

## **No. 6 Service Flying Training School, Mallala**

### **Background and formation**

In December 1939 Australia signed the Empire Air Training Scheme agreement, under which the RAAF would setup an extensive training organisation to supply aircrew for the rapidly expanding Royal Air Force. As part of this scheme, some eight Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) were established to provide advanced training for pilots newly graduated from Elementary Flying Training Schools (EFTS). The SFTS would operate “service” type aircraft (largely Wirraways and Ansons) that could replicate the performance of aircraft types in operational service.

The SFTS courses were split into intermediate and advanced sections and were initially planned to run for 16 weeks (reflecting some 100 hours of flying). However, the training periods varied during the course of the war due to a variety of factors. At one point it was as low as 10 weeks (75 hours’ flying) but from late 1942 the period of most acute demand for aircrew had passed and courses were progressively lengthened, becoming as long as 28 weeks in 1944.

The eight SFTSs were spread between all the mainland states. No. 6 SFTS was the South Australian unit destined to be formed at Mallala and equipped with Avro Ansons for twin-engine training. While the first three SFTSs were established in 1940, No. 6 SFTS was one of the later units to be formed and was not established until the second half of 1941.

The RAAF had been aware of a suitable site for an airfield at Mallala (36 miles north of Adelaide) since 1939. On 25 February 1941 a party of officers visited the location for a detailed assessment. The site was about a mile north of Mallala township and was very flat with a reasonably low annual rainfall of just 15 inches. The only negative was for the potential for dust to be raised as an open paddock-style airfield was proposed rather than expensive sealed runways. However, it was believed that growth of a grass mat would bind the surface enough to prevent dust.

Other positive factors supporting the location included a ready supply of water and electricity via the township. In addition, there were various businesses in Mallala capable of supplying fresh bread, meat, fruit and vegetables. Mallala was also situated alongside the main railway line running north of Adelaide. This was advantageous in terms of supplying the operating base but also when building it. For example, Bellman hangars all arrived by rail in prefabricated sections.

By March 1941 detailed plans for the base had been drawn up. These comprised many dozens of buildings and various facilities designed to house a large base manned by around 1,300 personnel. The plans included underground fuel tanks and 15 Bellman hangars. The total cost was estimated at £218,000. Approval from the Air Board came in early April, together with an ambitious schedule that would see parts of the base ready for occupation in August 1941.

In mid-August an advance party of 3 officers and 84 aircrew arrived at the new base to prepare it for operations. They faced many challenges as most of the base still resembled a construction site. Nevertheless, a week later, on 26 August, No. 6 SFTS was officially formed. The commanding officer, Wing Commander Norman Brearley, arrived on 1 September.

No. 6 SFTS would be well served with an initial commanding officer of the calibre of Brearley. Brearley was a decorated pilot who had served with the Royal Flying Corps in the First World War. After being

shot down and wounded over the Western Front, he served as a senior instructor in England and finished the war as a Major. In the early 1920s he founded the pioneering West Australian Airways which later operated the first Perth-Adelaide air service until being sold to Australian National Airways in 1936. Called up for wartime RAAF service in 1940, No. 6 SFTS was one of several training units that Brearley would command until mid-1944.

In mid-September 1941 the first Ansons arrived at Mallala – by the end of the month 24 were present. On 22 September the first intake of 49 trainees arrived, a third of whom were graduates of the nearby No. 1 EFTS at Parafield. The remainder came from a variety of interstate schools. The following day flying training commenced, and by the end of the month overall personnel strength had grown to 552, including the 49 trainees.



*A newspaper photo of the Mallala base in 1941. Many huts have been erected, but some are still incomplete. In the foreground the assembly of a Bellman hangar has commenced. Several Ansons are visible at the top of the photo, dating the picture at September 1941 or later. (Mallala Museum)*

In retrospect, it is quite remarkable that any training operations were undertaken at this time as it was assessed that construction of the base was only 50% complete. Contractors blamed delays on shortages of labour and materials. There were other problems too: at one stage goods were being unloaded at Mallala railway station but there was no heavy transport to cart it the short distance to the base. Supply of RAAF equipment for the base was also modest. In September No. 6 SFTS could boast just two ambulances, one utility and three tractors among its tiny fleet of motor transport.

If these were not enough challenges for Brearley to overcome, nature also played a role with wintery conditions during the month of September. Wind gusts estimated at 70mph blew down two huts while others needed reinforcing. Heavy rain saturated the airfield and it was unserviceable for several days.

