



JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL
Year 73 No. 272 December 2022



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QLD, TAS, NT, ACT and New Zealand – Looking for volunteers.

*** Mail all communications for Squadron Secretary to Stephen Bruce (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to Beryl Dodds (address above) ** Have you notified Editor 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 postal address above or email Roland at editor@458raafsquadron.org**
Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter #273 are due to The Editor by 30th March, 2023.

VALE –

**Her Majesty the Late Queen Elizabeth II.
Horatia Mary (Roush) Hargraves.**

**1926-2022
NSW Flight**



FLIGHT REPORTS

Canada Flight Report by Adam & Cate Wagstaffe

Introducing Adam Wagstaffe and daughter Cate, who have kindly offered their combined knowledge and skills to take over the reins as Canada Flight's Correspondents.

Together with other family members, Adam owns and operates a company called JoJeCa Aero. Cate has a degree in History and Archaeology. Adam's Uncle, John Michael Wagstaffe, served with 458 Squadron as a pilot. Adam and Cate are from North Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada and are pictured here in front of their 1943 Aeronca L-3B at the Pitt Meadows Airport in BC. Visit their website and learn about their exciting company. <https://www.jojecaaero.com/>



458th Squadron Newsletter

Canadian Update. November 2022

We are the nephew and great niece of WO John Michael Wagstaffe RAF (1219231) pilot with 458, who was killed in action April 19th, 1944 on the fateful day in Malta well documented by Peter Alexander.

Although Michael was English and was RAF, and I was born in England, I emigrated to Canada in 1975 and Cate was born here. Our interest is in highlighting the Canadian members of 458, providing background, histories, photographs and family connections (both living and past).



W/O John Michael Wagstaffe

It will not be possible to fill the very large shoes of the late Bryan Quinlan, who represented the Canadian flight of 458 for so long. We will not try, but will, as the following generations, attempt to use Cate's history, archaeology and research back ground to tell some interesting biographies of the many

Canadians who served with
458 RAAF Squadron.

F/O John (Jack) Downs



By way of establishing the first link we would like to continue the history of F/O John (Jack) William Downs, or 'Brush' Downs as he was affectionately called among his crew. Jack was born March 4th, 1922 in Welland, Ontario, Canada to Father Benjamin and Mother Margaret Elizabeth Hart, both born in England. Jack also had two sisters Grace and Ursula – who both passed away in 2011. His nickname 'Brush' while obvious to the English and Australian

members of this newsletters, came as a surprise to his family (and to me, I had to ask my dad what it meant).

I have recently been in touch with Jack Downs' niece Cathy, daughter of Grace, who never met her Uncle Jack. She was excited to learn more about her great uncle and linked me to other family members. We are in correspondence to find out more of Jack.

I never met my Great Uncle Michael either. Our family lost touch with Uncle Michael's wife Pauline (married just 2 months before his death), but I was able to make contact with Pauline's daughter-in-law Joy, who sent me Michael's Flying Logbook. Kept for almost 80 years, we have been able to pour through the book together to discover both Michael and Jack's career with 458 – flying as 1st and 2nd pilots. Hence why we've integrated them together in this article.

Uncle Michael enlisting in February of 1941. He went from Barclay's Bank in Harrogate to flying Tiger Moths in Bulawayo in just a few months. Michael proceeded on to Harwards for his wings and while being recommended for fighters moved on to Oxfords and Ansons before moving to George, South Africa for the Navigation reconnaissance course before shipping to England.

Jack Downs joined the Toronto Royal Canadian Air Force Reserve in July of 1941 and went from small town Welland Ontario to training in Lake Erie, Ontario close, in fact, to his grandparents' cottage. We don't have more information yet on Jack's training, but Cathy's family are in the process of acquiring his records for more details.

It was at this time, in mid-1942, the crew came together for training Vickers Wellington: Jack Downs (First Pilot), Mike Wagstaffe (Second Pilot), 'Tubby' Satin (Navigator), Bill Wake – the UK Co-President and subject of Keith Wilkinson's report in the last editions of the newsletter, Reg Windett, and Ron Lewis-Lavender (Wireless Operators and Air Gunners).



Crew: Bill Wake, Ron Lewis-Lavender, "Brush" Downs, Reg Windett, and Mike Wagstaffe (Photo provided by Reg Windett).

