

1980: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Maher (LSO until 14 December 1981), Allen Clark (posted 4 May), Murray Coppins (posted 14 July), Bob Stumpf USN (14 January until 2 June), Ray France (posted 14 July), Gary Osmond (posted 5 September), Andy Sinclair (AWI until 19 January 1981), Tom White III USMC (6 June 1980 – 12 June 1981), and Sub-Lieutenants Eamon Lines (7 July – 2 July 1982) and Dave Baddams (to 2 July 1982).

CO VC724 was Lieutenant Commander Barrie Daly.

The Skyhawk fleet had dwindled to an almost unworkable number, 10: two TA-4Gs and eight A-4Gs.



*Skyhawk 885 taxiing forward in the initial stage of being loaded on the catapult. Note the plane guard Wessex in the background, positioned approximately 400 metres off the port quarter as described by Dick Chartier. Note also the camouflage. By 1980 the Melbourne embarked a mix of camouflaged and non-camouflaged Skyhawks. The scheme had been first applied on a VC724 A-4 at Nowra in 1977 using washable paint. After formal approval, the scheme was applied by Qantas as airframes were overhauled. (Seapower Centre)*