

AIR FORCE NEWS

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FIRST WORD

By Wing Commander Jen Ross
Director People and Culture – Air Staff

“OUR UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES CAN BE BROUGHT TOGETHER TO FURTHER ENHANCE OUR COLLECTIVE FIGHTING SPIRIT, OUR TEAMWORK AND OUR CULTURE REMINDS US ALL THAT WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO GROW AND SHAPE CULTURE FOR THE BETTER.”

I have recently heard the term “fighting spirit” and it really resonates with me. To me, this term accurately describes what is at the heart of what you do, it is what is at the heart of us, as aviators and it plays a significant part in what drives us to be an effective Air Force.

As an Air Force, we know what makes us unique. From the respective uniforms that we wear, the colourful patches that we choose to don, to those who have embraced growing a beard or an aviator moustache. These all play a part in truly articulating and outwardly displaying our unique identity.

These simple actions mean something to each and every one of us and, allowing us to feel part of something important, special and a somewhat exclusive club. Our respective messes and clubs hold true to our history and traditions with our artefacts on display for all to view.

Over the course of time, we have embraced the opportunity to improve things for our aviators. Embracing our unique bicultural opportunities, from enrolling in te reo Māori lessons to learning our Air Force Haka or learning the history of how Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi came to be, to ensuring our people feel safe, respected and included within their units and wider workplaces. These elements ensure that our people feel valued and that our contributions are welcomed.

We frequently review the way we conduct our daily logistics and enabling support to deployed operations so that we are more effective and agile. Our civilian workforce provides the robust foundation stones that support those in uniform to do what they have to do.

Our technically minded aviators and world-class training, coupled with new capabilities, ensure we remain relevant in the quickly changing aviation environment. The ability to challenge the norm, think outside the box and be innovative, are incredibly important traits which we encourage and foster in our Air Force.

We are constantly poised for whatever may come our way and it is our fighting spirit that ensures we are ready to act when called upon. It ensures that we are prepared both physically and psychologically to respond both as a team and as individuals when our air warfighting ethos is put to the test.

We are often asked “why do you serve” and I think it helps to put things in perspective if you can clearly understand and articulate what the term “fighting spirit” means to you. It is at the heart of everything you do, why you choose to serve and why you choose to belong to our unique Air Force.

FROM THE

 LOG

A photograph of a New Zealand Air Force flight suit laid out on a dark surface. The suit features patches with the New Zealand flag and the text 'NEW ZEALAND'. A blue pen with 'AIR FORCE' written on it is visible in the foreground. The word 'BOOK' is overlaid in large white letters, with the 'K' having a stylized wing design.

BOOK

The Air Force's genesis can be traced to a paddock in the Christchurch suburb now called Wigram, 86 years ago. Since then it has evolved into its own distinctive service, different to every other Air Force in the world. We're going to take a stroll back through time to look at the Air Force's origins, the moments along the way that mapped the direction of the service, and the traditional and unique taonga precious to our people.

MOMENTS IN TIME

With a little less than a century of service behind it, the Air Force is already rich in its developed culture and tradition. While its origins are steeped in British military customs, the service has evolved to embrace the warrior ethos that draws heavily from te ao Māori (the Māori world view).

Next month marks the 100th anniversary of Sir Henry Wigram (top left) selling a plot of land, the Sockburn Airfield, to the Government for a heavily subsidised price. About the same time the New Zealand Permanent Air Force was formed as part of the Army and cemented the Christchurch airfield as the birthplace of Aotearoa New Zealand aviation.

Sir Henry was one of a number of people passionate in promoting a vision regarding future wars in the air, as is clear from this quote more than 20 years before the start of World War II:

“Aerial Navigation might be an immense factor in the event of a war taking place. It would be perfectly possible for a fleet of these machines to hover over the Thames and set fire to the docks and timber yards and pretty well destroy the shipping of the Thames. We are only on the eve of developments that might take place. We might find Great Britain unable to render us assistance, and therefore we might be subjected to attack. We do not know where it might come from. It might come from Germany, or it might come, as is even more likely in the years to come, from the East.”

On April 1, 1937, under the legislative authority of the Royal New Zealand Air Force Act, it was formed as its own service. Over the next 86 years the service has celebrated key moments that have helped shape its culture and values.

In 1941 the Air Force became the first of the three services to accept women, with the New Zealand Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) formed under Francis “Kitty” Kain (top right).

By 1945 World War II had come to an end. New Zealand had lost 3635 Air Force service people – 350 in the Pacific and 3285 in Europe, the majority with the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command.

Other wartime commitments saw the Air Force send personnel and aircraft to South Vietnam in 1965 and to the Persian Gulf for the Gulf War in 1991.

The Air Force's presence in the Pacific can be traced to No. 5 Squadron's formation in Fiji ahead of the imminent war in the region in 1941. Over the years the service fortified its presence in the area with copious search and rescue missions and humanitarian aid and disaster relief operations.

Closer to home, in February 2011, C-130 Hercules (middle), Boeing 747s, a P-3K2 Orion, King Airs and Iroquois helicopters were sent to Christchurch following a deadly earthquake that wrecked huge swathes of the city and killed 185 people. It was the largest single movement of personnel and freight in Air Force history.

At a dawn ceremony at Base Ohakea in 2016, the Air Force's Tūrangawaewae (a place to stand) was opened and personnel were formally welcomed inside (bottom). The building has become the nucleus of the service, with recruits staying there and learning the rich Māori history that is interwoven in Air Force traditions.

While these are just a few moments in time, they helped to shape the Air Force into the service it is today.





‘A MOTH-EATEN RAG
ON A WORM-EATEN POLE,
IT DOES NOT LOOK LIKELY
TO STIR, A MAN’S SOUL;
‘TIS THE DEEDS THAT WERE DONE
‘NEATH THE MOTH-EATEN RAG,
WHEN THE POLE WAS A STAFF,
AND THE RAG WAS A FLAG.’

Sir Edward Hamley

QUEEN'S COLOUR

The Air Force's achievements over the past eight decades have been recognised by the country's Sovereign and are signified by the award of the Queen's Colour. A Colour is the highest honour the Sovereign can bestow.

The authority for all matters of design of Air Force Colours and Standards is Norroy and Ulster King of Arms, Her Majesty's College of Arms, London. Until the presentation of the Queen's Colour in 1953 the Ensign was the only ceremonial flag in the Air Force.

Colours have not been carried in action since 1881, but they have always been regarded as the symbol of the spirit of the regiment or squadron, for on them are borne the battle honours and badges for gallant deeds.

Now that the Colours are no longer carried in action it will not be possible for them to become battle-scarred as they once were, but nevertheless, each successive set of new Colours inherits the traditions, glory, honour and veneration acquired by its predecessors.

“The flag is a symbol, intrinsically valueless – extrinsically priceless,” said Andrew Ross in “Old Scottish Colours”, and Sir Edward Hamley expressed much the same sentiment in the quote above.

During the 1953–54 Royal Tour of Aotearoa New Zealand, Queen Elizabeth II personally presented her Colour to the Air Force. The presentation was made at Base Auckland during a ceremonial parade on 28 December, 1953. Six hundred Air Force personnel took part, and besides the invited guests thousands of onlookers watched the ceremony.