In October a memo was sent to the Air Board from the officer commanding No. 1 Training Group complaining that not a single building at Mallala could be considered fully complete and that many were “quite unfit for use”. Indeed, many that had been erected were awaiting internal fit-out to various degrees.

Somehow in these conditions the unit expanded and managed to undertake training. Roughly every two weeks new intakes of around 50 trainees were inducted, and before the end of the year the first courses had passed out. Aircraft serviceability was reasonable, given the conditions and shortages of equipment, and stood at 75% at the end of November. By 31<sup>st</sup> December the aircraft fleet stood at an impressive 77 Ansons. A single Moth Minor (A21-36) had also been taken on strength and was likely used by Brearley and other senior officers for communications flights to Parafield (where some maintenance was being undertaken at the airline workshops there).

By this time just 7 of the planned 15 hangars had been erected, and of these 7 only two had sealed tarmac floors. However, the base was now approaching full strength and at the end of 1941 total personnel numbered 1,275, including 190 trainees.

### **Pacific War early 1942**

With the start of the Pacific War on 8 December 1941 the security of Australia itself was under threat. It had long been recognised that the growing fleet of EATS training aircraft could be used operationally in a time of war emergency. To this end plans were underway for the formation of reserve squadrons at several of the training bases. These were “shadow” units that would utilise existing assets and personnel and would only become fully operational when the need was most dire and training operations could be abandoned.

The Anson fleet was potentially valuable for coastal patrol duties, a task for which the aircraft had originally entered service with the RAF in the mid-1930s. There was a need for an aerial coastal patrol capability in South Australia as there were no regular RAAF squadrons then based in the state. From Mallala aircraft could patrol both St Vincent’s and Spencer’s Gulf. Through these waters were important sea lanes to Adelaide and other regional centres including Whyalla. Whyalla was of national strategic significance as it was then the only source of iron ore for the steelworks at Newcastle and Wollongong.



*Ansons of No. 70 (Reserve) Squadron at Mallala stand ready for an anti-submarine patrol in March 1942. Note the sparse grass coverage on the aerodrome surface which led to ongoing dust problems at Mallala. (George Robertson via Mallala Museum)*

Two reserve squadrons were reportedly formed at Mallala on 15 December 1941. These were designated Nos. 70 and 71 (Reserve) Squadrons, although No. 71 was probably never properly formed for whatever reason (possibly a lack of suitable Ansons) and was soon replaced by No. 67 (R) Squadron<sup>1</sup>. By the end of the month Squadron Leader Glasscock had arrived to take command of both squadrons and the first consignment of 54 x 100-pound anti-submarine bombs had been received (Ansons could carry 2 x 100-pound bombs). There is evidence of these aircraft soon flying coastal patrol exercises and missions. In early February 1942 an impressive 27 Ansons from No. 70 (R) Squadron flew to Port Lincoln, and from that base an unidentified ship was sighted on 5 February.

RAAF records from this period typically refer only to generalised “Ansons”, but there were some significant differences in the level of equipment carried by those used for coastal patrol compared to

---

<sup>1</sup> There are sparse records concerning the reserve squadrons and there seems to have been some initial confusion as to what squadron numbers had been allocated. No. 6 SFTS records refer to Nos. 70 and 71 (R) Squadrons having been formed in mid-December 1941. However, it is instead likely that only 70 (R) Squadron was formed at Mallala this time as No. 71 (R) Squadron was formed as a reserve squadron at No. 8 SFTS in Bundaberg in January 1942. The second reserve squadron at Mallala became No. 67 (R) Squadron. This unit had originally been formed at No. 3 SFTS in Amberley but was transferred to Mallala in March 1942 when No. 3 SFTS was closed.

those used only for flight training. Ideally the patrol aircraft would be fully equipped including with a turret, two 0.303-inch machineguns (fixed front and turret mounted), wireless, navigational equipment and inflatable dinghies. While No. 6 SFTS instructors flew as pilots and probably in the co-pilot (bomb-aimer / navigator) position, other trained aircrew were posted into the unit to serve as navigators, wireless operators and gunners. Ansons on operations would normally have a crew of four.