They completed the rest of their training together, including Coastal Operational Training in Silloth from August to February of 1943. This training involved periscope bombing. Dropping depth charges from 50 or so feet above water to practice low flying and gauging the point of release on a target towed by a boat. Dead reckoning: using 'BABS' or Blind Approach Beam Systems. Low level bombing: an exercise for Downs to bomb by eye from a height of 50 to 100 feet. Air to air firing: presumably at a drogue towed by another aircraft, and formation flying.

No 6 (C) O.T.U. ENGLAND					
YEAR	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR	2ND PILOT, PUPIL	DUTY
MONTH DATE	Type	No.	1ST PILOT	OR PASSENGER	(INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
MAR 28	Wellington	8	P/O ARCON	P/O DOWNS SELF	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
MAR 28	Wellington	8	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	PERISCOPE BOMBING
MAR 1	Wellington	14	P/O ARCON	P/O DOWNS SELF	PERISCOPE BOMBING (UNSUCCESSFUL)
MAR 3	Wellington	26	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	AIR TO AIR FIRING
MAR 4	Wellington	14	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	D.R. H
MAR 4	Wellington	14	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW LEVEL BOMBING
MAR 4	Wellington	14	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
MAR 24	Wellington	26	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	NIGHT CIRCUITS
MAR 1	Wellington	25	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	NIGHT CIRCUITS
MAR 5	Wellington	20	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	NIGHT CIRCUITS
MAR 5	Wellington	25	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	NIGHT CIRCUITS
MAR 14	Wellington	25	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
MAR 19	Wellington	19	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	AIR TEST
MAR 19	Wellington	19	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	AIR TEST
MAR 20	Wellington	22	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	D.R.S. CABLE OVER OCEAN
MAR 20	Wellington	1	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	AIR TO AIR FIRING
MAR 20	Wellington	1	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	R.A.6 CREEPING FIRE AHEAD
MAR 21	Wellington	1	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	DUAL CONVERSION
MAR 23	Wellington	14	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	DUAL CONVERSION
MAR 26	Wellington	26	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	207. NIGHT
MAR 28	Wellington	17	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	R.R.S.
SUMMARY FOR 6(C) O.T.U.					1 WELLINGTON
UNIT 6(C) O.T.U.					2
DATE 29 th MARCH					3
SIGNATURE					4

No. 6 Operational Training Unit August 1942 to February 1943

No 1 T.T.U. TURNBERRY					
YEAR	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR	2ND PILOT, PUPIL	DUTY
MONTH DATE	Type	No.	1ST PILOT	OR PASSENGER	(INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
APRIL 8	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
APRIL 10	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	DUMMY ATTACKS ON SHIP
APRIL 10	Wellington	401	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 10	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 10	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING AT NIGHT
APRIL 10	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 12	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	DUMMY ATTACKS ON SHIP
APRIL 12	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 12	Wellington	406	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 14	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 14	Wellington	406	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	" " "
APRIL 14	Wellington	403	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 16	Wellington	406	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 18	Wellington	407	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 19	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 19	Wellington	406	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 20	Wellington	404	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 24	Wellington	402	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 24	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 28	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE
APRIL 28	Wellington	405	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	LOW FLYING EXERCISE

No. 1 Torpedo Training Unit March 1943 to April 1943

Then to Torpedo Training in Turnberry in March 1943 with Dummy attacks on ships, an exercise for both bomb aimer and pilot to concentrate on flying straight and level at 3000 feet. Low flying at night, attacks with runners, and moonlight attacks.

Lastly Ferry Training in Talbenny in June 1943. Heavy load take-off (to simulate a full cargo of depth charges), patrols of the Bay of Biscay, and compass swing consumption tests – a lot of math required to account for magnet deviations. Just nine days later, the