DESCRIPTION

The Queen's Colour is of Royal Air Force blue, it has a border in a motif of fern leaves, a fringe, cord and tassels of mixed red and gold silk. It bears the Royal Cypher surmounted by the St. Edward crown in the centre, in the canton the Union and in the second quarter the four main stars of the Southern Cross in gold. The staff is 2.45 metres in length surmounted by a crown and lion.

Source: RNZAF Publication: Colours, Standards, Flags and Badges in the Royal New Zealand Air Force



ENSIGN

The right to have its own Ensign was conferred upon the Air Force on 29 August, 1939 by His Majesty King George VI.

The New Zealand Gazette of 14 September, 1939 stated:

“Public notification is hereby given of the institution by the Royal prerogative of an Ensign to be known as the Royal New Zealand Air Force Ensign, comprised of the Ensign of the Royal Air Force defaced by the addition of the letters, ‘N.Z.’ superimposed in white upon the red roundel thereof.”

The Ensign is flown daily at Air Staff, the headquarters of Air Force commands, at all Operational Support Wings in Aotearoa New Zealand and overseas and at all camps of regular or non-regular units established other than on a permanent Air Force base.

If however, a base is on a care and maintenance basis the Ensign is not to be flown.

Normally it is flown at the peak of the gaff, when one is provided, but it may be flown on a pole at appropriate functions organised by the Service, provided that the pole is greater in length than the Ensign.

In no circumstances is the Air Force Ensign ever displaced by any other flag. It is never to be used for decorative purposes such as a wall-hanging or table covering, even though the function may be a purely Service event.

The Ensign may never be carried on ceremonial occasions as it is not a Colour, nor is it used to drape the coffin at a Service funeral (the NZ Ensign is normally used).

ART ON OUR ARMS

Badges are worn by personnel as a sign of pride in their unit, service or the work they have done on a particular operation, such as the ongoing operation in Antarctica.

While there are a plethora of badges across the Air Force's squadrons and units here's a rundown of our flying squadrons' badges and what they mean.

RNZAF BADGE

In front of a circle inscribed Royal New Zealand Air Force and ensigned with the Imperial Crown is an eagle volant affronte, the head lowered and to the left. Underneath reads the motto *Per ardua ad astra* – Through struggle to the stars.

The original Air Force English translation of the Motto: Through steep and toilsome ways to the stars, was amended in 2022 to "Through Struggle to the Stars" to reflect the translation in common use by members of the Air Force.

This badge is an adaptation of the Royal Air Force badge, the chief difference being that the motto appears on the RNZAF badge on the scroll. The badge was accepted by Air Headquarters New Zealand on 10 August, 1943 and afterwards approved by His Majesty King George VI in January 1944.

NO. 3 SQUADRON

A crouching Māori warrior holding a taiaha. The motto is *Kimihia ka patu* – Seek out and destroy and was approved in November 1953. The badge indicates alertness required of a fighter squadron.

NO. 5 SQUADRON

An albatross in flight with wings completely outstretched on a blue background. Its motto is *Keitou kalawaca no wasaliwa* – We span the ocean. The Fijian words denote how the squadron operates over a wide area of the Pacific.

NO. 6 SQUADRON

The mythical Māori god Tane, god of the forest. Its motto is *Vigilance with patience* and was approved in May 1954. Tane, is in the attitude of watchfulness in the legendary form he adopted for voyages across the sea. This was considered suitable for a flying boat squadron, largely engaged in air sea rescue duties.

NO. 14 SQUADRON

A kea in perching position. Its motto is *Kia maia, kia u, kia ngawari* – Active, ardent, adaptable. The badge indicates fearless and aggressive qualities proper to a fighter squadron and was approved in April 1952. The original proposal was for a kaka, however when the badge, drawn by the College of Arms Artist, was forwarded for approval a kea had been drawn instead and was subsequently approved.

NO. 40 SQUADRON

A mariner's compass star. The badge's motto is *Ki nga hau e wha* – To the four winds, To the four points of the compass, To all points of the compass. The design, approved in 1956, encompasses the types of worldwide operations the squadron deploys to.

NO. 42 SQUADRON

A kereru (native wood pigeon) perching, superimposed on a terrestrial globe on which Aotearoa New Zealand is highlighted. The badge's motto is *Tara ki uta, tara ki tai* – We span the land, or more fully; We span or cover the land from coast to coast. It was approved in November 1952. Like the kereru, No. 42 Squadron flies over all parts of the country. The terrestrial globe was introduced to indicate the much wider field covered by the squadron.

THROUGH STRUGGLE TO THE STARS





WARFIC



FIGHTING

In recent times the Air Force has undertaken a range of humanitarian aid and disaster relief missions (HADR). However, while these are things we are prepared for and are very capable of delivering, HADR is not our primary role. When called on the Air Force needs to be ready to respond to war.

IT'S BETTER TO BE A WARRIOR IN A GARDEN THAN A GARDENER IN A WAR

That famous Chinese saying should underpin all Air Force training to enforce the warfighting culture within the Air Force, Director of Strategy Capability Wing Commander (WGCDR) Stu Pearce says.

“By engaging in training exercises with a combat focus, we develop the skills and abilities that are easily transferable to non-warlike but high stakes activities such as HADR (humanitarian aid and disaster relief) missions, search and rescue or any other peacetime contingency we are called upon to deliver.

“We absolutely should be proud when a No. 5 Squadron P-3K2 (as was) finds people in the middle of the ocean, because it's a tremendous achievement. But the skills that they need are honed from the skills perfected in hunting for adversaries at sea, and ultimately to put a torpedo on a target.”

Similarly, capturing and analysing airborne imagery has proven vital in times of disaster when civil defence agencies need timely information on the scale of a disaster. But the primary role of our reconnaissance capabilities is to provide intelligence on the enemy.

In 2001 the Air Force's strike force was disbanded and criticism has been levelled at the service that it is unable to protect the country during times of conflict. But that conversation needs to be “put to bed”, WGCDR Pearce said.

“Air power is bigger than just fast jets. Air power can be the critical link in a logistics supply chain that keeps soldiers fighting. Air power can be protecting our air bases from attack with specialised equipment and accurate and timely intelligence, force protection and Military Working Dogs.”

He pointed to the NH90 battlefield mobility helicopter. Designed to move troops in battle, the NH90's ability to carry large underslung loads, including artillery, was a key part of the Defence Force's fire and manoeuvre capability and warfighting role, WGCDR Pearce said.

“When New Zealand artillery want to advance, they can use NH90s to do it. An NH90 can connect up one of the Army's light howitzers, undersling it, move it forward and have it fire again – the ability to do that and move the battlefield forward, exploits air power to support land forces to engage their targets.”

The NZ Army's Land Component Commander Brigadier Matt Weston said the NH90 provided New Zealand's land forces an ability to move that was not constrained by terrain and could therefore be focussed on “disrupting the enemy and managing risks inherent in our plans”.

“Aviation provides freedom to rapidly deploy troops and patrols, deliver vital combat supplies such as ammunition, and conduct timely aeromedical evacuation. The NH90's range, speed and payload is a significant uplift in capability,” he said.



WGCDR Pearce said the new fleet of P-8A aircraft will also have an offensive capability with the Mark 54 torpedo.

“The aircraft is a hunter, designed to find enemy submarines and kill them.

