

# 5 Squadron RNZAF Association

## Chairman's Message to 2017 AGM

A truly memorable double celebration of the squadron's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the introduction of the P-3 Orion to RNZAF service was held on 23 and 24 September 2016 and was strongly supported by the Association in areas of planning input, publicity, conduct and a financial sponsorship of \$5,000. At the formal anniversary dinner in an impressive setting at MOTAT the association also provided a beautifully-iced birthday cake for 'Orion 50 years' and the ceremonial cutting by a team of four that comprised a commander of the initial technical training detachment to California in 1965/66, Don Fleming, one of the delivery crew captains, Tom Enright, the youngest current aircrew member, Fg Off Kate Galbraith and the youngest current maintenance tradesman, AC Ashoka Masilamani.

Subsequently, the following message to the Association was received from the Commanding Officer, Wg Cdr D J Hunt:

*"Your support, not just for the Anniversary events but in everything you do, is highly valued. We could not ask for better advocates for 5 SQN nor have better examples to assist the current crop of 5 SQN personnel in remembering our origins.*

*On behalf of the men and women of 5 SQN thank you for your support in the past, present and the future."*

Your Association was also proud to note the award of **The Master's Trophy to the New Zealand Region to 5 Squadron Maintenance Flight** by the Honourable Company of Air Pilots, of London (formerly the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators). The deployed unit's exceptional achievement of 97% operational serviceability with one aircraft over 16 months and 174 missions in the Middle East/ Indian Ocean was cited as easily the best rate of any aviation unit in the theatre, and worthy of international recognition.

Progress is being made between the RNZAF, 5 Squadron Association and some influential members of the Fiji establishment at the University of the South Pacific towards the completion of the awaited Laucala Bay memorial to RNZAF service in Fiji and the South Pacific – and to mark 50 years since the closing of RNZAF Station Lauthala Bay and the departure of the last Sunderland.

The Association has provided good design concepts and communications coordination to keep the project moving and is assisting as much as it can to achieve an unveiling sometime in early 2018 within the USP 50th Anniversary events calendar. More to come on this.

Another notable undertaking involves the graves of seven 5 Squadron aircrew members in a cemetery at Maagiagi, Western Samoa that were reported to us as being in a dilapidated condition. Greg Taylor enlisted the willing support of some freemasons in Apia who have waterblasted, repainted and restored the graves to a respectful condition for us. We have yet to confirm that the adjacent memorial plaque fully records the tragic accident when Catalina NZ4048 KN-C crashed on takeoff at Satapuala on Monday 11 December 1950. The committee will continue to seek a permanent maintenance arrangement and CO5 Squadron intends to have deployed crews pay their respects from time to time at these graves of their predecessors who died in the line of duty. The cemetery is 1.7Km SE of Aggie Grey's Hotel in Apia.

Sunderland NZ4115 Q is at last undergoing restoration at MOTAT and the committee has recommended that a donation of \$2,000 be made from Association funds to assist the volunteers in this worthy project. Any volunteers from our membership who have time and skills to offer will be warmly welcomed.

One of our founding principles is to be supportive of members in ill health and to surviving spouses, so please communicate with Neil Wright [neil.eleanor@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:neil.eleanor@vodafone.co.nz), webmaster Pete Culpan [culp@paradise.net.nz](mailto:culp@paradise.net.nz) or myself if you know of any of our members or families who might appreciate a call or message from the association. Pete Culpan maintains the 'Last Post' pages on the website and welcomes any information to improve that record, including dates of death that are not recorded.

Once again hearty thanks to committee members Greg Taylor, Neil Wright, Don Bennington, Vern Reynolds, Peter Burch, John Fitch, Brian Grimwood, Grant Dowie, Des Gyde and Darrell Simpson for their commitment to the association's interests on your behalf throughout the year.

**Gordon Ragg AFC JP**

Chairman

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