303. F.T.U. ENGLAND					
YEAR	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR	2ND PILOT, PUPIL	DUTY
MONTH DATE	Type	No.	1ST PILOT	OR PASSENGER	(INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
JUNE 5 th	Wellington	458	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
JUNE 5 th	Wellington	F	P/O SMITH	SELF & CREW	LOCAL FLYING
JUNE 5 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	HEAVY LOAD TAKE OFF
JUNE 11 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	COMPASS SWING CONSUMPTION TEST
JUNE 12 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	NAR. SOUTH BISE ATLANTIC AREA
JUNE 13 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	AIR TEST
JUNE 15 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	A/S PATROL BAY OF BISCAY
JUNE 16 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	TALBENNY TO HERNE
JUNE 17 th	Wellington	F	P/O DOWNS	SELF & CREW	HERNE TO RAS EL MAR
JUNE 29 th	Wellington		P/O KINGSTON	SELF	RAS EL MAR TO BLIDA
SUMMARY FOR JUNE 1943					1 WELLINGTON
UNIT 303 F.T.U.					
DATE 30 th JUNE 1943					
SIGNATURE					

No. 303 Ferry Training Unit May to June 1943



crew of Jack Downs left Talbenny to join 458 in Protville via Hurn, Ras El Mar, and Blida.

Their first mission as a crew was August 4th, 1943, a shipping search north of Archipelago Toscano, according to the squadron Ops Book. What happened to Satin, we don't know, but quickly the crew of Jack Downs took to their task of endless armed patrols along the coasts of Corsica and Sardinia. Michael was admitted to No. 1 RAF Hospital in Protville in September of 1943. We believe he suffered from some sort of insect bite, as he wrote home to thank his parents for sending the rare and hard to find Calamine lotion and a liquid antiseptic called TCP. Michael would never again fly as 2nd pilot to Downs, as Downs himself was admitted to No. 1 RAF Hospital for Malaria and died September 27th, 1943.

S/A.	W.P.	P/O. Downs	Captain	8944	0610	Shipping Search north of Archipelago Toscano.
		Sgt. Bottin	Navigator			
		Sgt. Wagstaffe	2nd. Pilot			
		Sgt. Wake	U.S.O.			
		Sgt. Lavender	"			
		Sgt. Windott	"			

The Downs crew was integrated into other crews, and despite this bitter sweet departure, I can't help but be thankful to the crew members who wrote letters to my father and remembered Michael; the quiet, soft-spoken chap they spent a brief time with. And they remembered Downs, as Bill Wake said in his last report, "A Canadian pilot who I had absolute faith in". The relatives of Jack Downs were extremely grateful to receive

Downs crew joined up with 458 Sqd. in Protville and flew first missions in August of 1943

a booklet personally made by Bill Wake about his time with Jack and 458. Cathy and I have been corresponding and I have been sharing Uncle Michaels logbook, to hopefully piece together both their careers. They have been particularly pleased to see the log book entries with Downs listed as Pilot. Cathy's husband Keith Ellard Cummings was named after two uncles that died in the war. Pilot Officer Ellard Alexander

458 SQUADRON						
YEAR		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR	2ND PILOT, PUPIL	DUTY
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.	1st PILOT	OR PASSENGER	(INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)
JULY	17	WELLINGTON	P	P/O. Downs	SELF 2 CREW	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD
JULY	24	WELLINGTON	H	P/O. Thompson	SELF	ARMED PATROL SW. S. ITALY
JULY	26	WELLINGTON	H	SELF		CIRCULARS 3 HANDLING
SUMMARY FOR JULY 1943						1. WELLINGTON
UNIT 458 Squadron						"
DATE 30 th JULY 1943						"
SIGNATURE P/O. Wagstaffe						"
AUG	2 nd	WELLINGTON	P	P/O. DOWNS	SELF 2 CREW	ARCO. CORSICA ELBA ITALY
SEPT	2 nd	WELLINGTON	H	P/O. DAVIS	SELF 2 CREW	ARMED PATROL CASSICA ELBA
SUMMARY FOR AUGUST SEPTEMBER 1943						1. WELLINGTON
UNIT 458 Squadron						"
DATE 27 th OCT 1943						"
SIGNATURE P/O. Wagstaffe						"
PILOT COMMANDER						Asbury - 458
						CL. E. CH. 458 Sqd.

Cummings of the RAF was the first Canadian to die in the war September 3rd 1939. He died while training in Scotland and in 2012 a memorial was placed on Bennachie, west of Aberdeen, where his plane crashed. His Uncle Kenneth George Cummings of RCAF was shot down over Leipzig, Germany, in 1944. Cathy has said "The more we read about Uncle Jack, the more we wish we knew."



