

1973: THE FIRST LOSSES

a pin when the handle was pulled, failed to rotate because it was seized. The plate was the interface between the seat and the airframe and when rotated it pulled a sear pin and initiated the rocket motor. The armourers always believed the airframe guys were responsible for servicing it, and vice versa. There were no servicing instructions in any of the manuals. Four of the remaining seven aircraft on board had the same problem.

Barry Evans

1973 snapshot

The air group embarked on 20 August 1973, disembarking on 7 December.

CO VF805 was Bill Callan from 5 June 1972 to 23 January 1974. Lieutenant Commander Grahame King succeeded him.

The squadron's pilots during the year were Lieutenant Commander Tom LaMay USN (SP, posted off on return to Nowra), Lieutenants Ralph McMillan (posted off 13 October), Charlie Rex (posted off 23 October), Rick Symons, Tom Supple (posted off January), Graham Winterflood (posted off October), Jack Mayfield (posted off May), John Siebert, the fortunate Tony DerKinderen (posted off June), Graham Donovan, Murray Smythe, Chris Olsson (SP, posted off January 1974), Peter Cox (Landing Safety Officer, posted off June 1974), and Sub-Lieutenants Jerry Clark, John McCauley and the incredibly lucky Barry Evans.

CO VC724 was Lieutenant Commander Brian Dutch until 22 October. Lieutenant Commander Alan Hickling was SP.

Ten per cent of the fleet was lost in 1973. At the start of 1974, it stood at 18 aircraft: four TA-4Gs and 14 A-4Gs.



Skyhawk 889 which was lost on 8 November 1973 after a failed catapult launch. The shuttle is just behind the nosewheel, with the bridle being the two taut wires leading from it to the catapult hooks in the mainwheel wells. The holdback is the taut wire under the flaps at left, with the holdback restraint the two loose cables under it. The Flight Deck Officer is waving his green flag in his right hand. (FAAAoA)