



JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council
Year 63 No 244 August 2012



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** Post communications for Squadron Secretary to David Longhurst (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to John Gibbins (address above)*

*** Have you notified Roland Orchard if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email?*

Are there others in your family, or circle of friends, who would like to receive a copy by e-mail? Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.

PLEASE TAKE NOTE.....NEW EDITORS MAILING ADDRESS.

ANYTHING THAT YOU WISH TO APPEAR IN THIS JOURNAL MUST BE MAILED OR EMAILED TO ROLAND ORCHARD (address above)

Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to the new Editor Roland Orchard by 30th November 2012. Please feel free to mail or email in your stories, articles or enquires to Roland. All are welcome.

VALE:- Wal Archbold..... NSW Report
Ethel Cobb (widow of Jack)..... WA Report
Margaret Ellis (widow of Jack)... Vic Report



Congratulations to Jim Whitem for being presented with the Order of Australia Medal. A well-deserved award for a life time achievement of service to his country and the community. Well done from all of the 458 Squadron family. Here's Cheers, mate.

FLIGHT REPORTS:

New South Wales Flight report by David Longhurst.

It is my sad duty to advise members of the passing of Wal Archbold, a man I met on just a few occasions but a man who, like so many of the no longer young but still bold of 458, left a lasting impression. Apart from being a man of warmth and humour he was also a larrikin who made the most of his lot. Wal was a farmer, builder and a keen sportsman. He played first grade rugby league for Ourimbah, was a keen fisherman and I'm sure much more, but what impressed me most was his casual comment of having taken up hang gliding at the youthful age of 65. My research indicates that (according to a member of a member of Newcastle Hang Gliding Club,) he first flew at Stockton and Merewether in 1983 and had his last flight through the gap at Boggabri about 10 years ago when he was 80 plus. On that day he got to 9000 ft! A life well lived.

We extend our sincere condolences to his wife Dora and family President Keith Cousins has advised me that Cassie has not been well. As a consequence he has become much more aware of the vital role she has played in keeping him in the manner he had become accustomed to now that he has had to take on much of the household duties role. Keep up the good work Keith we know you will navigate your way through it with your usual aplomb.

Had a chat with Eric Munkman a few days back; he was in great form. Eric is in the process of planning a luncheon in September/October and it is hoped that we will catch up with a number of members and wives who were not able to get to the Anzac Day reunion lunch.

I'm trying not to turn this into a health report, but as you will appreciate a number of our spritely members are feeling the ravages of lives well lived. Our thoughts are with you in this rather chill winter in New South Wales. The good thing is that spring is just a month away.

WA Flight report by Ted Jewell

It is sad to announce the death of Ethel Cobb wife of the late Jack Cobb, a well-known member of the Squadron.

In March I had the usual BBQ at my home in Mandurah, which is about 100km from Perth. It was a lovely day to travel. There was about 16 people who arrived for lunch and it was good to see so many able to make it as we are all getting on in years. I had a few photo's showing all these young airmen of 458 Squadron. I was only 19 years of age then. Those who attended the BBQ were Joan Clues, Vera Etherton and her two grand-daughters, Joanne & Sonya, Bill Kelliher and son Bob, Esme Nobbs, Nick

Bertram and friend Jess, Bob & Dot Bresland, several friends and I. I had a great harvest of pumpkins, a whole barrow load, so they all went home with a supply to eat.

ANZAC DAY.

I am so pleased to see some of the young members coming forward to carry on the 458 Squadron name for Anzac Day, as Joan Clues & the late Bill Clues daughters Vicky and Jennifer and son Garry attended the Dawn Service in King's Park to lay a wreath at the War Memorial for 458 Squadron.

I had a quick look at the 458 Squadron on the internet and was very impressed with what I saw. It has a great future to bring the Squadron history together during and after the war.

I spoke to Jim Palmer recently on the phone and he still enjoys hearing all the news about the Squadron. Jim is in a Nursing Home at Kojonup, south of Perth.