One particular story the family recalls, was Jack's plane had been hit at some time and that he had been able to crawl out through the fuselage! The 458-squadron website's nominal roll has 94 listed Canadians having served. Though we can't promise to tell you about all of them, we're going to damn well try.

*P/O Ellard Alexander
Cummings*



United Kingdom Flight Report by Keith Wilkinson

The death of Queen Elizabeth II was greeted with much sadness among the 458 Squadron family here in England.

Even though she was 96 years old and clearly quite frail, news of her death came as a shock, as it did around the world.

Audrey Christianson - widow of 458 pilot Jack Christianson - had met the Queen twice at garden parties in Buckingham Palace because of Jack's job, before and after the war, with the Civil Service in London. She and Jack had received a card from her for their 65th wedding anniversary.

Audrey had first met the Queen when she was still a princess and on a visit to the Royal Opera House where Audrey worked.

Audrey recalled: "I wrote to her about this because I had pictures of her. They always came backstage to meet the stars, you see. And she sent a letter back to me."

One of the grandchildren of Audrey and Jack had been to the Palace too to collect a Duke of Edinburgh Award. Audrey's

daughter Jill was among those who queued for hours to see the Queen's coffin lying in state before the funeral.

Like everyone in the UK, Audrey was in disbelief when the news was announced about the death. There had been much discussion and speculation that day in the UK media about her failing health but the suddenness of it all was unexpected.

"I was on my iPad," said Audrey. "A message flashed up on the screen. And I thought - no! Is it true? I couldn't believe it.

Everyone thought it was very sad. My family has always liked the royals."

Squadron Co-President Charles Humbles and his wife Joyce had never met the Queen but they have had a number of cards from Buckingham Palace - for their 100th birthdays and for their wedding anniversary.

"We saw her when we were on holiday down in Devon," said Charles. "We saw them pass in the car."

Charles remembered seeing King George V1 when he visited 458 Squadron in North Africa.

"I saw him go flashing-past in a car - that's all. It was when the CO Bruce McKenzie asked him if he could keep his whiskers and the King said 'yes'."

Squadron Co-President Bill Wake had never met the Queen. He was out on his shopping trip in town when he heard the Queen was "resting" due to health concerns.

Bill told me: "I hadn't at all thought the end was near. It was quite a shock. I can remember King George V1 dying in 1952 and people in the pubs were wearing black armbands."

Coverage of the Queen's death by British broadcasters was immense and lasted, uninterrupted by adverts, for days. Bill was particularly struck by the ceremonial perfection of the funeral services, which he found unbelievably poignant.

"It was very, very impressive," he said. "Extremely so. It was almost overwhelming in its impressiveness. The music and the choir made me feel very emotional."

Bill had seen both King George V and VI.

"I saw King George V in 1935. My father and my two brothers and sister went to see a procession for his silver jubilee. We were

queuing up in Fleet Street and saw his carriage go by. We went to a cafe my uncle ran and my father took us to the Common for a picnic."

Bill saw King George VI up in Scotland during the war while training to be a wireless operator - air gunner.

"We were on a train going towards, I think, Kilmarnock. We were all sergeants. There was a warning that when we arrived, the King and Queen were going to get out there. When we got onto the platform we were all ordered to salute to the left."

Whilst watching the funeral of the Queen on television, Bill said he felt very nervous for the pallbearers who had to perform this difficult task in front of billions of viewers worldwide.

He knew something of how they must have felt. When he was in Cairo, in his 458 Squadron days, he was a pallbearer for an RAF crewman who died when two Wellingtons collided mid-air.

"I knew some of those chaps," he said. "It was very sad."



Victoria Flight Report by Roland Orchard

Not much to report from Victoria except the sympathy we share for The Royal Family on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Over my time spent publishing this great Newsletter I've been honoured to have communicated with Buckingham Palace on a number of occasions relating to key 458 Squadron Association Newsletter publications. The responses, I hope, gave everyone delight and joy in knowing that Her Majesty had 458 Squadron Veterans in her thoughts as she wrote her replies. Whether you be a Republican or Monarchist our fathers, uncles, brothers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers who served with 458 Squadron, all did under the reign of The Queen's father King George VI. Our 458 Veterans all honoured and respected The Royal Family and together with the love of their respective family, friends and country, fought and died in the name of 'King and Country'. Our thoughts and prayers are with The Royal Family at this sad time. God save The King.