*Anson crews at Mallala pose cleverly with 100-pound anti-submarine bombs in March 1942 to make them look man-sized. At this time other RAAF aircraft usually used 250-pound bombs but such weapons were too large for the Anson which had only a very modest bomb carrying capability. Messages and drawings for their Japanese recipients can be seen on the bombs, with the one on the far right reading "FROM 70 SQN". (George Robertson via Mallala Museum)*

Unfortunately, there are few records concerning the reserve squadron operations. Certainly during the course of 1942 the Japanese submarine threat became serious. Among the ships sunk were ore carriers sailing between Whyalla and NSW ports. However, no Japanese submarines penetrated far towards South Australia beyond the waters of eastern Victoria, and ultimately No. 67 (R) Squadron would be sent to that area.

In August 1942 No. 6 SFTS records show 29 Ansons being allocated to No. 67 (R) Squadron and 28 allocated to No. 70 (R) Squadron (at this time No. 6 SFTS was had over 140 Ansons in total). This allocation appears to have been in preparation for operational

activation of these units. In September No. 67 (R) Squadron was sent to Laverton in Victoria. In January 1943 the unit was raised as a regular squadron at Laverton, and some further personnel and aircraft from No. 6 SFTS were transferred to it. No. 67 Squadron subsequently operated Ansons for coastal patrol duties over Victorian waters until being disbanded in 1945.

Interestingly, all published historical records of No. 67 Squadron refer to it being established at Laverton in January 1943 with no reference to its antecedent as a reserve unit at Mallala (and before that at Amberley). Along with No. 67 Squadron, three other reserve Anson units were activated as regular squadrons in 1942-43; these being Nos. 66, 71 and 73 Squadrons. Meanwhile, No. 70 (R) Squadron at Mallala never became an operational unit and it fades from historical records after 1942.

On 23 February 1942 Wing Commander William Raymond Garrett took over command of No. 6 SFTS from Wing Commander Brearley and would stay in the position for some eighteen months. Garrett had graduated as a pilot at Point Cook in 1926 and subsequently flew as a



*William Raymond Garrett, seen here as a Group Captain, who commanded No. 6 SFTS between February 1942 and August 1943.*



commercial pilot and with the Citizen Air Force. Garrett was an effective leader and also somewhat enterprising, having built an overhead projector from spare parts in the Mallala workshops for use with aircraft recognition silhouettes. During his time at Mallala Garrett was awarded the Air Force Cross.



*A five-man crew from No. 70 (Reserve) Squadron boards an Anson for a mission from Mallala in March 1942. The crew, wearing life jackets, consists of two pilots, two WAGs (Wireless Air Gunners) and a navigator. Whether such five-man crews were commonplace is unknown; an Anson crew of four being more usually quoted. (George Robertson via Mallala Museum)*

War conditions saw some 4,000 feet of trenches being dug at Mallala in early 1942 and anti-aircraft posts being built. Flights were made over the South Australian coast to check “brown out” conditions. Other wartime duties for No. 6 SFTS Anson’s between 1942 and 1945 included army co-operation/searchlight practice flights over Adelaide, dummy Adelaide air-raids by formations of aircraft for Air Raid Precautions practice, meteorological flights and photographic sorties. Occasional naval-cooperation flights were also flown.

In March a contingent of 123 men from the evacuated Royal Netherlands East Indies Air Force training school arrived at Mallala. However, the following month they

left to join a Dutch training school that had been setup in Jackson, Mississippi using American aircraft supplied under lend-lease.

Adding to the international flavour, also in March over 200 Royal New Zealand Air Force personnel arrived at Mallala. They were from No. 488 Squadron, a fighter unit equipped with Brewster Buffaloes, which had evacuated Singapore following the loss of its aircraft. Within a few days the New Zealanders had departed Mallala to continue their journey home.



*Dutch officers from Java on parade at Mallala during their short stay in March-April 1942. (RAAF Museum)*

Meanwhile, at Amberley in Queensland No. 3 SFTS had been operating in an environment relatively close to hostilities in New Guinea and Far North Queensland (where Horn Island had been attacked). The base was used to house large numbers of American airmen and had also become an assembly and test centre for newly arrived

P-40E fighters. Accordingly, it was decided to close No. 3 SFTS and split the assets and personnel between No. 1 SFTS at Point Cook and No. 6 SFTS at Mallala.

Some 304 personnel (including 80 trainees) and 49 Ansons were earmarked for No. 6 SFTS from Amberley, with all transfers having been completed by early April. As noted above, No. 67 (R) Squadron was also transferred to Mallala as part of this move. Along with the Ansons, at this time No. 6 SFTS also received around a dozen each Airspeed Oxfords and CAC Wirraways, as well as an additional Moth Minor and a single Gipsy Moth. Likely these aircraft were from No. 3 SFTS but No. 6 SFTS had no use for most of them and they were soon transferred elsewhere. The sole exception was the Gipsy Moth which appears to have been retained as a base communications aircraft.