We had a great lunch at Bob and Dot's home in City Beach. There were only nine of us there, because of the flu getting about. We had a call from Colin Williams who said his father was on 458 Squadron so he was invited along. His father was Cliff (Bunny) Williams who was in my tent at one time. Colin has two sisters in Mandurah so I may meet them sometime. Although there was only a few of us, we all had a great day.

We have a lunch planned for 28th October. It is good we are able to keep in touch with these outings. The idea is for everyone to bring a plate of sandwiches or cakes and we will have plenty of hot soup made by our host Dot, so all in together we have a great lunch with, maybe, a glass of wine.

OLD Flight:

Mike Netherway has been keeping in touch and put me in touch with James Douglas, son of S/L John Douglas. Just recently I lost a lot of emails from my version of Outlook Express, Mike's and James Douglas' just to name a couple. James' father John served with 458 on the same crew as Mike's Dad, Len (Captain). James lives in the UK but as I stated I have lost the emails from Mike and James. Please email again so we can stay in touch.

Bob Dangaard also contacted me. It was great to hear from him and apologies again for misspelling your name, Bob. The following is an extract from his email to me.

Dear Roland,

Thank you for your email, the reason why your attempt to email me the journals was not successful was you spelt my name wrong. It is spelt Dangaard first name Bob, same as my father.

I am pleased to hear you have taken on the role as 458 Squadron editor, I wish you luck it will be a very demanding job. My father served in 458 Squadron during the war years as an engine fitter. Whilst in England he married an English girl in London, and after the war he returned to Australia with the squadron and my mother came out as a war bride at a later date. They had 3 children, me and 2 girls.

My father died in 2001 but for many years after the war was good friends with another 458 squadron member who lived in Cairns and his name Earl Hetherington. Earl died recently but unfortunate there was no funeral, apparently his family did not want one.

Once again thank you for getting in touch with me and I look forward to receiving the newsletters.

Regards Bob Dangaard.

Anyone from QLD interested in mustering up some family support and submitting a report would be more than welcome. Please contact Roland Orchard. editor@458raafsquadron.org

South Australia Flight report by Rick Michell

My name is Rick Michell and I am the Treasurer of SA Flight 458 Squadron. My father, the Late Colin E Michell, passed away in 1960. Dad was a Flying Officer and he was a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. He served in the UK, Malta and North West Africa.

We have difficulty in writing a report which is at all interesting, but we have met on Anzac Day for lunch, even though no-one represented 458 in the march - 22 people attended. Our usual early July gathering, on the 5th, had 15 present, with the very welcome presence of Buck Pedersen (aged 98) with his daughters accompanying him. So pleased that Yvonne Hutchinson is so much better after her illness. We hope to continue lunches as long as members are interested. Our best wishes to all.

Our next lunch will be at the Kensi Regent St Kensington on December 2nd.
Rick Michell.

Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard

Sadly we mourn the passing of Margaret Ellis, wife of F/L Jack Ellis. Margaret passed away September 2011.

Excerpt of email sent by Ted Ellis.

Margaret R. Ellis, wife of: Flight Lieutenant 19299 J L W Ellis who passed away in October 2008. This is a message I never thought I would have to pass on to anyone for many years. Unfortunately, my mother, Margaret suffered a minor stroke in August 2011 and lost her power to speak and swallow this lead, we believe, to her losing the will to live as she already suffered from Macular Degeneration and was legally blind. We know that she understood everything we told her, we knew that she was extremely frustrated with her inability to complete any sentences. She passed away peacefully one month later in September. As I am the Executor of her Will you can understand the procedures that have to be undertaken.

To compound this, my partner's mother also passed away in early February. So I apologise for the delay in contacting you to pass on this sad news.

Kindest Regards

Ted Ellis (Son)

All of the 458 Squadron family offer our condolences to son Ted and the Ellis family.