South Australia Flight Report by Rob Forgan

I noticed on a news feed today that there is a development planned for Jane Eliza landing at Renmark. (Refer to [“Riverland Development expands housing options”](#) see link from Today’s In Daily)

As I recall this landing is the home of Liba Liba Houseboats, an enterprise started by Flight Lieutenant Ian Showell of 458 Squadron. The Liba Liba Houseboats were the first houseboats on the Murray River. Ian Showell was the original proprietor, a local Renmark resident (and inventor) who conceived the idea of a floating house while in Egypt. The boats he saw along the Nile became the inspiration for what became a multi-million dollar River industry. Ian designed and built 30 houseboats.

Ian Showell created a garden at the landing and dedicated it to 458 Squadron. In 1981 at the 458 Reunion organised by SA Flight he provided 8 Liba Liba houseboats for free and I think 50 members took the offer up of cruising along the Murray prior to the reunion weekend. I don’t know what has happened or what will become of the garden if it still remains. Unknowingly, my wife and I travelled on Liba Liba houseboats in the 1980’s and were unfortunately unaware of the association with 458 Squadron.

Rob (Forgan)

PS. Ian’s wife Fee Showell has an interesting biography on line. (See Editor’s Note below)

From 2006-227-November 458 Squadron Newsletter.

South Australian Flight by Pat Cribb South Australia has eleven surviving wartime members of the Squadron, and two Associates: Sid Bartram, Keith Grimshaw, Colin Hutchinson, Alex McKinnon, Buck Pederson, Jim Perry, Reg Priest, Bert Ravenscroft, John Ringwood, Ken Russell, Lyne Skinner, Kevin Tate, and Brian Woodhead. We send out 47 newsletters, including those to widows and family members.

Re the 458-memorial garden at Renmark, the Council has advised that. New ropes will be installed on the flagpoles. A seat will be

placed near Meander Ave. A plaque will be placed on the new seat, inscribed as follows. "This reserve was given to the Renmark-Paringa Council by F/Lt Ian Showell, Engineering Officer, 458 Squadron RAAF' We requested a rose garden, a pathway to lower levels, and that the pool be filled with large boulders and reeds planted. When funds are available Renmark Council will consider these requests. We are pleased that we now have flags for the flagpoles.

We send our best wishes to our treasurer Rick, son of deceased 458er Colin Michell. Rick has had health problems this year. No Report this edition. A warm cheerio to Rick and all members in South Australia.

Editor's Note-

Ian and Fee Showell were married circa 1937. The Late Fee (pronounced Fay) Showell's moving biography can be found on the following website. A fascinating insight of a most remarkable woman. <https://www.feeshowell.com/>

Thank you, Rob, for your very interesting article on one of our beloved 458 Veterans, Ian Showell and his dear wife Fee.

Remembrance Day 2022 from Stoney Stanton, Leicestershire, UK.

Remembering Sergeant Fred Hinton, 752964, 458 Squadron, Bomber Command, R.A.F.

My name is Alison Jackson and I live in Stoney Stanton, Leicestershire, UK. Along with my son Kallum, we create a



Remembrance Day display in St. Michael's church every year. (Pictured left) This year we focussed on 1942, and the men remembered on our memorial for that year. Fred Hinton is one of those men; he wasn't born in Stoney Stanton but Burbage a village nearby. He did however marry a girl, Jean Warner who did come from Stoney Stanton. They married in the autumn of 1941, so sadly weren't married for very long as Fred was killed in

January 1942. We have told the story of what happened to Fred, as I discovered from reading your article on your website.

