.

- Building 100, the seaplane squadron headquarters, was erected in 1938 and is an integral part of the seaplane buildings in the South Tarmac area. It is single storey weatherboard with a hipped iron roof.

- Building 101, a seaplane hangar, was erected in 1927 and extended in 1940 and it too relates to the historical role of seaplanes at early Point Cook. It is twin gabled and is clad with corrugated iron. This building is the only Inter War hangar remaining at the base.

World War Two:

- Buildings 211-214, Bellman hangars, erected in 1940, relate to development after the beginning of World War Two. They are steel framed, clad with iron, have low gable roofs and are characteristic of the rapid response to provide additional hangar and storage space using industrial prefabrication.

Post World War two:

Post-World War Two buildings are mainly constructed in brick. There are also sheds of different materials, including fibre-cement, which complete the suite of structures.

Supporting buildings:

Buildings which contribute to the cultural significance of Point Cook include Nos

<p>21-22, 30, 34, 38, 70, 72, 90, 142, M001-002, M003, 73, 108, 110, 155, 156, 158, 163, 176, 188, 190, 203, 225, 228, 241-243, 259, 261, 277, 327, 427, 453, 455, 457, 458, 459, 481, 482 and 485.</p> <p>There is also an Aboriginal stone artefact scatter of located in an exposed dune on the eastern edge of the base. Previous archaeological survey of the area indicates that further Aboriginal archaeological sites are likely to be present in the area.</p>
<p>History Not Available</p>
<p>Condition and Integrity</p>
<p>The condition and integrity of the various elements at Point Cook vary. Some buildings are in good condition and are highly intact. Others have been altered to various degrees and some have been relocated. Some earlier buildings were demolished during redevelopment in post-World War Two decades. (1996)</p>
<p>Location</p>
<p>About 250ha, at Point Cook, being an area enclosed by a line commencing at the north east corner of the airfield boundary, then south easterly via the eastern airfield boundary to a point where it changes to a south westerly direction (approximate AMG point 303120mE 5798720mN), then due south to a point where it intersects the Low Water Mark (LWM) of Port Phillip Bay, then westerly via the LWM to the western boundary of Point Cook RAAF Base (and including the pier), then northerly via the base boundary to its north west corner, then easterly via the northern boundary to the point of commencement.</p>
<p>Bibliography</p>
<p>Allom Lovell and Associates, June 1992, RAAF Williams Point Cook: an appraisal of the heritage significance, vols 1 and 2. Department of Defence. Information from National Trust of Australia (Victoria). Garrison, A.D., 1990, 'Sir Richard Williams' in Ritchie, John, ed, Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.12. Melbourne University Press. Jane Hingston, RAAF Base Fairbairn Heritage Study: A Beginning, Semester 1 1998 University of Canberra</p>

APPENDIX B – NATIONAL HERITAGE LISTING



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy

National Heritage Places - Point Cook Air Base



National Heritage List inscription date 31 October 2007

RAAF Base Point Cook was the first military aviation base in Australia and features our oldest, most extensive complex of military aviation buildings. As the home of Australia's first military flying school and the birthplace of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), the air base played a pivotal role in the history of military and civil aviation in Australia for more than 90 years.

Gallery

Click an image for a larger view.



- More images from the Australian Heritage Photographic Library

Birthplace of military aviation in Australia

The story of Point Cook, as the oldest continuously operating military airbase in the world, is an essential part of the story of the RAAF and the development of military and civil aviation in Australia.

The Australian Government acquired Point Cook in 1913 to establish the nation's first military flying school. The newly formed 'Central Flying School' started with two officer instructors, a few mechanics, two biplanes, two monoplanes and a Bristol Box-kite. The first military flight in Australia took place on 1 March 1914, and the first training course began in August with four student pilots, including Richard Williams and Thomas Walter White.

During World War I the Australian Flying Corps (AFC) was established at Point Cook as a new element of the army. Many of its pilots saw active duty overseas, in the Middle East and the Western Front.

The first Australian airman to die in action was Lieutenant George Merz—one of the first pilot graduates from Point Cook—who was killed in Mesopotamia. During the war 65 Australians became 'aces' by shooting down at least five planes, and Lieutenant Frank McNamara, who trained at Point Cook, won Australia's sole air Victoria Cross while serving with No 1 Squadron, AFC.

Throughout this period Point Cook remained the focal point of military aviation in Australia, serving as a flying training unit as well as the assembly point for most AFC units travelling overseas.

Williams and White served in the Middle East and are noted for their distinguished service and special association with RAAF Base Point Cook. Williams is known as the father of the RAAF, for his efforts in promoting air power in Australia's defence. White wrote *Sky Saga, a Story of Empire Airmen in the Second World War*, and in 1949 was appointed Minister for Air and Civil Aviation in the Menzies Government.

The Royal Australian Air Force

The RAAF, formed on the 31st of March 1921, was the second professional air force in the world, established three years later than the British Royal Air Force.

With the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939, RAAF Base Point Cook became the focus of RAAF training in Australia, a role it maintained until the 1990s. RAAF Base Point Cook is recognised as the oldest military aviation base in Australia serving between 1914 and 1992.

The parade ground at Point Cook, completed in 1930, became a prominent feature of RAAF bases elsewhere in Australia. The Air Force Memorial, unveiled on the edge of the parade ground in November 1938, was the first and principal monument to Australian airmen killed in World War I.

After World War II, the base also became home to a range of significant units and facilities, including the RAAF Staff College (1949 to 1960), the RAAF College (later Academy) for training officer cadets from 1947, and the RAAF School of Languages (1950 to 2000).

The military airbase complex

The Point Cook air base occupies an area of about 250 hectares southwest of Melbourne on the shores of Port Phillip Bay.

When the base was established, the proximity of Port Phillip Bay made Point Cook a choice location for seaplanes as well as conventional land planes. Flying was in its infancy and still experimental, so the area's sea-level altitude and absence of hills made it ideal for training and development purposes.

The design of the air base influenced the planning and development of later military aviation bases in Australia. The base includes rare examples of buildings specific to the pre-World War I, World War II and inter war periods. These include the oldest hangars and workshops in Australia, built in 1914; the AFC complex, including the

seaplane jetty, dating from 1916 and operating until 1937; the water-plane hangar, built in 1914; and the seaplane complex dating from the late 1920s.

Today Point Cook is home to the RAAF Museum. Initiated in 1952 by Air Marshall Sir George Jones, the Museum has provided for the restoration and display of historic aircraft.

Further information

- [Location and Boundary map \(PDF - 119 KB\)](#)
- [Gazettal notice \(PDF - 800 KB\)](#)
- [Australian Heritage Database record](#)
- [RAAF History](#)
- [RAAF Museum Point Cook](#)

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