ANZAC DAY



Victoria Members



Fred Ayres ready for the March

Another successful Anzac Day in Melbourne, albeit a wet start for the Navy (Hey, they are used to the watery spray in their faces, aren't they?) Wouldn't you know it just prior to the

RAAF contingent marching, the rain stopped and the sun made an appearance. Those who marched were Eric & Jane Foster (daughter of Ron Eggers) and their daughter Sarah, Howard & Sally Bertram, Rod and son Zack Flentje, Neil Flentje (sons and grandson of Bill and Betty Flentje), Fred Ayres

(Jnr) and daughter Glenda and her son Jeff (son, granddaughter and great grandson of Fred Ayres Snr) (Welcome Glenda and Jeff from Sydney) Christopher and son Jonathan Orchard, Jeremy Orchard, Roland and daughter Emily Orchard. Big thanks to 405 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets who carried the banner and Wimpy poster. Apparently we had good coverage with the ABC telecast. We were joined by Veterans Roy and Barbara Pearce at the Melbourne Bowling Club after the March.

UK Flight report by Keith Wilkinson

The Queen has unveiled a memorial to the airmen of Bomber Command – a development welcomed by members of 458 Squadron here in the UK. The squadron, of course, started life in Bomber Command at Holme-on-Spalding Moor in England – attacking German-occupied territory from Yorkshire. Many Bomber Command veterans have been unhappy over the lack of recognition they have had since World War Two; their contribution at times overshadowed by controversy over the bombing of civilian targets and places like Dresden. This memorial, which cost £6 million, in London's Green Park, commemorates the bravery and sacrifice of 55,573 airmen who lost their lives, as well as "those of all nations" who died in the bombings in World War Two. Among those who have welcomed the memorial is former 458 Squadron Leader George Dunmore, now aged 89. Mr Dunmore flew as co-pilot on about 30 ops with the legendary, larger-than-life Commanding Officer, Bruce McKenzie. He told me: "I think it's first class. I'm all in favour of it." Mr Dunmore feels it's sad that many veterans did not live long enough to witness this. And he believes it's equally unjust that men in the highly dangerous Arctic Convoys didn't get special recognition for their valour.

"It's typical of what's been going wrong with this country," he says. "If anyone deserved a medal, they did."

Mr Dunmore took part in a number of hazardous operations with McKenzie, recalling: "He could put the fear of God into you. He was a born flyer who flew by the seat of his pants. He had no nerves at all."

Not only has he faced the dangers of flying in a Wellington on bombing missions, he also has first-hand experience of being on the receiving end, as a civilian. As a 17-year-old he was in the London borough of Lewisham in the Blitz. "We were only a few miles from the London docks, and the streets around us were being bombed. My late wife, she was younger than me, was bombed-out three times. It affected her all her life."

Ben Robinson, who was 91 years old in February, served with 458 Squadron from the outset at Holme. He remembers the young men going out on bombing raids – and not coming back. Asked if he felt the Bomber Command memorial was long overdue, he said: "Yes, certainly. After the War, Churchill didn't want to know. They were brave lads. I have always thought they did a good job. I think they ought to have been recognised. They lost so much."



Heather reading poem to Jack and one of his granddaughters

In May, I attended the 90th birthday party of former 458 pilot Jack Christianson. Happy Birthday my good friend. This took place in a hotel on the outskirts of Swindon in Wiltshire...one of this summer's rare fine days with plenty of sunshine. As Jack was toasted by his many friends and family, a poem for him was read

out by a relative, Heather Chandler: "We salute you Great Jack, it seems you're perennial. We'll be back (far too quickly) to cheer your centennial." Soon afterwards, Jack had a nice surprise – discovering he has for some time been living close to a former squadron member called Phillip Coggins. The two have met up after a series of coincidences drew them together. They now have 70-odd years of catching up to do! "I have agreed to meet him again in the Autumn," says a very delighted Jack.

No plans fixed yet for a 458 annual reunion in Britain – but chances are it will happen in one form or another with a handful of people. It's a tradition that is being kept going, despite the dwindling numbers of veterans here, or problems with health and mobility. Rest assured, if you have anything to do with the squadron – a former member, or a surviving spouse, you are not forgotten. What has been so amazing about 458 is the way its members have kept together like a family in the many decades since WW2. That spirit is still alive.

New Zealand Flight report by Kevin George

Dear all. Roland posed the question in the last Newsletter, wondering if "All is well in the land of the long white cloud?"