### **Training Operations & Accidents 1941-1942**

By April 1942 No. 6 SFTS had been coping with the sudden expansion caused by the absorption of the aircraft and personnel from No. 3 SFTS. By the end of that month personnel strength stood at 1,753, a number which included 256 trainees. Anson strength now stood at 118, with aircraft now split between No. 1 and 2 Maintenance Squadrons. However, the construction of workshops and engineering facilities was still behind schedule, resulting in aircraft serviceability dropping to around 50% or even less at times. These problems were exacerbated by prevalent dust, referred to as “the dust havoc”, which severely affected the serviceability of engines. In late May civilian experts had arrived to give advice on grassing of the aerodrome surface.

Some of the maintenance facilities that were still not properly commissioned by mid-1942 included those involved with doping and instrument repair. Some of the instruments were sent to the Australian National Airways workshops at Parafield for repair, but the time taken to return them was deemed to be “unsatisfactory”.

Nevertheless, despite these problems training operations continued on a large scale. Anson numbers peaked in September 1942 with 142 on strength, before decreasing to a small extent with the transfer of No. 67 (R) Squadron to Victoria. By the end of the year 137 Ansons were on strength and by this time most maintenance issues had largely been resolved with serviceability levels at some 86%. The single Gipsy Moth was the only other aircraft retained by No. 6 SFTS at this time. Personnel strength was around 1,900 in total which included 281 trainees and around 200 members of the Women’s Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF). By the end of 1942 a total of 580 pupils had been passed out of No. 6 SFTS since its commencement. This was an average output of around 40 trainees per month.

While Anson accidents of all kinds were relatively common, some ten aircraft were lost in accidents involving fatalities during 1941-42 resulting in the loss of 26 airmen. These losses are detailed in Appendix 1. Most serious were three accidents involving mid-air collisions, which occurred due to the need to practice formation flying. These accidents resulted in the loss of six aircraft and 16 of the fatalities. A strange co-incidence occurred on 3 June 1942 with two unrelated accidents occurring where each aircraft crashed into water (off Kangaroo Island and at Lake Albert near the Coorong).

One of the mid-air collisions occurred at 1000 on the morning of 4 August 1942 over Monteith, near Murray Bridge. The aircraft, R3542 and W2165, crashed into the Murray River resulting in the death of four airmen onboard each aircraft. A detailed accident report is available and will be discussed in some detail as it provides valuable information on both the accident but also on the crew and operations of No. 6 SFTS at this time.

The pilot of R3542, Flying Officer Lawrence Vivian Wotzko, was 31 years of age and had 1,377 hours in his logbook, including 278 hours on Ansons. He had flown Ansons with No. 2 Squadron at Laverton

in 1939 before doing a flying instructor's course. He then spent two and a half years at No. 1 EFTS, Parafield, as an instructor, where he was rated as "average". After a conversion course on Oxfords, he had only just arrived at No. 6 SFTS when the accident occurred. Overall Wotzko was regarded by the Chief Flying Instructor as "a careful, capable and conscientious instructor".

The pilot of W2165, Sergeant Hugh Godfrey Phillips, was 20 years old and had 603 hours of flying experience, of which 449 were on Ansons. He had trained at No. 9 EFTS, Cunderdin, and at No. 4 SFTS, Geraldton, where he was rated as "average". He then did a flying instructor's course and spent at short time at No. 3 SFTS, Amberley, before arriving at No. 6 SFTS in April 1942. He was regarded as a sound and capable pilot and instructor.

Maintenance records on both airframes and all engines were up to date, and investigators did not believe the accident was due to any defect or fault.

W2165 had crashed into about 10 feet of water near the banks of the river which were covered with willow trees. The aircraft struck the water while inverted, at an angle, and both mainplanes broke off on impact. The fuselage was broken just aft of the gun turret.

R3542 was lying about 80 yards away from W2165 in the centre of the river, under 40 feet of water. The wreckage was marked with buoys and barges were used to undertake a salvage operation starting on 6 August (the bodies of the crew were not initially recovered, and only two bodies were eventually found). Portions of a wing were found in a paddock 400 yards from the main wreckage.



