



Looking aft from the radio operator's position in 4 Comm Unit Hudson A16-84 seating can be seen for at least six passengers but Ken Cross recalls that actual seating was for seven-eight. The shine from behind the officer on the right could be from the dinghy enclosure in the door. The army personnel are, unfortunately, not identified despite the official Australian army newspaper, Army, running a copy of the photo on behalf of the author in 1987. (courtesy Ken Cross)



A16-84 was flown to Amberley on 1st May 1943 for a 240 hourly inspection, removal of the target towing gear and fitting out as a passenger aircraft. On 16th September 1943 Sqn Ldr J. MacDonald flew it back to 4 Comm Flight after the work had been completed. Affectionately known as 'Old Blinkers', over the next seven months it was used almost exclusively for the carriage of Army staff officers, particularly within Queensland and to destinations in New Guinea. It was damaged in a freak storm in November 1943 when struck by an Anson which had not been tied down, but appears to have been repaired quickly, within a few days. It is seen here at Higgins field, Cape York, 1943 when struck by an Anson which had not been tied down, but appears to have been repaired quickly, within a few days. It is seen here at Higgins field, Cape York, 1943 when struck by an Anson which had not been tied down, but appears to have been repaired quickly, within a few days. It is seen here at Higgins field, Cape York, 1943 when struck by an Anson which had not been tied down, but appears to have been repaired quickly, within a few days. (courtesy Ken Cross)



A16-55 seen towards the end of its time with No. 4 Communication Unit. It was normally flown by Hugh Hawthorne's crew. Hawthorne's log book shows that he flew it between 1st April 1943 and 12th December 1944. Altogether Hawthorne flew more than 900 hours in A16-55 (out of a total of more than 1,500 hours flown in Hudsons altogether), probably the RAAF record for individual hours on one particular Hudson by one pilot. It is interesting to note that if, as expected, this photo was taken no later than December 1944, then unit code letters 'VM', were in use a lot earlier than officially stated (see Book One, p. 407). Allotted to No. 2 Aircraft Depot for a complete overhaul in October 1944, by the time A16-55 arrived in January 1945 it had been decided that no further work would be carried out on it. Stored post-war for a time, it was subsequently authorised to be written off and as one of the last seven Hudsons held by the RAAF the airframe was later melted down. (courtesy Hugh Hawthorne)

joked, and, provided the propellers revolved and the machine was in the air and a course set – well, what else mattered?

We were heading north. A thick bank of cloud hid everything for many miles of the journey, but when crossing the Macpherson Range it cleared and revealed some remarkable and impressive mountainous country . . .

This particular flying-machine was well punctured with holes where tubes or pipes had once been. The piercing draughts from some of these apertures were something like being squirted with a soda siphon.

Apart from narrow escapes from pneumonia, everything was great. Nobody complained. Anyhow, I was a guest, so far be it from me to

suggest that blankets and hot-water bottles be provided. At times a voice would say "Look out of your window and get a glimpse of Magnetic Island." All I could see was the gently swaying wing of the aircraft full of fascinating rivets.<sup>94</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> advice was received that A16-84 would no longer be used for drogue-towing but would be put at the disposal of Lt-Gen Sir John Lavarack, GOC First Australian Army, following the Hudson's conversion to communication duties. In the meantime Hugh Hawthorne's log book entries indicate that he flew Lavarack as far as Merauke in Dutch New Guinea over the period 28<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> August. Other passengers identified in a unit