I hasten to assure you all that insofar as my wife and I and our extended family (which includes 12 grandchildren) are well. We live in Central Northland about half way between Auckland and North Cape. Dawn keeps reminding me that we are lucky to live where we do. There is a big range of climate in New Zealand and central Northland, which is semi-tropical, is about as good as it gets. Kaikohe is about equidistant between the East and West coast and over 600 feet above sea level. (Above Tsunami level). You will have heard NZ described as the "Shaky Isles" however earthquakes are so mild here that most people don't notice them. Our rainfall is well distributed throughout the year and droughts are brief. We are still living in the house where we were visited by 2 busloads of Australians on the 25th March, 1984. They were touring NZ end to end and conditions were kind to them.

My father was Australian who grew up in Pambula (NSW) about 12 miles north of Eden. He was brought to NZ by an older brother in 1913 at the age of 16 and died at the age of 83 in 1980. His heart was very much in Australia. I had one sister and the four of us crossed the Tasman three times before World War II. I have crossed the Tasman 44 times, the last time following the final reunion in Canberra in 2005. (a return journey counts as 2) I always feel much at home in Australia and serving with 458 in the Mediterranean was just not planned by me.

Growth (lawn) is rampant here and our 4 acres (with 1 acre in water) is becoming too much for us. The place is not as tidy as we would like. (Much less tidy than in 1984) We have 4 residential flats within the 4 acres, themselves demanding of our time.

I noted the four Vales in the last Newsletter. Recently we can add a Vale from New Zealand. That refers to Jack Pryde, a close and loyal friend who has been a Squadron Association member for about 13 years. He did not serve on 458 but flew Wellingtons with 2 RAF Squadron doing the same sort of work as 458 did. He accompanied me to reunions in Australia on several occasions eg. Orange in 2003 and Canberra in 2005. Jack was 98 and a half when he recently passed on. I will miss him as we kept in close touch and visited each

other on many occasions. He was a Hawkes Bay sheep farmer living about 400 miles from here. A few months ago I received a letter from Peter Francis Hedgcock (son of Peter Henry Hedgcock) who served on 458. He enclosed a photograph of Bluey Dodds, one of my long term WOPAG's. Bluey died some months prior to the Squadron reunion here in 1984.

I am now well advanced into my 90th year. I still have a flying licence; a recreational licence which does not require frequent medical examinations. I can hold it as long as I can retain a vehicle licence. Kind regards to all.



L-R Tom Hampton, Tom Rowan & Bryan

Canada Flight report by Bryan Quinlan

Highlights of July were two visits, the first a lunch meeting with our most active member Tom Rowan from northern Saskatchewan who was making the rounds visiting family members and in Vancouver staying with his nephew Tom Hampton. The latter lives in North Vancouver and was kind enough to drive Tom and join us for lunch in West Vancouver.



Tom Rowan & Bryan

Subsequently, I phoned Tom at home for a report on his travels and found that he was highly upset over a brush with the RCMP on their interpretation of passing two stationary emergency vehicles with their flashing lights on at too high a speed which netted both he and his daughter driving separately fairly hefty fines. Tom claims they were not speeding and disagrees with their ruling on the incident. Tom paid the fines, but being the feisty character he is, may take the matter up with his political representatives and perhaps through the media. Stay tuned!



Jane & Eric Foster

The second visit was from Eric and Jane Foster, daughter of the late Ron Eggers who was Micky Reid's Navigator and who I knew during our time on 458. Joan and I marvelled at their adventuresome spirit and mode of travel via a powerful BMW motor cycle and their flexible plans to spend the next four months travelling across Canada and the USA stopping

wherever they found a place of interest.

We had a very pleasant afternoon visit shooting the breeze and looking at my wartime photo album followed by taking them to dinner at a local eatery. The customary photos were taken but only two of the five or six taken turned out, fortunately both good ones of Jane and Eric, including the intrepid travellers in full gear and mounted on their trusty steed ready for departure.

Was very pleased to hear from Robert (Sandy) McGaw's daughter Sheila that he has made a good recovery from his heart operation and that he is very keen to have a photo of his 458 crew included in the Aug Newsletter and Sheila said she would mail me a copy, hopefully arriving in time to be included as an attachment.

