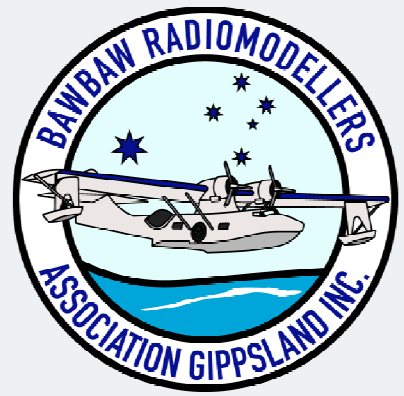


# B.R.A.G.



BawBaw Radiomodellers Association Gippsland Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

Club website: <https://www.bawbawrc.com.au>

April 2021 EDITION

Issue - 05

# SATURDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

## INDOOR FLYING 24 April 2021

Attendance Bob, Fred, Graeme, James, Gavin & Terry. With apologies from Jason. There were a variety of Models Fred had a new built-up Tiger Moth that looked fantastic but needs some more trimming. James had a new Stunt Monkey 850mm 2S power that flew very well and slow inside the big hall. He even lightened it by dropping the under carriage and got better performance!



Fred's Tiger Moth



Bob had his normal assortment of models and again demonstrates his retrieval drone by rescuing a small Cessna from the basketball ring wires. Gavin had his foam SE5A and a couple of small 3 channel models.

Graeme rejuvenated a couple of WWI models – a SE5A and an Eindecker but their age showed with failing glue and parts.



Gary is still missing in action and we hope to see you soon. Bob is looking after your role in the meantime.





# Meet the Night Witches, the Daring Female Pilots Who Bombed Nazis By Night

They were a crucial Soviet asset to winning World War II.

They flew under the cover of darkness in bare-bones plywood biplanes. They braved bullets and frostbite in the air, while battling scepticism and sexual harassment on the ground. They were feared and hated so much by the Nazis that any German airman who downed one was automatically awarded the prestigious Iron Cross medal.

All told, the pioneering all-female 588th Night Bomber Regiment dropped more than 23,000 tons of bombs on Nazi targets. And in doing so, they became a crucial Soviet asset in winning World War II.

The Germans nicknamed them the *Nachthexen*, or “night witches,” because the whooshing noise their wooden planes made resembled that of a sweeping broom. “This sound was the only warning the Germans had. The planes were too small to show up on radar... [or] on infrared locators,” said Steve Prowse, author of the screenplay The Night Witches, a nonfiction account of the little-known female squadron. “They never used radios, so radio locators couldn’t pick them up either. They were basically ghosts.”



*Women pilots of the “Night Witches” receiving orders for an up-coming raid.*

Using female bombardiers wasn’t a first choice. While women had been previously barred from combat, the pressure of an encroaching enemy gave Soviet leaders a reason to rethink the policy. Adolf Hitler had launched Operation Barbarossa, his massive invasion of the Soviet Union, in June 1941. By the fall the Germans were pressing on Moscow, Leningrad was under siege and the Red Army was struggling. The Soviets were desperate. The 588th’s first mission, on June 28, 1942, took aim—successfully—at the headquarters of the invading Nazi forces.

## A Woman Leads the Charge

The squadron was the brainchild of Marina Raskova, known as the “Soviet Amelia Earhart”—famous not only as the first female navigator in the Soviet Air Force but also for her many long-distance flight records. She had been receiving letters from women all across the Soviet Union wanting to join the World War II war effort. While they had been allowed to participate in support roles, there were many who wanted to be gunners and pilots, flying on their own. Many had lost brothers or sweethearts, or had seen their homes and villages ravaged. Seeing an opportunity, Raskova petitioned Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to let her form an all-female fighting squadron.



*Marina Raskova, Moscow, 1938.*

On October 8, 1941, Stalin gave orders to deploy three all-female air force units. The women would not only fly missions and drop bombs, they would return fire—making the Soviet Union the first nation to officially allow women to engage in combat. Previously, women could help transfer planes and ammunition, after which the men took over.