“The C-130 Hercules is also a critical part of the Air Force’s tactical mobility and therefore part of collective air power. The same can be said for the SH-2G(I) Seasprites, which are a key part of our Navy ships’ offensive capability,” he said.

“While we’re not going to be getting into dogfights with enemy fast jets, our air assets are absolutely part of the warfighting capability, and the way in which we deploy them underpinned by our warfighting culture.

“It’s important we see ourselves as warriors. Our training, our skills, our physical fitness and readiness, our equipment, all point towards a singular purpose: being highly effective at fighting wars. And it’s that training, skill, equipment and our mind-set that have led to the Defence Force being regarded as one of the most respected small militaries on the planet,” WGCDR Pearce said.

THE WARRIOR ETHOS

Tūrangawaewae manager Wal Wallace tells Air Force News what the phrase “warrior ethos” means.

“One of the things we speak a lot about is the Māori cultural version of the warrior ethos and the two houses – the house of Tūmataūenga, the Guardian of War and the house of Rongomātāne, the Guardian of Peace.

“They are a matched pair, one never stands alone, they stand together to provide balance. With the warrior of old, it was never just about the ability to wage war, it was also about the ability to wage peace – it was just as important to be skilled in that area.

“We had our own processes when our people had to go out and do battle. When they came back, before we put them back in their houses with their wives and children, we needed to take off the trauma and burden that they carried back from the battlefield. We have our own purifying processes to do that and to transition them through it.

“So when we sent them back to their families, all that stuff was gone and off their shoulders and they could just be a mum and dad again.

“A huge part of the warrior ethos is being able to look after the people.

“When we bring people home out of theatre these days, we try to help them unload their trauma.

“One of the reasons the Tūrangawaewae was built at Ohakea was as a transition base for personnel who have returned from deployments. Here we can provide a culturally safe place to let go of the trauma that they are carrying.

“So it was very clear in the days of old that a warrior wasn’t just a warrior in the battlefield, but was also a warrior in the garden and a warrior in the house and they mean completely different things. For the full warrior ethos you need to take that into account, not just how to kill somebody.”

In order to develop an air warfighting ethos, Air Force aviators should embolden their minds:

To be air-minded (Tū arorangi): An attitude and belief that provides the perspective of air power as a battlespace unconstrained by geography, distance location or time. To be air-minded lies at the core of an air warfighting ethos and is the sum of an aviator’s depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding of the characteristics, employment and impact of air power.



**“WE DO
EVERYTHING
ACCURATELY
AND AS
SAFELY AS
POSSIBLE”**

Warrant Officer Kerry Williams

AIR- MINDEDNESS

To protect (Tū whakamaru):

The belief and understanding that the Air Force's primary reason for being is to protect directed elements in addition to the assets that enable mission success. Fundamental to this principle is the need to protect aviators as the basis of Air Force fighting power.

To prepare (Tū whakareri):

The attitude and belief that preparation is the key to success. The aviator needs to prepare conceptually, morally and physically to achieve the fighting power necessary for current and future operating environments.

To win (Tū toa):

The unyielding personal attitude that enables the aviator to push beyond all internally and externally imposed challenges to achieve success in everything the Air Force does. It is important to understand that in order to win, the aviator must do so both morally and ethically.

Air-mindedness arguably underpins the very principles of the Air Force – to gear everything towards flight in the safest possible way. But what does air-mindedness actually mean to our aviators?

“It is an unwritten expectation, a culture, a mind-set where we do everything accurately and as safely as possible to get our jobs done,” Warrant Officer of the Air Force, Warrant Officer (W/O) Kerry Williams explained.

“To me air-mindedness links closely with integrity, comradeship and the courage to do things right, no matter how long it takes or how complex an issue is. There's no parking up on the side of the road to fix the issues when you're flying a plane.”

Along with safety, the concept supports a flat structure where anybody, regardless of rank, can raise their hand to highlight an issue. It allows the voice of the people to be heard, W/O Williams said.

“Having professional workplaces, training, behaviours and a safe culture allows us to achieve air-mindedness without thinking too much about it – it's just something you do, a behaviour that kicks in when you're in a challenging situation or when nobody's looking.

“Air-mindedness also reflects readiness and understanding of air power, enabling us to meet strategic and operational objectives and be effective air warfighters.”

A VIEW FROM THE PILOTS

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Mare Robertson is now a Qualified Flying Instructor (QFI), working with No. 3 Squadron's A109 helicopters. During her career she has flown missions in Iroquois helicopters in major New Zealand disasters including the Christchurch earthquake, the Pike River Mine explosion and Rena grounding.

"It's why you join the military, to be part of the greater good. With the Rena, we were pulling crew off the ship before it broke in half. For Pike River we were called out to be on standby in case there were survivors who needed to be flown out. They didn't know at that point what had actually happened."

After her time as a line pilot on the Iroquois and A109, she transitioned to the role of a QFI on the T-6C Texan, eventually becoming an A Category QFI, training both ab-initio students and trainee flying instructors. The focus became less about the thrill of flying and getting the job done, and more about preparing the future military aviators for what they might encounter in their careers.

"As a QFI you're not only teaching the pure flying skills, but helping the students understand where they fit in the bigger picture, how to be their best selves and get the best out of them and those around them, and ultimately how they can contribute in a safe, effective and helpful way in a range of high stress situations they may find themselves both airborne and elsewhere."

However, SQNLDR Robertson, who has flown with the Black Falcons aerobatic team, said there was something special about that type of flying.

"That's a buzz. You've all got to be on your best game. You are pretty close to other aircraft putting the utmost trust in yourself and your mates. The coolest thing about it was that I got to do it with some of my closest Air Force mates, which made it special."



“IT’S WHY YOU JOIN THE MILITARY, TO BE PART OF THE GREATER GOOD.”

Squadron Leader Mare Robertson

Pilot Officer (PLTOFF) Josh Gennills will complete his Wings course later this year. As a child his eyes were drawn to the sky as Iroquois and fighter jets flew over his Rongotea home.

Enlisting in the Air Force in 2013 he was offered a role in the avionics trade with No. 3 Squadron, but his mind never strayed too far from the cockpit.

“Part of my job doing maintenance was getting the aircraft out of the hangar and sitting at the controls, which I loved.

“I enjoyed being in avionics, but it got to a point where I needed to commit to the avionics path or do something new. So I reapplied to try to sit in the front and actually leave the ground instead of being just pulled around.”

He made it through the commissioning course and was posted to No. 14 Squadron at Base Ohakea in February last year. PLTOFF Gennills’ first flight was “awesome”.

“I thought this is crazy. You sit down, strap in and are attached to the cockpit to the point where you’re not moving and everything you need to control is within arm’s reach. You know what moves the plane this way and that. It’s a really cool feeling.”

That feeling has stayed with him during all his flight training to date. And as he gets closer to graduating, the more complex the flying is.

“The last three weeks we’ve been getting into basic aerobatics. So we went from the basics of a gentle take off, gentle level and into gentle turns, and a bit of instrument flight where your world is your screen. Now we’re into aerobatics, which is where you start getting that confidence in the aircraft.”

The next step is learning more about instrument flying, followed by a navigation phase, flying around the country using visual reference points, as well as doing time-on-target flights to reach points by a specific time.

PLTOFF Gennills’ heart is with the rotary wing and its search and rescue work and he was inspired watching the NH90s work in Hawke’s Bay after Tropical Cyclone Gabrielle.