A telephone call to Gladys Markland advises that she visits Bert regularly at his Care facility but unfortunately no significant improvement in his health situation.

Tom Lindsay has very little to report but advised he is nearing completion of his life's story for the 458 website, noting that he is concerned that it may be too long. I told him not to worry as it is impossible to significantly condense

90+ years of life.

Jack Reynolds advised that he had nothing of interest to report.

Roland sent me information about Glenda Brown's search into any family connection with Gordon (Red) Lawson whose photos turned up in her late Uncle's possession which she acquired and ties into her 15 years of research on her family's history. So far she has not discovered any connection and although I knew Red 458 and believe it was his aircraft we saw shot down in flames on the night of 14-15 July 1943 when he went missing, I could not help in any family relationship. Her next step is to visit Archives Canada to see if there is anything there helpful to her research. I certainly admire her determination and dedication to her task. I was able to send her a copy of a newspaper photo of Red and most of his crew roller-skating in Malta.

Last but certainly not least was an e-mail from Jim Whitem that he and his daughter would be making a short cruise-ship stopover in Vancouver near the end of Aug and wondered if it would be possible to meet. We have left it to closer to the arrival date to see if it is feasible to arrange a meeting and Jim will contact me when they arrive or nearing Vancouver.

ARTICLES OF INTEREST.

458 Squadron Website:

www.458raafsquadron.org

OUR WEBSITE TAKES FLIGHT!!

It gives me great pleasure to announce our Website is up and flying!!! We took flight (went live on the worldwide internet) on April 18th 2012, in time for Anzac Day and haven't circled back since. Anyone in the world can read our story – the story of the 458 Squadron heroes who saved the world in the defence of our democratic freedoms. www.458raafsquadron.org contains our Honour Roll, our Nominal Roll, 184 Newsletters (this is 3/4 of them, the remaining 59 being sought to complete the entire collection), our Serviceman's Stories (with more being added everyday – have you added yours?), highlights the opus magnum work of Peter Alexander CMG OBE OAM "We Find and Destroy" the Squadron's Official history in hardcover, the Squadron's Movements (the amazing drawing from Tom Moore and Jock McGowen)... And many other pages of enormously noteworthy 458 records.

We need you - The Website exists primarily to serve our Veterans/Members. Please write or email the Newsletter Editor with your comments and ideas for things to include in the Website. We will endeavour to fulfil your request in any way we can. By doing this the world will know/discover the 458 Squadron Story in even more detail.

Thank you On behalf of the Website Project Team, Jeremy Orchard

GREAT FEATURE OF THE 458 WEBSITE

One of the many great features on the website is the Nominal Roll, the same that appears in the Squadron History. When viewing the Nominal Roll, our intention is to be able to click on each name which will open up a separate page telling the story of that particular Veteran. (This can include written text as well as pictures)

At this early stage, if you want to be included in this fabulous feature, please write an article about yourself or your father, grandfather or great-grandfather and send it to me, via the address on the front page. (Preferably on a word document and attach to an email. If you are unable to email then written is great as well). You may write as much as you like and include war time service as well as pre & post war life. Pictures are also welcome and preferable.

Wouldn't it be fantastic if each and every name on the Nominal Roll had a link to their story which all members could access and read about? These are exciting times with our very own 458 web site. We have received all of the hardware – laptop, printers and scanners and all of the software that goes with them. This will help manage the web site and also start an endless archive for all photos, articles and anything 458 in general. I must admit to feeling very privileged to able to manage all of this equipment and together with the website project committee I'm determined to make sure we use the hardware to the best advantage for all 458ers. With this in mind I am asking every one of you to please send me any of your thoughts, ideas, project ideas, pictures, articles....the list can go on, so we can take full advantage of this equipment. The only limitations to the applications of all of this, is our own imaginations.

458 Web Site Presentation to the 458 Squadron Council



Standing - John Gibbins, Peter Bitmead, Jeremy and Roland Orchard,
Sitting – Eric and Ron Munkman, Bev Bitmead , Keith Cousins, David Longhurst.
Inset- Rob Wilkinson.(photographer)

Jeremy and I flew to Sydney on June 19 for a presentation of the 458 Squadron Website. On behalf of the website project team, we would like to thank the Council for a great response to our presentation.