Raskova quickly started to fill out her teams. From more than 2,000 applications, she selected around 400 women for each of the three units. Most were students, ranging in age from 17 to 26. Those selected moved to Engels, a small town north of Stalingrad, to begin training at the Engels School of Aviation.

They underwent a highly compressed education—expected to learn in a few months what it took most soldiers several years to grasp. Each recruit had to train and perform as pilots, navigators, maintenance and ground crew.

Beyond their steep learning curve, the women faced skepticism from some of the male military personnel who believed they added no value to the combat effort.

Raskova did her best to prepare her women for these attitudes, but they still faced sexual harassment, long nights and grueling conditions. “The men didn’t like the ‘little girls’ going to the front line. It was a man’s thing.”



## Making Do With Hand-Me-Downs and Relics

The military, unprepared for women pilots, offered them meager resources. Flyers received hand-me-down uniforms (from male soldiers), including oversized boots. “They had to tear up their bedding and stuff them in their boots to get them to fit.”

Their equipment wasn’t much better. The military provided them with outdated Polikarpov Po-2 biplanes.



*A partisan airplane, the Polikarpov Po-2, during World War II.*



They were 1920s crop-dusters that had been used as training vehicles. These light two-seater, open-cockpit planes were never meant for combat.

"It was like a coffin with wings," said Prowse. Made out of plywood with canvas pulled over, the aircraft offered virtually no protection from the elements.

Flying at night, pilots endured freezing temperatures, wind and frostbite.

In the harsh Soviet winters, the planes became so cold, just touching them would rip off bare skin.

Due to both the planes' limited weight capacity and the military's limited funds, the pilots also lacked other "luxury" items their male counterparts enjoyed. Instead of parachutes (which were too heavy to carry), radar, guns and radios, they were forced to use more rudimentary tools such as rulers, stopwatches, flashlights, pencils, maps and compasses.

There was some upside to the older aircraft. Their maximum speed was slower than the stall speed of the Nazi planes, which meant these wooden planes, ironically, could maneuver faster than the enemy, making them hard to target. They also could easily take off and land from most locations. The downside? When coming under enemy fire, pilots had to duck by sending their planes into dives (almost none of the planes carried defense ammunition). If they happened to be hit by tracer bullets, which carry a pyrotechnic charge, their wooden planes would burst into flames.

### Long Nights, Stealth Tactics

The Polikarpovs could only carry two bombs at a time, one under each wing. In order to make meaningful dents in the German front lines, the regiment sent out up to 40 two-person crews a night. Each would execute between eight and 18 missions a night, flying back to re-arm between runs. The weight of the bombs forced them to fly at lower altitudes, making them a much easier target—hence their night-only missions.



Captain Polina Osipenko (Co-Pilot and Commander of the plane), Deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR Valentina Grizodubova (Navigator), and Senior Lieutenant Marina Raskova right before taking flight. (Credit: Sovfoto/UIG via Getty Images)

The planes, each with a pilot upfront and a navigator in back, travelled in packs: The first planes would go in as bait, attracting German spotlights, which provided much needed illumination. These planes, which rarely had ammunition to defend themselves, would release a flare to light up the intended target. The last plane would idle its engines and glide in darkness to the bombing area. It was this “stealth mode” that created their signature witch’s broom sound. The planes, each with a pilot upfront and a navigator in back, traveled in packs: The first planes would go in as bait, attracting German spotlights, which provided much needed illumination. These planes, which rarely had ammunition to defend themselves, would release a flare to light up the intended target. The last plane would idle its engines and glide in darkness to the bombing area. It was this “stealth mode” that created their signature witch’s broom sound.



There were 12 commandments the Night Witches followed. The first was “be proud you are a woman.” Killing Germans was their job, but in their downtime the heroic flyers still did needlework, patchwork, decorated their planes and danced. They even put the pencils they used for navigation into double duty as eyeliner.