*Anson W2255 seen at Mallala circa mid-1942. This aircraft was allocated to No. 6 SFTS in early April 1942. The yellow fuselage strip worn by camouflaged Ansons prior to the beginning of the Pacific War has been removed. (ADF Serials)*

On the morning of 4 August, six Ansons had departed Mallala at 0815 for a cross-country flight that would take them via Eudunda, Karoonda and Taillem Bend before returning to Mallala. During the flight formation flying would be practiced, which none of the trainee pilots involved (two in each aircraft) had previously done.

Each aircraft also carried a fourth crewman. These were Air Observers who were not trainees but were serving with No. 67 (Reserve) Squadron. It was common practice

for them to fly on such missions to give navigational assistance and for their own experience.

The aircraft arrived over Taillem Bend at an altitude of around 2,000 feet, just below some low cloud. They were flying in two three-aircraft echelon formations, the aircraft being separated by one wingspan in length. The formation had begun a gentle left-hand turn in order to head back to Mallala. During the turn, the port wing of the no. 2 aircraft (W2165) in one of the echelons made contact with the tail of the no.1 aircraft (R3542) causing both aircraft to dive into the river. It was assessed that the accident was caused by the pilot of W2165 making an error of judgement.

#### **Training Operations & Accidents 1943-1944**

As noted in the introduction, after 1942 the period of acute demand for airmen had passed and this led to qualitative improvements in training, most notably a gradual lengthening of the training courses

during 1943-44. However, 1943 saw the peak of activity at Mallala. During the year 711 trainees graduated: a monthly graduation average of 64. For most of the year there were around 120 Ansons on strength, although this number decreased after July and by December the number had dropped to 98.

In July 1943 personnel strength at No. 6 SFTS was almost 1,600. This number included 346 trainees and 169 WAAFs. By the end of December numbers had reduced somewhat to around 1,400, including 302 trainees and 171 WAAFs. A few satellite landing grounds were in regular use by the school, including at Lower Light and Balaklava.

In August 1943 Wing Commander Alexander ("Alec") Arthur Barlow arrived to assume command from Wing Commander Garrett. A civilian pilot who had first flown in 1928, Barlow had been on the reserve list when transferred to active service in August 1939 shortly before the outbreak of war. Barlow was among a small number of pilots with experience on Lockheed 14 airliners who had been called up to become the RAAF's first Lockheed Hudson instructors. After being involved with Hudson training in 1940-41 he had commanded No. 6 Squadron in 1942. In early 1943 Barlow was appointed commander of No. 1 Service Flying Training School at Point Cook prior to his arrival at Mallala in August 1943.

After September 1942 No. 6 SFTS experienced no fatal accidents for almost ten months, before a spate of four accidents in July and September 1943 which caused the loss of eleven lives. Details are shown in Appendix 1. Following this there were only single fatal accidents in both 1944 and 1945 with just two lives lost.

This was a much-reduced accident rate compared to the 1941-42 period, and likely reflected better safety standards at No. 6 SFTS and the longer training periods. On many occasions the base was closed due to bad weather, typically due to strong winds, or flying was restricted to that involving instructors. Sometimes the unpaved landing areas were unserviceable due to rain and occasionally fog also restricted flying.

However, a lingering liability of the Mallala location was the prevalence of dust storms. This was particularly bad during 1944 when it often caused flying to be abandoned multiple times each month. It was blamed on dry conditions due to a lack of winter rain.

Nevertheless 1944 was still a very busy year with around 5,000 flying hours per month. A few Airspeed Oxfords had been received in December 1943, and some two dozen were on strength in the first six months of the year. However, it was not until September that large numbers of Oxfords were received, with 86 being on strength, and these appear to have taken over the bulk of routine training flights at that time. Indeed, some Anson overhaul work was being outsourced to Guinea Airways at Parafield, perhaps a sign that the Anson fleet was becoming worn and more difficult to maintain. During 1944 several Tiger Moths were also received.

In October Wing Commander Edward Albert Beaumont took over command of No. 6 SFTS from Wing Commander Barlow. Beaumont had served with the RAF as a pilot for over a decade in the 1920s and 1930s, including at several locations in the Middle East. In 1939 he was called to active service and served as a senior instructor during 1940-42 and then as a staff officer. In June 1944 he took over command of No. 8 EFTS at Narrandera, NSW. With that unit scheduled for closure by the end of the year, he was posted to Mallala.

A total of 450 trainees graduated during from No. 6SFTS in 1944, a monthly average of 38, which was almost half the level of 1943. In December 1944 overall personnel strength was 1,368, a number not much different from a year before.