“I know it was a terrible situation for the people there, but in those situations, when they happen, I would love to be part of the team that helps out.”



THE FUTURE



AIR FORCE

The future of the Air Force looks exciting. Strength in diversity has been recognised and the service is taking the initiative in encouraging a wide range of recruits in order to deliver the best service in the future.

“FOR MILITARIES, THEY HAVE BETTER BATTLEFIELD PERFORMANCE WHEN THEY HAVE A MORE DIVERSE WORKFORCE.”

Squadron Leader Lisa Eavestaff

STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

The history of women in the Air Force is almost as long as the history of the service itself. The Women's Auxiliary Air Force was formed in 1941 in response to critical manpower shortages but it was not expected to last past the end of World War II.

In 1954 the Women's Royal New Zealand Air Force was formed and seven years later women's trades were aligned with men across all the services. However, women were paid only 80 per cent of the salaries men got for doing the same work, on the basis that they were not as effective.

By 1977 a shift in attitudes towards the value of women in the workforce resulted in a review of Defence policy on the employment of women and women were integrated into the RNZAF. But roles and conditions within the service had limitations that were not fully erased until 2000 when a Defence Force Order cleared the way for women to take a full and equal part in all service activities including combat, peace enforcement and humanitarian operations.

Today, women make up 22.5 per cent of Air Force personnel and a concerted effort is being made to encourage them to study science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects in school and then look to a career in the service.

In 2017 the School to Skies programme was initiated, targeting Year 12 and 13 female students. The week-long initiative is designed to attract more women to the military, by helping them to understand the organisation's values and break down barriers to a military career.

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Lisa Eavestaff said research shows there is still gender bias towards young girls seen in toys marketed to them, television shows and the role models.

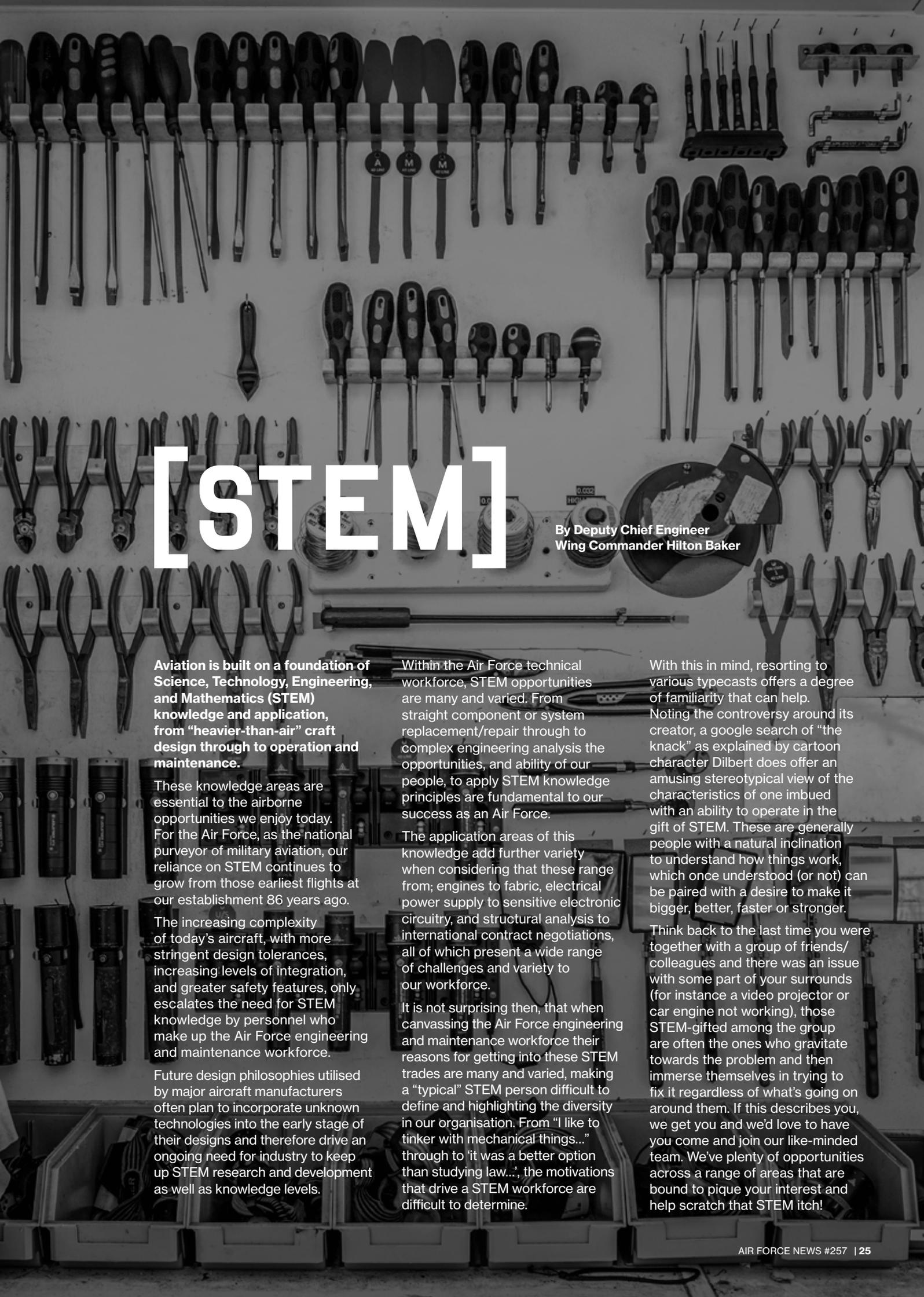
“That's a reason why a lot of females later on choose not to take STEM careers or study the right subjects at school, because there has been an unconscious bias put into them that maybe that's not an option for them and they should be going down other paths.”

Another programme run by the Air Force, Operation Tangata Kanorau, targets intermediate-aged children and looks to encourage girls, Māori and Pacific Islands children to look at how STEM subjects can be applied in an engaging and fun way, SQNLDR Eavestaff said.

“If we can get kids excited about STEM jobs then they can take the right subjects in high school.

“Statistics for any organisation around why diversity is important shows that having those different perspectives leads to better decision-making, more innovation, more creativity and that leads to more profitability for business. For militaries, they have better battlefield performance when they have a more diverse workforce,” she said.

“On a bigger scale, peace agreements are 35% more likely to last when women participate in the decision-making. It just shows how important it is to have those different perspectives, those different lenses.”



[STEM]

By Deputy Chief Engineer
Wing Commander Hilton Baker

Aviation is built on a foundation of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) knowledge and application, from “heavier-than-air” craft design through to operation and maintenance.

These knowledge areas are essential to the airborne opportunities we enjoy today. For the Air Force, as the national purveyor of military aviation, our reliance on STEM continues to grow from those earliest flights at our establishment 86 years ago.

The increasing complexity of today's aircraft, with more stringent design tolerances, increasing levels of integration, and greater safety features, only escalates the need for STEM knowledge by personnel who make up the Air Force engineering and maintenance workforce.

Future design philosophies utilised by major aircraft manufacturers often plan to incorporate unknown technologies into the early stage of their designs and therefore drive an ongoing need for industry to keep up STEM research and development as well as knowledge levels.