Focus on a 458 Veteran

(Black) Jack Baker by Charles Baker

Dad initially joined the Army at the outbreak of war but quickly realised that life might be a little more bearable with a solid roof over his head and subsequently transferred to the RAAF. I think also he wasn't as keen on shovelling in those days as he became later as a keen gardener. Anyway, into

the Air Force he went, initially to do pilot training at Parafield in South Australia. To his disappointment at the time he didn't qualify as a pilot and went into crew training instead. He spent the war with 458 as a WAG on the Wellington and I suppose you would have to say that he was lucky to survive considering the vulnerability of tail gunners. He must have had a first class skipper in control! Apart from a heavy crash landing one time which caused the crew to jump out and scatter like startled jackrabbits his service was completed physically unscathed except for a wrenched knee, suffered in the crash landing, that has caused him some problems to this day. Whilst spending time around the Mediterranean he had the unique experience of seeing Mount Etna in Sicily erupting. After the war Dad joined the RAAF Reserve and spent many years as a Flight Lieutenant with the Air Training Corps (ATC). I was a beneficiary of this in that I spent nearly 4 years in The ATC which gave me my love of aircraft and a keen (but not always practised) sense of discipline and mateship. During his time in England he met Grace, his third and current wife. She was a volunteer nurse. They went their separate ways not long after, each marrying separately and raising families, Jack in Australia after the war and Grace in England. By the late 70's both had lost their partners and sometime in the mid 90's a mutual acquaintance put them in touch again. Before long they were married, a ceremony in England followed by one in Sydney clinched the exercise. They lived in Sussex for a few years then moved to Sydney where Dad was no longer the only one swimming in the ocean in the morning. Apart from his war service Dad spent his entire working life with the NSW Railways as a draughtsman initially then as an engineer. He loved physical fitness. He ran in about 30 Sydney City To Surfs fun runs (beating me , 29 years younger, by about 20 minutes each time), ran numerous marathons (!) and was a keen member of Veterans' Athletics which took him to various locations around the world to Veterans' Games. When I was a boy he would take me and my brothers and sisters to Balmoral Beach in Sydney 2 or 3 mornings a week before school/work for a swim, a run along the beach and to throw a tennis ball. We all learnt to swim very young. For all these reasons it is sad to see his decline over the past few years. I think that if it wasn't for his commitment to his health over his long life he would not have found himself in his 94th year. *Charles Baker*



While in Sydney, Jeremy and I took the opportunity to meet Jack. Thanks to Charles and his wife Pat for enabling us to visit. Jack was very contemplative but remembered Dad (Gordon Orchard) fondly. We also had the pleasure of meeting Jack's wife, Grace and Charles' wife Pat.

**Jack & Grace Baker seated.
Jeremy, Charles and Pat (standing)**



LOST on ANZAC Day (NSW) - 458 Lapel Badge -

458 Lapel Badge Found outside NSW Masonic Club following the 458 Anzac Day luncheon. Please contact Rob Wilkinson to retrieve it.



Peter Hedgcock (son of Peter Hedgcock Snr) would like to put out a general broadcast to any relatives of John Sheerlock. Peter would dearly like to hear from any relatives or friends of John. Peter's email address is hedgy2002@hotmail.com



Email from Julie Beashel (nee Alexander)



I live in Tasmania on Bruny Island and thought your members might like to see how we honour Anzac Day on our Island. I know it has been a while since Anzac Day this year, but I have been slow catching up with my 'things to do' of which this was one. I have attached some pics for you if you are interested.

We started with Dawn Service and a Bugler. Followed by being Piped in to Breakfast of Bacon, Eggs, Tomato, Sausages, etc.. What a feast. Also of course, the obligatory Rum!!!!They do this every year. We have a wonderful community here and always enjoy these get togethers.

Regards

Julie Beashel

Ed. Thanks Julie it was lovely to hear from you. More of Julie's photos are on the 458 website www.458raafsquadron.org under Anzac Day – Reports from the Day page.