## Disbanded and Overlooked

Their last flight took place on May 4, 1945—when the Night Witches flew within 60 kilometres (approx. 37 miles) of Berlin. Three days later, Germany officially surrendered. According to Prowse, the Germans had two theories about why these women were so successful: They were all criminals who were masters at stealing and had been sent to the front line as punishment—or they had been given special injections that allowed them to see in the night.





Altogether these daredevil heroines flew more than 30,000 missions in total, or about 800 per pilot and navigator. They lost a total of 30 pilots, and 24 of the flyers were awarded the title Hero of the Soviet Union. Raskova, the mother of the movement, died on January 4, 1943, when she was finally sent to the front line—her plane never made it. She was given the very first state funeral of World War II and her ashes were buried in the Kremlin.

Despite being the most highly decorated unit in the Soviet Air Force during the war, the Night Witches regiment was disbanded six months after the end of World War II. And when it came to the big victory-day parade in Moscow, they weren't included—because, it was decided, their planes were too slow.



Petlyakov\_Pe.2FT

Some of the other type planes flown in other female squadrons



Yak 1



## Fly Day Sunday 2-5-21

Several Club members turned up for a Chit Chat/ Socialising and some even flew model planes. Graham flew his new Grumman HU-16 Albatross Twin Engine Sea Plane, the model handled well on the water has plenty of power and good flight duration for electric power. Graham had several flights with this model and also flew a micro ducted fan Mig 15.

Steve had a few models there for Mick to test fly and also practised some manoeuvres for Bronze/Silver Wings.

It was good to see Lindsay out for a fly and did a top job on BBQ duties.

Mick's first time out to the field since surgery I brought a trainer out to do some instructing, with Ray having several flights and starting to get the hang of flying.



Grumman HU-16 Albatross



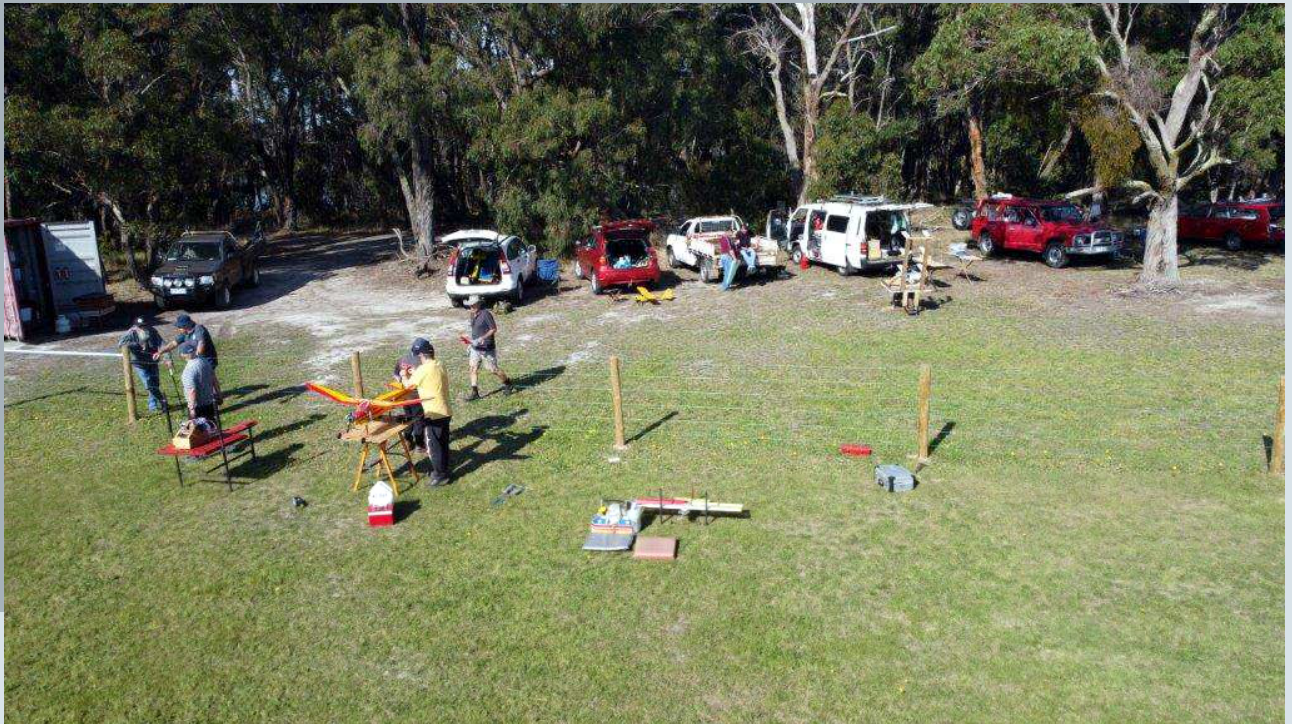
Graeme B flew his Old Timer.  
Bob took several pictures with his drone & Scott had several flights as well also looking keen to do his Silver/Bronze Wings.  
Bill & Ash turned up for the BBQ and a Chat.