Within the Air Force technical workforce, STEM opportunities are many and varied. From straight component or system replacement/repair through to complex engineering analysis the opportunities, and ability of our people, to apply STEM knowledge principles are fundamental to our success as an Air Force.

The application areas of this knowledge add further variety when considering that these range from; engines to fabric, electrical power supply to sensitive electronic circuitry, and structural analysis to international contract negotiations, all of which present a wide range of challenges and variety to our workforce.

It is not surprising then, that when canvassing the Air Force engineering and maintenance workforce their reasons for getting into these STEM trades are many and varied, making a “typical” STEM person difficult to define and highlighting the diversity in our organisation. From “I like to tinker with mechanical things...” through to “it was a better option than studying law...”, the motivations that drive a STEM workforce are difficult to determine.

With this in mind, resorting to various typecasts offers a degree of familiarity that can help.

Noting the controversy around its creator, a google search of “the knack” as explained by cartoon character Dilbert does offer an amusing stereotypical view of the characteristics of one imbued with an ability to operate in the gift of STEM. These are generally people with a natural inclination to understand how things work, which once understood (or not) can be paired with a desire to make it bigger, better, faster or stronger.

Think back to the last time you were together with a group of friends/colleagues and there was an issue with some part of your surrounds (for instance a video projector or car engine not working), those STEM-gifted among the group are often the ones who gravitate towards the problem and then immerse themselves in trying to fix it regardless of what's going on around them. If this describes you, we get you and we'd love to have you come and join our like-minded team. We've plenty of opportunities across a range of areas that are bound to pique your interest and help scratch that STEM itch!



THE RER AH JAM AN



REMANA

AU

AVIATOR

Tūrangawaewae: A Place to Stand
Ko Taikorea te Maunga
Ko Rangitikei te Awa
Ko Pakapakatia te Whenua
Ko Ohakea te Tūrangawaewae
Ko Te Tauaarangi o Aotearoa te Iwi

Taikorea is the mountain
Rangitikei is the river
Pakapakatia is the land
Ohakea is the standing place
The Royal New Zealand Air Force is my Iwi

A PLACE TO STAND

The Air Force Tūrangawaewae at Base Ohakea officially opened at dawn on October 8, 2016. The opening celebrated a cultural coming of age for the Air Force and has since been a focal point for all personnel and visitors to the base.

Tūrangawaewae manager Wal Wallace said that since that morning, the Tūrangawaewae had been fully embraced by the service and its calendar has been full ever since.

“To a point where we’ve had to force ourselves to scale back so staff do not get burnt out.”

Every year staff clock up a lot more time-off-in-lieu than they could ever use, he said.

“Much of what takes place here doesn’t happen between 8am and 5pm – our day might start in the morning and finish at 9pm. Or a group will arrive on a Friday and go home on a Monday. Weekends and holidays don’t really mean much around here. As more groups utilise the place and realise what it can provide, they start to book in advance to keep returning,” Mr Wallace said.

“So what we’ve found is if people want to secure a spot, they almost have to book three months in advance.”

A major part of what the staff do at the Tūrangawaewae revolves around the education of different aspects of Te Ao Māori (Māori world view).

“We have our noho marae (overnight stays), which gives a deeper understanding of the communal side of the culture, because you sleep here, eat here and learn here.”

The Tūrangawaewae is now an entrenched aspect of the Air Force to the point where many activities are not necessarily culturally focussed, such as workshops.

“They come here for the spiritual environment that you can’t find in a typical classroom,” he said.

A number of traditional holistic health practices are also held there because of the benefits that the Tūrangawaewae provides to mental, spiritual and social health.

“You see a Wing Commander, Corporal and Leading Aircraftman washing dishes together, that contributes to social health. It’s a great leveller. Our noho marae are never done in uniform, which gets rid of the rank.”

Since the Tūrangawaewae opened its doors coming up to seven years ago, there have been a number of proud moments, Mr Wallace said.

“There are only three people who work here full time. Whenever we get visiting dignitaries, it is nice to be able to provide them with a full pōwhiri comprised of base personnel who just turn up to help. We put the word out and they come in droves.”

The team at the Tūrangawaewae is focussed on providing more educational opportunities that cover a wide range of cultural aspects from kapahaka (performing arts), tā moko (traditional tattoo), whatu kākahu (cloak weaving), mau rākau (weaponry), te reo (language) and karanga (ritual calling).

“There has also been interest from people wanting to learn to carve,” Mr Wallace said.

“All of these skills are useful to the Air Force – it’s not just about the language. They provide our people with a broad range of knowledge and understanding.”

HAKA O TE TAUA A RANGI: ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE HAKA

This haka belongs to all our Air Force Iwi – uniformed, civilian, men, women, Māori and non-Māori alike. It is the legacy of our forebears. It pays homage to those who came before us and is a beacon for those yet to follow. It differentiates us from all the others and all the other nations.

Wal Wallace changed the original version of the Air Force haka.

“The earlier version of the haka was rolled out in 2003 but wasn’t introduced onto recruit courses until 2008.

“Because it was put together and performed by kapa haka people, they found it easy enough to learn. But when we ran it through a few recruit courses, they got through it, but it was a struggle. I thought it was too complicated and there were some lines that I thought were grammatically incorrect.”

So about 2011 he set to rewriting the whole haka and sent it to Te Taura Whiri I Te Reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission.

“I wanted to present a haka that nobody could question. And when they sent it back, they gave it the green light, so that’s the one we started teaching. It’s much simpler and more straightforward than the previous one. Whenever I see it, I feel very proud. Especially when I see the diversity of the people performing it – owning it.”

It’s one of the few haka that can be led by women, Mr Wallace said.

“That was one of our principles. Most other haka that women can lead were written solely for women. This was our way of acknowledging the fact that women also deploy into theatre and in those situations it doesn’t matter if the person standing beside you is a male or a female.”

Mr Wallace also wrote the Defence Force haka, again with the idea that either men or women could lead it.

ATTESTING IN TE REO MĀORI

Recruits arriving at Base Woodbourne at the beginning of their Air Force career now have a choice on whether they take their oath and affirmation in English or te reo Māori.

“There had been discussions for quite some time around the Air Force progressing in its journey as a bicultural organisation,” Māori Cultural Advisor (Air) Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Brad Anderson said.

“This means recognising te reo Māori as an official language of New Zealand and have that recognised in all of the formalities and the official documents that we have in the organisation.”

When the suggestion was made to offer a te reo Māori version of the oath and affirmation, FLTLT Anderson realised the notion aligned with government organisations and agencies who were already providing legal documentation in both English and Māori.

“We picked this in particular because of what it represented, because it was the official act of someone joining our organisation. We thought, man, what an awesome place to start.”

Te Taura Whiri (the Māori Language Commission) was brought in to take on the translation, which was then checked by Air Force Māori Advisory Group as the subject matter experts.

“We wanted it to withstand scrutiny and when you translate between English and Māori some of the intent can get lost if you don’t understand the context or meaning of what was trying to be said.

“So when we asked Te Taura Whiri to do it, I also met with their translators and talked them through the English version so they understood what the English references meant – what the context was behind some of the military jargon,” FLTLT Anderson said.

“After some discussions with NZDF Legal to ensure the legality of the te reo Māori versions were satisfied, the Chief of Air Force approved the Māori versions for use and directed it be implemented at the next intake.”