## 1945: Final Operations



*An aerial photo of Mallala during wartime operations, likely in 1943 or 1944. Some 64 Ansons are visible on the tarmac in the foreground, with a similar number of aircraft visible on a second tarmac in the background. These two tarmacs reflected the organisational division of No. 6 SFTS into Nos. 1 and 2 Maintenance Squadrons. The township of Mallala can be seen at the top left. (Author)*

On 8 May a parade was held where Wing Commander Beaumont advised the unit of the surrender of Germany, and a day's leave was granted. Flying hours in May dropped to 5,001, but the slowdown in June was much more pronounced with just 2,448 hours of flying undertaken. This reduction was reflected in aircraft numbers with just 3 Ansons on strength during June (alongside 70 Oxfords). By August the unit was also operating a dozen Tiger Moths.

On 15 August the surrender of Japan was announced, and the unit stood down for two days. Nevertheless, there were still over 100 pilots undergoing training, and over 2,000 hours of flying was still being recorded monthly.

In mid-September Wing Commander Beaumont relinquished command of No. 6 SFTS and was subsequently replaced by Wing Commander W.G. Leer in November. By this time the unit was winding

In January 1945 a pool of 50 Ansons was placed in reserve in the south-east corner of the aerodrome. At this time just 16 Ansons were recorded as in use by No. 6 SFTS, although in the next few months a confusingly large number of Ansons were being rotated in and out of the reserve pool as overhauls were undertaken. Ansons also routinely flew transport flights to nearby airfields and into Victoria and New South Wales.

Perhaps surprisingly, an impressive 7,689 hours of flying was undertaken in March 1945, and 6,934 hours in April. By April the strength of Ansons had been restored to 89 (although many were probably awaiting transfer to the reserve pool) and 77 Oxfords were on hand.



*Airspeed Oxford X6842 of No. 6SFTS, Mallala, in flight during 1944-45 when the Oxfords shouldered the bulk of training work at the unit. These wore a simple all-over yellow high-visibility scheme. (ADF Serials)*

down significantly, with many personnel being posted out and accommodation buildings being dismantled. Flying hours were down to 1,155 in November.

A total of 2,187 students had passed out of No. 6 SFTS up until 1 October 1945, the final date for which such a tally was reported. At this time nine students were passed out of a special EFTS course, probably held to complete courses for partly trained students affected by the closure of schools elsewhere. This would also explain the dozen Tiger Moths operated by the unit in the latter half of 1945.



*Oxford HN656 of No. 6 SFTS at Mallala with a collapsed right landing gear. Such accidents were common with both the Anson and Oxford fleet. (ADF Serials)*

Some 70 students were recorded as passing out of No. 6 SFTS during October, which was the last major output and brought the total trained at the unit since its inception to in excess of 2,250. At this time a small number of Netherlands East Indies students were also present at Mallala, and four were recorded as undergoing training with an NEI SFTS Course in November.

From the middle of 1945 a beachside recreation camp had been established at Port Parham on the coast of the Gulf of St Vincent.

Sadly, this location was to witness the last fatal aircraft accident experienced by No. 6 SFTS. On 28 November a student pilot dived an Oxford into the ground while conducting unauthorised flying and “shooting up” the recreation campsite.

During December the unit recorded just 155 flying hours and all aircraft were transferred to “Stores Reserve”. No. 6 SFTS was formally disestablished on 31 December 1945, and the following day Mallala was placed under the control of a Care and Maintenance Unit, under the command of No. 4 Maintenance Group.

### **Main Sources**

A705 171/52/2 PART 1 DWB [Director of Works and Buildings] - RAAF Number 6 SFTS [Service Flying Training School] - Mallala - Buildings and services 1941 – 1943 516422

A9186 476 RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Service Flying Training School 5 to 8 Oct 41 - Jul 45 1941 – 1945 1360155

A12608 16/3/AIR PART 2 Operations Record Book - Form A50 [No 6 Service Flying Training School] 1944 – 1946 304291

Commonwealth War Graves Commission website

ADF Serials website

**Peter Ingman**

**South Australian Aviation Museum History Group**

**December 2019**

## Appendix 1: No. 6 SFTS Fatal Aircraft Accidents

---

A total of 39 men were killed as a result of aircraft accidents while serving with No. 6 SFTS at Mallala between 1941 and 1945. Fourteen Ansons and two Oxfords were involved in these accidents.