Embroidered patch of the 458 Squadron Crest (with Velcro backing) - Now in stock



Badge + Postage within Australia:- 11.50AUD

(Prices for New Zealand, UK and Canada are based on the fluctuations in the Aussie Dollar)

Order via website www.458raafsquadron.org or write to Roland Orchard 78 Edward Rd. Chirnside Park. 3116 Victoria, Australia. Thanks to our Victorian Senior Vice President Chris Orchard for his tireless work in sourcing this new supplier.



Bon Voyage to Jim Whitem and Wendy Whitem-Trunz who are off on a 10 week Pacific cruise from 27 July to 11 October.



458 WA Reunion 1958 Tape Recording

Would anyone still have a copy of this tape recording or for that matter any other tape recording of a 458 Reunion or meeting?

Arthur Budd recorded the 1958 WA Reunion and apparently, according to the 458 Newsletter Volume 9 No. 35 of May 1958, sent copies to other States and England. If anyone has a copy or knows someone with a copy could you please contact Roland Orchard. editor@458raafsquadron.org



Excerpt of Email from Adam Wagstaffe in response to his purchase of a 458 Badge and subsequent enquiry from myself (Ed). Adam lives in Ontario, Canada.

My uncle (father's brother) was WO John Michael Wagstaffe a pilot with 458 in 1943/44. He was part of FO McMillan's crew that crashed in Malta 17 April 1944.

Adam

Jojecaaero.com

Adam Wagstaffe, Jojeca Aero

FEATURE STORY



Email from Alghero, Sardinia.



Valter Battistoni

The following are very interesting emails from our new friend of 458 Squadron, Valter Battistoni. Valter lives in Alghero, Sardinia, is an author and wants some information to further his research. Valter has given me permission to copy his emails and has had a response from Mr Jim Whitem OAM to date. Feel free to email him with any

information that you may have. Valter's email address is

battvtr@tiscali.it

(Thanks Valter and you certainly *do* have a story to tell.)

Email 1.

Sirs,

I recently wrote a book on the history of the airport of Alghero (Sardinia, Italy) from 1938 to 1995. Writing the book I found out the story of RAAF 458^o during the WWII and the period when they were detached to Alghero in the spring/summer of 1944. In this research the RAAF Museum gave me a precious help. However there are some events that I did not manage to explain clearly due to a lack of sources. First of all the number of aircraft deployed at Alghero: surely they were Vickers Wellington, but the number is still unreported. Then I could not find any photos or paper with particular regard to the airbase logistic (offices, dormitories, canteen, medical services). Finally some sources report four incidents at the airfield or nearby:

- **13 Aug 1944 HF400 on landing**
- **14 Aug 1944 HF401 on ditching**
- **14 Aug 1944 HF342 on ditching**
- **01 Sep 1944 HF354 on landing**

The two incidents of 14 Aug are described as a forced ditching in front of the beach of "The Lido" (or "San Giovanni") due to lack of fuel at the end of a mission given the airfield closed for a thick fog. I'm living in Alghero from decades and I also was the airport director but I never heard before this story as well as nobody of the local old people I've questioned remembers or could report these ditching. On the other hand the presence of fog in the middle of August had to be a very rare occurrence as I don't remember such a case in 35 years of airport life. It is pretty common however in other periods of the year. I wonder if you could help me in discovering the complete stories of these four incidents, with particular regard to the events of 14. Any other information will be very appreciated as I would like to write an article on the



Brief History of the Airport at Alghero by Valter Battistoni

presence of RAAF in this Sardinian airport. Thank you very much for your help.

Valter Battistoni

Email 2.