As the next intake of recruits arrived at Woodbourne to begin their careers, two of the new aviators chose to attest in te reo Māori.

“I spoke with them both afterwards and asked if they realised they had made history by being the first two to ever attest in te reo in the Air Force.

“I asked why they chose to attest in te reo. One answered that although they do not whakapapa to Māori they were raised to be culturally open-minded and knew the importance of the culture to our country – and as a representative of our country in the Air Force, wanted to support this,” FLTLT Anderson said.

“I thanked them both and told them how awesome it was that they had stepped up to the occasion.”

All the service was trying to do was to provide the equal opportunity for people to attest in either language, he said.

The move is in line with Kia Eke, the Māori Strategic Framework for Te Ope Katua o Aotearoa New Zealand Defence Force, which was introduced earlier this year.





“THERE’S NO EXPECTATION OF WHO DOES WHAT, BUT THE OPPORTUNITY IS THERE. THIS IS A BIG MILESTONE IN OUR ORGANISATION AND ESPECIALLY FOR US AS AN ORGANISATION, IT’S A BIG STEP TOWARDS BECOMING AN AUTHENTIC BICULTURAL ORGANISATION, WHICH IS WHAT WE WANT TO BE.”

Flight Lieutenant Brad Anderson

There is wide recognition that a specific strategy is needed, with clear outcomes and goals, in order to improve partnership with Māori and make progress towards being a bicultural Defence Force.

Kia Eke involves identifying new opportunities while progressing many initiatives that are already happening across the Defence Force, which fall within the programme of change outlined by the framework.

At a service level the Air Force was focussing on education this year. This will aim to have te reo Māori classes delivered at all bases and increase specialist cultural resources through regular development wānanga. These will give focus to kaikōrero (orators) and kaikaranga (those who deliver karanga).

FLTLT Anderson said while everything that was happening with te ao Māori was a great start, there was still a way to go.

“In terms of becoming that authentic bicultural organisation, it will take more than what we have been able to achieve right now. But as we increase our cultural resources, recruit and retain more Māori and continue to provide and promote cultural education everyone within our organisation, we’ll get there.

“We are seeing a lot of support for the culture and it seems like somewhat of a revival within our society. The Māori language and culture is now being taught widely throughout all schools in New Zealand and as we do the same in the Air Force, we will get to where we want to be culturally. It’s a long term thing, but when I look at where we’ve come from – even 10 years ago and 10 years before that – I’m very optimistic about where we’ll be in 10 years’ time.”

A group of seven military personnel, four men and three women, are posed in front of a light-colored building with a red roofline. They are wearing camouflage uniforms. A large tree with yellowing leaves is on the left, casting shadows on the building. The word 'HANGAR' is written in large white letters across the middle of the image, with a stylized white wing icon to its left.

HANGAR

R SPACE



Nestled behind a wooden fence, about a kilometre west of Base Woodbourne, sits a building with couches, a kitchen, a telly, and surrounded by a beautiful garden. The recently completed centre was designed for recruits and personnel from all walks of life to relax and be themselves. It is Te Whare Manaaki, a house of care.

TE WHARE MANAAKI: HOUSE OF CARE

The concept of the centre stemmed from conversations between Warrant Officer (W/O) Treena Brown and the base's previous commander, the late Wing Commander Peter de Rungs.

"Pete was fluent in te reo. I really wanted to speak te reo but was too shy. We talked about creating a safe space to learn and what this could look like for Woodbourne and the Air Force and how we would drive this forward," W/O Brown said.

The building the pair settled on was a dilapidated old golf club. It was away from the base, wasn't a classroom or anybody's office or joe room.

"It was perfect," she said.

Defence Estate and Infrastructure came on board and transformed the structure into a meeting house they decided to call Te Whare Manaaki.

"Manaaki epitomises care and love and support. It suits it for what we want it to be. It's more than a cultural centre. When you look at it, it looks like a whare nui. It's a space for anybody to experience any culture," W/O Brown said.

The intent is for it to support with the delivery of lessons and training. The recruit course, ROI (Regular Officer Induction) course and professional development course all have a bicultural deliverable within it, which would be ideal to be run from the building.

"We could also give haka lessons here. But also, if any trainee wants to grab the key and come down here for a cup of coffee on a Saturday afternoon, that's great because it's a space you can go to that gives you space from your barrack room or from the classroom. Anyone can use it."

The team wanted to create a space where they could deliver anything while building on cultural confidence and cultural competence as an Air Force and have a space to do that, W/O Brown said.

Housed at the building is Base Woodbourne's Pou Tūhono – a carving representing the base's spiritual connection to the Tūrangawaewae. It will rest at Te Whare Manaaki until it is erected somewhere on base, which will require Iwi engagement.

"As people start to use this facility, they too can start engaging with that Pou," she said.

With more people using the building, more ideas were emerging into its use, she said.

"There was talk the other day of creating an above-ground hangi pit in behind it."

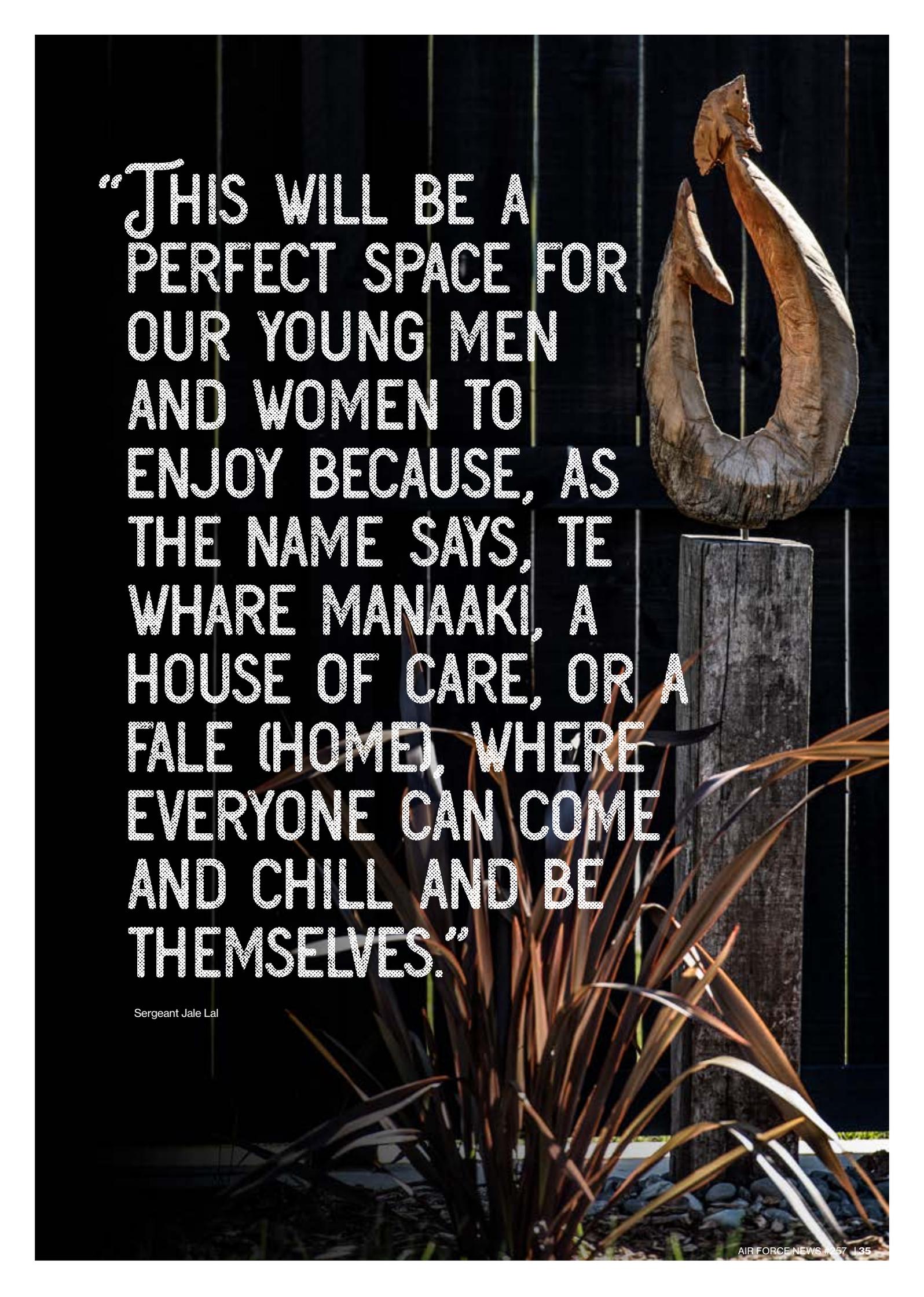
Sergeant (SGT) Jale Lal has also been instrumental in the building's creation and he said there would be a special role for it for recruits coming from a Pasifika background.