Between October 1941 and August 1942 the bodies of No. 6 SFTS men killed in accidents were returned to their home states for burial in civilian cemeteries.

From September 1942 burials were held at the Mallala War Cemetery. A total of twelve RAAF airmen are buried there, all of whom served with No. 6 SFTS. Curiously, one of these men was killed after the end of WWII, in November 1945 (the official cut-off date for inclusion in the WWII Australian War Memorial Roll of Honour is, in fact, 30 June 1947). Eleven airmen buried at Mallala as a result of aircraft accidents are included in the table below. A twelfth man buried at Mallala was killed on 2 March 1943 following a ground accident: 417643 Leading Aircraftman Peter Dennis Kierse.

On 2 July 1945 another member of No. 6 SFTS, Flight Lieutenant Maxwell Ashdown (295326), was killed in a crash of Wirraway A20-182 near Nhill in Victoria.

Date	Aircraft	Killed	
14 October 1941	Ansons W2254 & W2257	<p><u>W2254:</u></p> <p>407163 Sergeant Ian Bruce Blacker (instructor)</p> <p>408654 Leading Aircraftman Bernard George Hutchins (student pilot)</p> <p><u>W2257:</u></p> <p>402680 Flying Officer Charles Edwards Somerville (instructor)</p> <p>416356 Leading Aircraftman John Gordon Maslen (student pilot)</p>	Two Ansons collided in mid-air at 800 feet 1¼ miles south of Mallala 'drome. An instructor and student pilot in each aircraft were killed.
13 February 1942	Ansons A4-6 & A4-31	<p><u>A4-6:</u></p> <p>408920 Leading Aircraftman Stanley Livingstone McFarlane (student pilot)</p>	Two Ansons collided in mid-air, possibly soon after take-off from Mallala. Four student pilots were killed.

		<p>408742 Leading Aircraftman Charles Tilley Collett Shoppee (student pilot)</p> <p><u>A4-31:</u></p> <p>409005 Leading Aircraftman Keith Allan Mustow (student pilot)</p> <p>408993 Leading Aircraftman Keith Grant Hayter (student pilot)</p>	
13 May 1942	Anson R3561	409511 Leading Aircraftman David Alwyn Checchi (student pilot)	Anson R3561 crashed 5 miles north of the small township of Hoyleton (about 40 miles north of Mallala) during a rainstorm. The student pilot was killed. The RAAF accident report states the probable cause as “unknown” and the nature of the crash as “obscure”.
3 June 1942	Anson W2370	<p>403968 Sergeant Graeme Yeoman Wadlow</p> <p>401888 Sergeant Finlay Emmerson Anderson</p> <p>411254 Sergeant Joseph Gray Myers</p> <p>412898 Leading Aircraftman William Stanley Butler</p>	Crashed into Lake Albert near Meningie while on a night flight, apparently lost. The RAAF listed the cause as “obscure”. Four crewmen were killed.
3 June 1942	Anson W2435	<p>6732 Pilot Sergeant Frederick Reginald Cassidy (instructor)</p> <p>405480 Sergeant Kenneth Walter Hailey</p> <p>405506 Sergeant David Roderick Stewart</p> <p>413419 Leading Aircraftman Laurence Francis Pickup</p>	At 1907 in the evening, Anson W2435 ditched into the sea ½ mile from the Cape Willoughby lighthouse off the eastern tip of Kangaroo Island. The aircraft was reportedly seen drifting at sea but was never found. All four crewmen were listed as “missing believed killed” and the cause was “obscure”.
4 August 1942	Ansons R3542 & W2165	<p><u>R3542:</u></p> <p>2366 Flying Officer Lawrence Vivian Wotzko (instructor)</p> <p>416929 Leading Aircraftman Leslie Cadd (student pilot)</p> <p>416956 Leading Aircraftman Norman Dudley Haines (student pilot)</p> <p>413187 Sergeant Gordon Cooper (Air Observer)</p> <p><u>W2165:</u></p> <p>406625 Sergeant Hugh Godfrey Phillips (instructor)</p>	At 1000 on 4 August 1942 two Ansons collided in mid-air during formation flying practice over Monteith, near Murray Bridge, and crashed into the Murray River. Eight crew were killed. Aboard each aircraft was an instructor, two student pilots and a No. 67 (R) Squadron Air Observer. Further details of this accident are provided in the main text as a detailed accident report is available. The cause was human error by one pilot during close formation flying.