Dear Roland and other Ladies and Gentlemen,

I read with great pleasure your email and first of all I would like to congratulate all of you for your efforts to preserve the history of 458 RAAF Sqdn. When I began to make researches in order to write down my book, I was thinking mainly of civil aviation and the role of Alghero airport in the development of commercial charter flights to/from Britain, which started in 1954. My father was Alghero Station Manager for Alitalia Airlines from 1960 to 1965 and I served there as CAA Airport Director from 1975 to 2004. But it was obviously impossible not to mention the WWII period. Alghero airport was set up as a military airport in 1938 mainly for controlling the Northern-Western Mediterranean areas, probably for the needs of the Spanish war, but not only. I discovered with great surprise that after 8 September 1943 (armistice) the airport became a very relevant base for USAAF, RAF, RAAF and even SAAF. It lasted more or less one year, and then all the groups moved to other airbases in Corsica or in the Italian mainland, following the northbound movements of the front line, as also the 458 did. I am also realizing that few people here remember those days and many are really surprised to read the story of the Allied presence at Alghero. Probably it happens because old people did not remember with pleasure the years of war, with all sacrifices, privations, hunger and grief and were not in the mood to narrate their stories to their sons and grandchildren. In this way an important part of the history of this town risks to be lost. So my book is a small attempt to recover the memory.

As for the mentioned incidents, and in particular the two ditching, another question arises: were the airplanes recovered, and how, or are they still there under the sand?

If the aircraft ditched at about 200 yards (180 mt.) from the Lido shore, the sea in that area is deep not more than 5/6 mt. even less. Only in the northern part of the gulf, just in front of the village of Fertilia, it is deep about 10/12 mt. But the report just mentions Lido while the northern beach has another name; you may take a look of the area on your own with Google Earth. I have asked several old fishermen but nobody remembers those events.

So it will be very interesting to ascertain what happened to the two Wellingtons: there will be anybody of you who may help? In my opinion the aircraft must have recovered and brought somehow to the airport; otherwise it would be very exciting trying to find the wreckages. I can also try to ask the local Coast Guard to find out if Italians had a role in removing the airplanes, after the Squadron departed to Foggia. On the other hand the Allied gave the airport back to Italians on October/November 1944.

I really thank you again for your precious help and hope to find out other important elements to reconstruct the story of those days in Alghero.

Every contribution from your Association will be highly appreciated.

Finally I enclose the front cover of my book and the page where the RAAF incidents are cited. I also apologize for my poor English and hope you will forgive me.

Kind Regards

Valter Battistoni

PS I have a beautiful memory of Australia which I visited twice in 1975 and 1998. Who knows if I will experience a third time ☺

Email 3.

Well, I did not think I had a "story" to be told, so far! I just am one of the many who like history and in particular aviation history. Anyway please feel free to include whatever you like in the next 458° newsletter. As for me, you already have a little description of myself in one of my e-mails, as well as a photo of my book cover. Please also find attached another photo of myself (it is the same published on linkedin.com where you may also find a short profile on what I'm currently doing). Finally I enclose a picture of the beach in front of which the two Wellington ditched in 1944. Something must still be under the water over there. The small village on the coast is Fertilia and the highest hill is the Monte Doglia, just in case you wanted to recognize the site on Google Earth. By the way, I asked local old people, fishermen and scuba divers, about the Wellington ditching's. Somebody told he heard something many years ago, and another one said he (he was a child) and his father went immediately with their fishing boat to the site in order to rescue the crew, but nobody needed help. Later on a truck with "coloured men" (Americans?) came from the airport to pull one wreck by wires to the shore. The next day a lot of people started to dive in order to recover any kind of material (everything in those days was precious for the people who were really suffering hunger). And this was the end of other wrecks. I am now following the tracks of a RAF B26 Marauder that hit a hill nearby the airport: the only thing I managed to find so far is a oven cover.

Please don't forget to e-mail me a copy of the newsletter!

Kind Regards

Valter

458 Wellingtons ditched 15 August 1944
in the shallow waters off this
beach(photo thanks to Valter)

Photos below thanks to Fred Ayres.



Orch's Comments

I appreciate everyone's input and apologies must go to those who wished to have an article included but unfortunately could not be due to restrictions on the number of pages I can publish. Owing to growing postal costs of hard copies of the 458 Journal I humbly ask those 2nd, 3rd, 4th and even 5th generation members who can afford to donate to keep this publication going ad- infinitum, please visit our website www.458raafsquadron.org and click on the Donations page. Our 458 Veterans went through uncertain times and hardships that unless we as individuals experienced, couldn't possibly understand. What simpler way than to put your hand in your pocket to help perpetuate the memory of our heroic 458ers.