"From a Pasifika perspective it's about when the recruits come here for training. For most of these recruits it would be the first time away from home and their community.

He hoped Pasifika recruits would be able to connect with others from Pacific Islands or from other cultures.

"From my perspective we want to educate others on who we are and that will hopefully lead to better understanding of everyone. The Defence Force is made up of so many backgrounds and cultures, which is what is so awesome about it.

"When we launched two years ago the late Wing Commander Peter de Rungs had the vision for this. Unfortunately he's not here to see how beautiful this place is," SGT Lal said.



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Sergeant Jale Lal



“IT’S IMPORTANT THAT WE MAINTAIN A SAFE SPACE FOR ALL CULTURES AND ALSO KEEP OUR AIR FORCE IDENTITY AT THE SAME TIME.”

Sergeant Louie Nicholas

PACIFIC CONNECTION

The Air Force’s connection with the Pacific harks back to November 1941 as war in the Pacific was threatening to take hold. A base in Fiji saw Vickers Vincents and Short Singapore flying boats providing long-range maritime patrol and anti-submarine force in the region.

The squadron remained in the region for 25 years, including locating to Fiji’s Lauthala Bay in 1953. Aircraft including Catalina and Short Sunderland flying boats flew over the Pacific oceans until 1966 and the introduction of the Orions and a relocation to Whenuapai, in Auckland.

But despite the Air Force’s extensive shared history with Pasifika people, enticing them to join the service has been challenging – until recently.

Sergeant (SGT) Louie Nicholas has recently noticed an increase of Pacific Islanders enlisting with the Air Force, across all trades.

“I’ve seen over the past five years a more diverse range of people across all Air Force trades and ranks. When I first joined up most of my peers of Pacific Island descent were either in the avionics/aircraft trade or the logistics trade, and even then that was few and far between.

“In recent years I’ve seen more of a Pacific representation across the other trades such as the fire fighters, communications, force protection and air crew trades. This includes both officers and non-commissioned officers.”

It is a real demonstration that the Air Force values all cultures and means people of Pacific descent can see how welcome they are in all areas of the service.

“They see these Pasifika personnel as role models. At times the military can be seen as something that’s too hard to get into especially when it involves leaving your family behind. But the more Pasifika representation we have, the more people will see that it can open doors to a great career path.”

It was important that future generations of Pacific Islanders wanted to join the service, SGT Nicholas said.

“We need to maintain a safe space for all cultures and also keep our Air Force identity at the same time. At the end of the day it’s about creating a better understanding of our Pasifika culture and how we can work together to use that culture to achieve a greater output across the entire organisation.”



ON THE
 **WINGS OF**



The Air Force takes pride in supporting its people. This is true for our deployed personnel, their families, our injured and those we have lost in service to their country. This engrained part of Air Force culture is cherished by its personnel.

F EAGLES

“THE MILITARY IS
DEFINITELY A BIG FAMILY
IN OUR OWN RIGHT.”

Sergeant Rebekah Richardson

DEPLOYED SUPPORT

When recruits join the Air Force they all have an expectation their new career will involve travel on deployments at some point. This is in fact the reason many sign up in the first place. Depending on the trade Air Force personnel can travel the world, with some deployments lasting longer than others and always with support at hand.

However long the mission takes and wherever in the world it is, the Defence Force has processes in place to ensure our aviators are supported and have solid links to home.

Before any personnel deploy on operations everyone involved takes part in pre-deployment training. It covers everything the person will need to know about their mission.

“Each branch in Joint Forces Headquarters briefs the contingent on what they are going to experience, what entitlements they can get including additional leave and allowances,” Sergeant (SGT) Rebekah Richardson from the Deployed Personnel Support Centre said.

There will also be someone who has already been on the same deployment taking questions from the contingent about what to expect – which can range from the type of clothes to take, to what’s good to eat there and what social opportunities are there.

While the contingent are away, “all of Joint is behind them”, SGT Richardson said.

“If there is an emergency, there is a number staffed 24/7 that deployed people can call. It doesn’t matter where they are in the world, there’s always a number to call back home.

“And if things go wrong at home we have processes in place to get personnel home on different grounds.”

If personnel are deployed for an extended period of time, DPSC arranges for them to travel home for a holiday, or family members can travel to them, she said.

All deployed personnel fill in a family support plan with contact details of family members and a point of contact from your unit who can get messages to whānau and friends.

“Units should be in contact with family members on a regular basis to check if they are okay. I’ve been in a unit where we reached out to partners and asked if they needed lawns mowed or help with the kids.

“The military is definitely a big family in our own right,” SGT Richardson said.

HONOURING OUR PEOPLE

Recognising our past and present veterans has a history reaching back to the traumatic days in 1915 when about 8,000 New Zealand lives were shattered through injury or death at Gallipoli.

These days our aviators can lean on specific Air Force organisations for support, including the Missing Wingman Trust and the Royal New Zealand Air Force Association. The wider defence community has access to Veterans' Affairs and once a year, on April 25 the country collectively remembers and commemorates those lost in military endeavours as well as paying tribute to those still serving.

The Missing Wingman Trust, the brainchild of Wing Commander Tim Costley, was born from tragedy with the deaths of three aviators within four months and the recognition that the official channels of support through both military and civil, didn't always go the whole way.

It was designed with two aims – to support the wider Air Force family and to remember those who we have lost, Trust chair Wing Commander (rtd) Ron Thacker said.

“Since 2010 we've provided in excess of \$160,000 in financial support to people for a range of things: medical support, mobility support, helping with repairs to homes, or food and travel for families supporting injured people.

“We've also relied heavily on our volunteer pool from around the bases who provide support in practical ways, such as working bees at houses for people who are unable to look after them.”

The Trust was a practical demonstration of the mantra that our people are our most important asset, Mr Thacker said.