		420056 Leading Aircraftman James Brignall Richardson (student pilot)  409484 Leading Aircraftman Colin McCall Say (student pilot)  413018 Sergeant Mervyn John Nicholls (Air Observer)	
7 September 1942	Anson W2373	412891 Leading Aircraftman Patrick John Brady (student pilot)	At 2020 on 7 September 1942 crashed during night flying. The sole pilot on-board was killed. The cause was listed as "obscure". Brady was the first to be buried in the Mallala War Cemetery.
1 July 1943	Anson R3518	437246 Leading Aircraftman Gordon Rex Young (student pilot)	At 1105 crashed 9 miles south of Angaston in the Eden Valley, while on a cross country exercise. The pilot lost control of the aircraft while flying in cloud contrary to orders, and crashed into a hillside. The cloud base was only 900 feet. He had just 81 hours in his logbook. An air force funeral was held the next day at Mallala Cemetery
14 July 1943	Anson W2556	406662 Flying Officer John Frederick Pettit (pilot)  27786 Corporal James Dennis Horrigan  59315 Leading Aircraftman Donald Beresford Tucker  116182 Aircraftman First Class Desmond Whenan  45971 Aircraftman First Class John Vincent Colin Matheson	Anson W2556 was went missing during a 240-hour test flight over the Gulf of St Vincent with a crew of five. The following day a search was flown by 29 aircraft which discovered floating wreckage. The cause of the accident is unknown.
21 July 1943	Anson W2256	427803 Leading Aircraftman Colin Walter Cook (student pilot)	At 2143 hours on 20 August 1943 trainee LAC Cook took off in W2256 from Mallala on a solo night cross-country flight. An hour later a dense (and unpredicted) low fog rolled in over the aerodrome while six aircraft were still out on the exercise. Despite a flare path being lit, all pilots had difficulty finding the 'drome and two were missing all night. At 0715 the next morning one pilot rang to say he had landed safely SE of the 'drome. Meanwhile, as soon as the fog had lifted by 930, 28 other aircraft were sent out to search for the missing W2256. This was quickly located close to the 'drome but had been wrecked on landing. The pilot, LAC Cook, suffered a broken thigh and head injuries and had spent the night jammed in the smashed cockpit. He was removed and taken to the base sick bay, but the next day died as a result of his head injuries. He is buried at Mallala War Cemetery.
23 September 1943	Anson W2095	29990 Sergeant Julian Patrick Rice (pilot)  284999 Flying Officer I D Weston (navigation instructor)  419826 Leading Aircraftman C M Lewis (student pilot)	At 2305 on 23 September 1943 W2095 crashed in a field near Tarlee, about 30 miles from Mallala. The aircraft struck the ground at an almost vertical angle, and had largely disintegrated on impact and then burnt. It was one of four aircraft that had taken off at 2130 for a night cross-country flight. Weather was initially fine but heavy cloud moved in from the north-west soon after take-off. Within the first hour two of the aircraft had

		429980 Leading Aircraftman Donald Neill McDonald (student pilot)	<p>returned to base due to the deteriorating weather, and all flying from Mallala was cancelled. Meanwhile just one of the Ansons completed the exercise and returned to base but reported very heavy rain which made flying unsafe.</p> <p>W2095 did not have a wireless. It is believed the pilot lost control during instrument flying in adverse weather, and possibly panicked and dove the aircraft into the ground. The pilot, Sergeant Julian Rice, had 411 hours of flying experience of which 350 were on Ansons. He was rated as "average" while training with No.4 SFTS at Geraldton. During advanced training it was noted that his "instrument flying needs supervision".</p> <p>All four crewmen were killed and are buried at the Mallala War Cemetery.</p>
27 March 1944	Oxford BM782	437960 Leading Aircraftman Derek Goldsworthy Wicks (student pilot)	At 1145 on 27 March 1944 Oxford BM782 crashed two miles south-east of Dublin (only about five miles from Mallala) while on a routine training flight. The pilot, LAC Wicks, was killed and is buried at the Mallala War Cemetery.
28 November 1945	Oxford LW879	444226 Sergeant Roger Byrom Clough	At 0945 on 28 November 1945 Oxford LW879 crashed 300 yards north-west of Cape Parham. The RAAF accident report recorded that "While shooting up rest camp pilot pulled out from dive into steep turn to right and slipped into ground." The pilot, 19-year-old Sergeant Roger Clough, was killed. The cause was "disobedience of orders."

*Mallala War Cemetery in 2018. (Author)*

