



12. The legacy of war: remembrance and commemoration

This session shifts the focus from air power and operations to the individuals who enacted aerial strategy, and the legacy of their service. In investigating the human dimension of aerial warfare, our presenters this afternoon will focus on how memory, place, and artefacts enable combatants, writers, service organisations, communities and families to honour, remember, and interpret individual contribution, suffering, and death.

Session Convenor: Kristen Alexander

1. Bartlett Reports: Writing Australia's Air War in 1944

Liam Kane- University of New South Wales, Sydney

In this paper I explore the public and private writing of RAAF public relations officer Norman Bartlett in New Guinea in 1944. Joining RAAF formations attached to the US 5th Air Force to write stories for the RAAF's official magazine *Wings*, Bartlett observed the daily lives, joys, and frustrations of Australian airmen working under American control. Understandably, Bartlett's writing for *Wings* highlighted successes – air support for US Army in Dutch New Guinea and deadly interdiction operations with US Navy Patrol Torpedo Boats.

However, Bartlett's private writing painted an unhappy picture. In his diary and letters to his wife Evelyn, he described how Australian airmen were 'sidelined'. They were given unglamorous but dangerous missions. These complaints ultimately culminated in the infamous 'Morotai Munity' in 1945. Perhaps more troublingly, Bartlett became convinced that the Allies were fighting a 'race war' and that Australians and Americans regarded Japanese as 'animals'.

Although Bartlett's career took him away from military aviation, his experiences in New Guinea never left him. I argue he attempted to fuse the two halves of his New Guinea writing in his historical fiction *Island Victory* (1955).

2. "Missing in action, presumed dead": Australia's war dead in Papua and New Guinea

Alexandra McCosker- The Australian National University (ANU)

In the years following the Second World War, the Territories of Papua and New Guinea had a significant physical Australian presence, as a result of Australia administering those territories. This followed Australia's significant involvement in the battles fought throughout the territories, including on the Kokoda Track during the war in the Pacific. One aspect of the campaign that is often forgotten is the involvement of aerial combat and reconnaissance. The dense jungle of Papua and New Guinea meant that any aircraft that "went down" were often missing for years, consumed by the dense jungle foliage, with the men in those aircraft deemed "missing in action, presumed dead". Decades after the war, the remains of the men of aircraft crews have been found and interred in Commonwealth War Graves. The Australian presence in the territories, including a significant Returned and Services League (RSL) presence, meant that these men would not be forgotten. This paper will look at the process of remembrance, pilgrimage, commemoration and memory in the context of Australia's missing pilots and airmen in Papua and New Guinea following the Second World War.

3. Grounding memory: The importance of place for remembering a fallen aircrew

Michelle Chase- School of Humanities & Social Science, UNSW Canberra

Australian Fred Knight was pilot of a Lancaster Bomber, part of squadron no. 460, flying out of RAF Binbrook. On the night of D-Day, Fred and his crew were heading for a bombing raid on Vire, but were shot down over Coutances and crashed just below the village of Cerisy-la-Salle. All seven crew members died.

In 1994, to coincide with the 50th anniversary of D-Day, the local municipality erected a monument to the crew beside the field where the plane crashed. The municipality holds an annual ceremony of remembrance at the monument for the young aircrew. Members of Fred's family have taken part in some of these ceremonies.

On one visit to Cerisy-La-Salle, Fred's watch, a twenty-first birthday present from his parents, was returned to Fred's nephew by the municipality. The watch had been found buried in the field where the plane came down.

Presented by Fred's great-niece, and exploring the conference theme of memory, this paper reflects on the importance of place and artefact as a focus for memory. The monument and the watch have created a connection between different communities who wish remember Fred and the aircrew, and to perpetuate their memory – none of whom knew the men whose memory they honour.

4. 'War wounds of the spirit': Guilt, grief, PTSD, and moral injury. Remembering and interpreting wartime experiences.

Kristen Alexander- UNSW, Canberra. PhD candidate

Second World War air men participated in and witnessed the horrors of aerial conflict. Their emotional and psychological health was tested. Some faltered. The majority carried on, turning to their air force culture, identity, and commitment to fellow crewmembers, as well as their deep-seated sense of duty.

As time passed, an unexpected heritage emerged, infiltrating their lives out-of-the-air. Some former air men were psychologically disturbed; some exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome. As they reflected on their experiences, many were morally troubled. Some were perturbed by moral emotions such as guilt, grief, shame, and disgust. Some suffered moral injury.

Drawing on the personal and medical testimony which underpin her PhD research, Kristen Alexander examines how former Australian air men prisoners of war remembered and interpreted their wartime experiences. She explores the emotional, moral, and psychological legacy of aerial conflict. She considers those who succumbed to their 'war wounds of spirit', as well as those who allayed their sense of guilt, made sense of their trauma, and lived with their memories of war.

5. For Pete's sake get this bloody crate moving!

Keith Webb- Director, Image Control Pty Ltd

In 2001 I began working with the Temora Aviation Museum linking the experiences of air and ground crews to link the richness and emotion of their experiences to the aircraft. It's a wonderful thing for aviation museums to display historic military aircraft to the public, but without historic context they are just machines, impressive but lacking the human dimension. I'll be drawing on over 600 interviews I've done to show how important it is to connect machines to the human experience and share some surprising insights.