“This is where we can show that when the chips are down and people are struggling, there will be an organisation wrapped around the Air Force, but not part of the Air Force, which will step in and offer all the help we can.”

The tradition of recognising those who have died and supporting our current and ex-military members is preserved each Anzac Day.

Defence Force historian John Crawford said one of the things that makes the Defence Force and its services special is that they don't turn their backs on people once they leave the service.

“Because of the nature of military service, people have to do things and experience things sometimes that take a toll. Therefore, we have a moral obligation to say, yes, you were serving our country and that just doesn’t finish when you leave the service, we are still interested in you and care about you and we’ll take opportunities to commemorate your service and the service of other people.”

Anyone in the services could be called upon to put their life on the line at some stage and often in very unexpected circumstances, Mr Crawford said.

Looking back to World War I political leaders and ordinary Kiwis were intent on recognising that the people killed were a long way away from their family and friends and they should not be forgotten, he said.

“We do not forget what these people did and what they gave up for us. The passing of time doesn’t change that – they are still dead and they still did that for us, so that’s a really important part of why we have commemorations and why they are particularly important to service personnel.

“In my office I have the wings of a New Zealand pilot Patrick John Farren and a photo of him. Farren was killed in North Africa. The reason I’ve got them is years ago some people turned up at Defence House with a bag of items and they said they were distant relatives of this person and were clearing out a house where his belongings were.

“They were going to take them to the dump unless someone wanted them. I thought I couldn’t let that happen. I thought I couldn’t let that happen. Here’s a guy who was killed serving our country and nobody wanted to remember him. So now I have his photo and his wings in my office and they are there to remind me of the duty I, as a Defence Force historian, have to honour the dead.”





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Defence Force historian John Crawford



GOOD





SPORT



Sport is a great leveller. Wing Commanders can face off against an Aircraftman and banter after matches leads to valuable workplace networks. We take a look at the positive benefits of sports and what the future of sport looks like in the military.

THE VALUE OF SPORT

The importance of playing sport with the Air Force has been recognised for decades. Inter-base and inter-service matches are played, as well as games against outside agencies including the NZ Police.

Sport isn't viewed as just messing about on the sports pitch – it plays a valuable role for military personnel. When games were cancelled during the Covid crisis, it resulted in a negative effect on all the services.

Wing Commander (WGCDR) Rachel James is head of Air Force sports and said the health and fitness that sport promoted was an obvious benefit.

“We need people to be deployable all the time and we need people in uniform to keep themselves to a fitness standard.”

Playing sport also inspired leadership, developed organisational and management skills, encouraged comradeship, and helped networking with a range of people of different ranks, she said.

“You can have a Squadron Leader on the field playing hockey or football alongside a Leading Aircraftman both from different trades and work areas; and they can create a network, which is of benefit to both of them when they go back to their units after the tournament.”

There was a “real regeneration” happening across Defence Force sports at the moment, WGCDR James said.

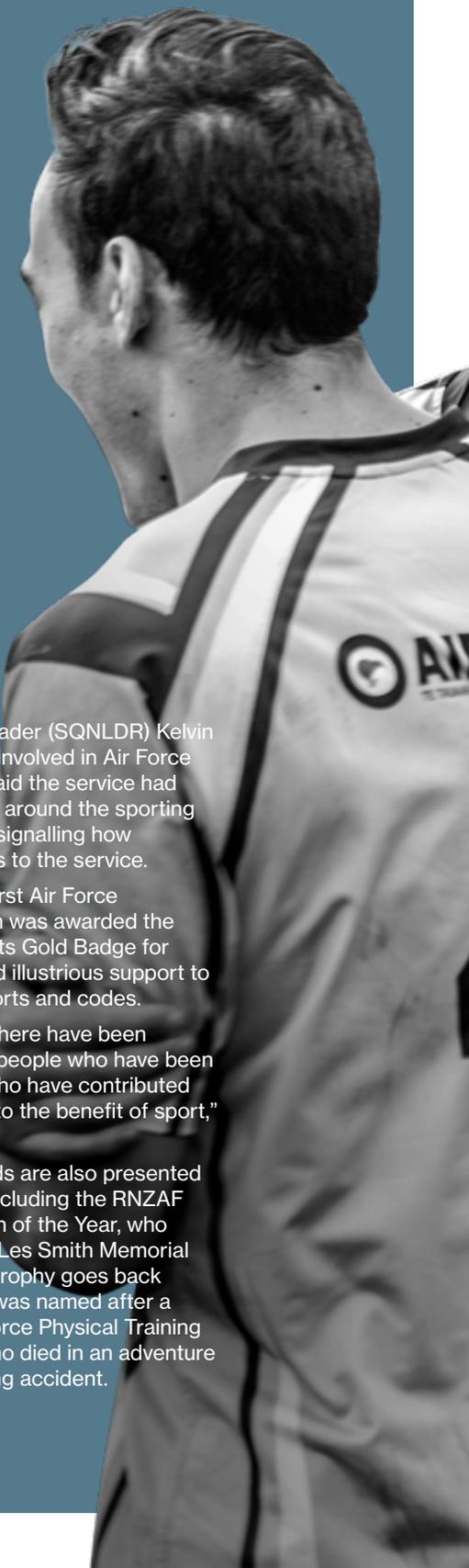
“The Sports Council has said, ‘Well there’s been a hiatus for a couple of years, now is our opportunity to invigorate sports and get people out doing what they love.’”

Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Kelvin Read is also involved in Air Force sports and said the service had official policy around the sporting programme, signalling how important it is to the service.

In 1962 the first Air Force sportsperson was awarded the RNZAF Sports Gold Badge for their long and illustrious support to Air Force sports and codes.

“Since then there have been hundreds of people who have been awarded it who have contributed significantly to the benefit of sport,” he said.

Sports awards are also presented every year, including the RNZAF Sportsperson of the Year, who receives the Les Smith Memorial Trophy. The trophy goes back to 1978 and was named after a former Air Force Physical Training Instructor who died in an adventure training rafting accident.





“IT FOSTERS WHAT THE ORGANISATION IS ABOUT – WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER, WE OPERATE BETTER TOGETHER AND WE OPERATE BETTER BECAUSE WE UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER’S PARTS TO PLAY IN MEETING OUR OUTPUTS.”

Squadron Leader Kelvin Read

Eleven sports are played at inter-service level, mostly made up with team sports.

“That’s because large groups of people are able to easily participate in one activity – it’s easier to organise large sporting tournaments and team activities.

There are a further five sports codes that have been approved by the Chief of Air Force: harriers, bowls, skiing, squash and water polo.

“We are also supporting emerging sports, such as e-sports, drone racing, boxing and body building. Invictus Games is part of the adaptive sports code, which has been approved at an NZDF level,” SQNLDR Read said.

WHAT’S ON THE AIR FORCE SPORTS CALENDAR

NZDF Hockey participated in an Anzac Day international double header in Christchurch. This involved the Australian Defence Force Hockey teams (men and women) travelling across to Aotearoa New Zealand to play the NZDF Hockey teams as curtain raiser games to the respective NZ v AUS games.

RNZAF Rugby League is hosting a Tri-Nations tournament in October and November with the Royal Air Force and Royal Australian Air Force both travelling here to participate.

Inter-base tournaments are planned from April to December for various codes.