Micro Mig 15







Drone Pictures thanks to Bob



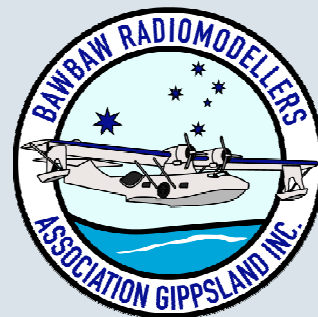
Another Top day out at the field with almost perfect weather for the whole day with several flyers hanging around till 4.00 pm.

Thanks to Lindsay for cooking the food & Steve for the field preparation.



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## CLUB OPENING FLY DAY, SUNDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021



Located at Willow Grove on the edge of the picturesque Blue Rock Lake.

Our new club is excited to show & invite all VMAA – MAAA affiliate clubs & their members to visit and enjoy our new Club site for our first inter club Fly Day.

The site provides a 100 meter long strip suitable for most size aircraft, Blue Rock Lake for float planes, two Heli circles are also setup.

Flying starts at 9.00 am

Gold coin donation appreciated.

There will be a BBQ on the day and cold drinks available.

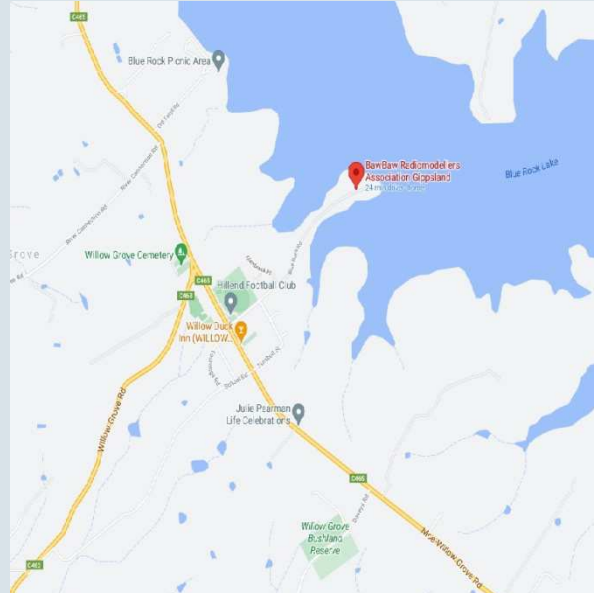
Sausages \$2.00, Hamburgers \$4.00, Drinks \$2.00

Please RSVP to [events@bawbawrc.com.au](mailto:events@bawbawrc.com.au)

Visiting Pilots need Bronze/Silver Wings, Heavy models need to be certified.

For more information please visit:

<https://www.bawbawrc.com.au/i/events>



BRAG Club

Address: 24 Blue Rock Rd, Willow Grove VIC 3825

Contact Mick on 0439537901 for any questions.

RSVP: [events@bawbawrc.com.au](mailto:events@bawbawrc.com.au)

Web site: <https://www.bawbawrc.com.au/i/events>



# MAY 30-5-21 Club Opening Fly Day

We have announced our opening Fly Day it will be on the VMAA Calender and other clubs have been invited, we will need our Club members participation and help to make this a successful day, a working bee will be announced shortly to finish setting up and preparing a few things for the day help will also be needed on the day to direct parking and help show visitors where to set up.

The more help members give the better the day will run.

Just received the working bee email.

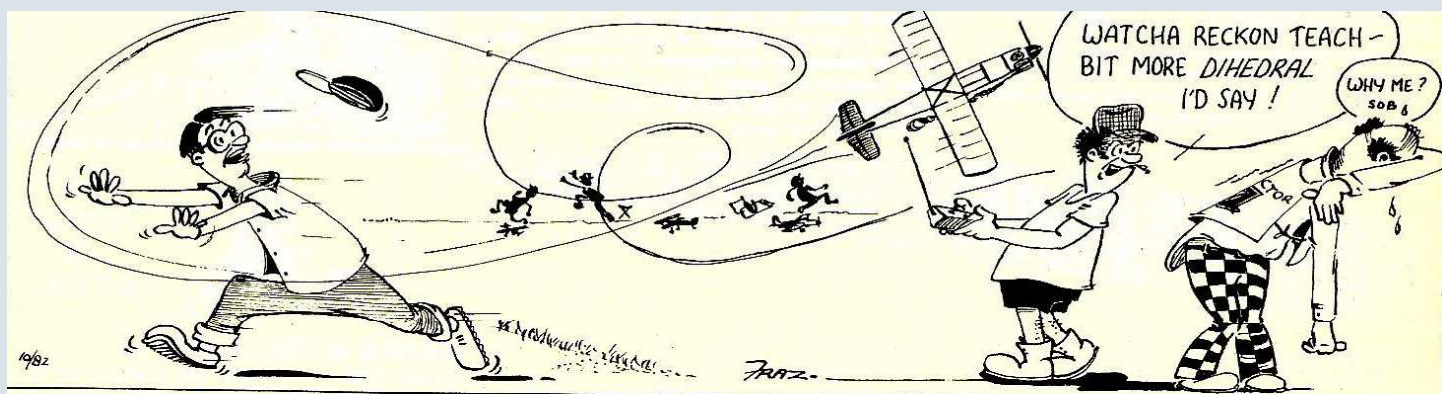
**There will be a working bee this Sunday 16-5-21.**

Start time will be about 9.30.

There should be an opportunity to have a fly if the weather allows as we wont be be working on the strip all the time.

List of Jobs:

- Mark out and install the two helicopter fences. (Jason and I will have most tools for this, may need auger)
- Finish the wiring of the pilot fence
- Fill some holes with dirt in traffic areas (may need trailer to collect dirt)
- Mowing and snipping (need whipper snippers)
- Moving the fallen branches near container area (take for firewood, prefer electric chain saws)
- Remove the fallen twigs/branches at the waters edge where the float planes take off. (Boat, bathers or waders?)
- General clean up
- Other?



Thanks Lindsay



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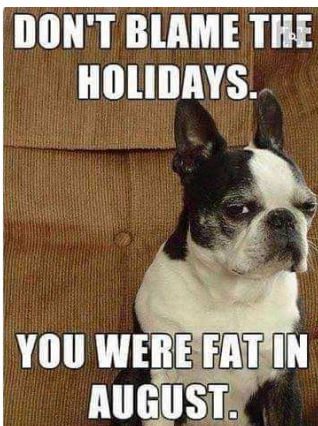
More information can be found <https://www.bawbawrc.com.au/i/sponsors>

**Wife texts husband on a cold  
winter morning:**

**"Windows frozen, won't  
open."**

**Husband texts back: "Gently  
pour some lukewarm water  
over it and then gently tap  
edges with hammer."**

**Wife texts back 10  
minutes later: "Computer  
really messed up now."**



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**Treasurer: Graeme Blackman**