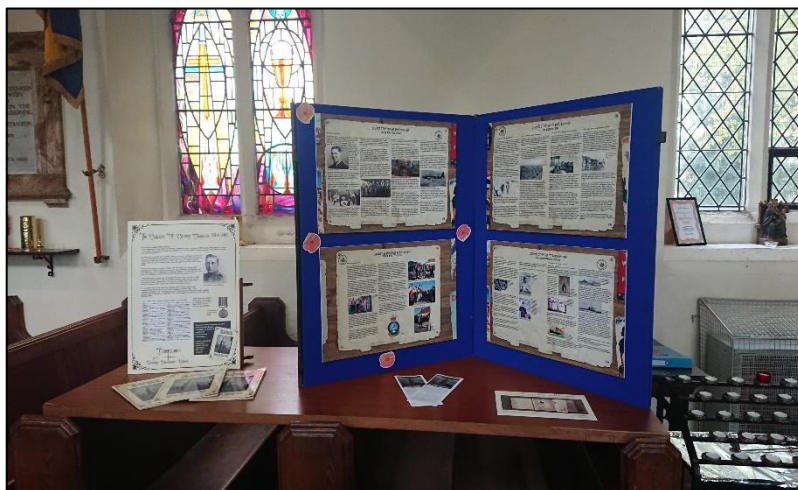
<https://www.458raafsquadron.org/education/lest-we-forget>

R1785 - A RING CYCLE by Rob Forgan.

I thought I'd send you some images of the display boards we created for our Remembrance Day. There are some other pics of the ceremony, etc which I thought you'd like. Thank you again for allowing us to share your story to others.

Alison and Kallum Jackson.

Picture Below-Tribute to Fred Hinton on left side of blue board as displayed in St Michael's Church.



Below left-War Memorial at St Michael's.

Below right- 2022 Remembrance Day Service at St Michael's Church, Stoney Stanton, Leicestershire, UK.



History in the Mediterranean.

SUNDERLANDERS



**The Story of 10 & 461 Squadrons
by Prue Anthony.
Daughter of Peter Jensen,
461 Squadron RAAF**



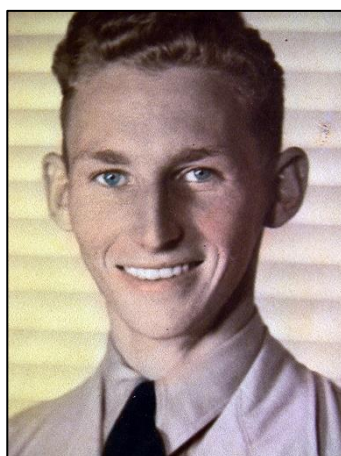
A No. 461 Squadron Sunderland Mark V
landing at Pembroke Dock, Wales in 1944

10 and 461 squadron flew Sunderland flying boats, operating in Coastal Command, escorting convoys and maritime surveillance mostly, in crews of 11 (they were huge aircraft!) 10 Squadron was already in the UK undertaking training on the Sunderlands when war was declared, so that they were the first of any of the Australian services (on the spot, so to speak!) to be deployed, and the first Australian casualties in WW2. They played an important role in the Battle of the Atlantic, especially as it was a German U-boat that made the primary attack on the first day of the war. A few hours after Britain had declared war on Germany at 11.00a.m. on 3rd September 1939, Lieutenant Fritz-Julius Lemp, captain of U-30, sighted the transatlantic passenger ship SS Athenia north-west of Ireland, en route to Canada from Glasgow. Lieutenant Lemp sank the liner. The attack in which 117 passengers and crew members died, violated the Hague convention, which prohibited attacks on unarmed passenger vessels,

and ensured that the start of the war was marked by national awareness of the lethal U-boats stalking British shipping lanes.”

(From “A Game of Birds and Wolves the Secret Game That Won the War” by Simon Parkin 2019, Hodder & Stoughton)

On Anzac Day
1942, 461



Squadron RAAF was formed and carried on similar work. My father Peter Jensen (pictures above) joined the squadron and was a



wireless operator/ air gunner on aircraft “U” in 461 that famously sank U-boat U-461. They dropped one of their dinghies to the survivors, and many years later Dad was able to contact Korvetten-Kapitan Wolf Stiebler (pictured left), to correspond over many years, and catch up several times both in Australia and Germany. One holiday they spent a week on a canal boat in France, and Wolf came to Sydney for the tall ships of the Bicentenary, as he had started his naval career on them, he even came

to our place in Narrabri for Christmas with Mum and Dad that year. With your 458 a Wellington Squadron, you may be interested to know that Peter survived a crash in an old Mk 1c Wellington, when he went to Sutton Bridge in Norfolk Central Gunnery School to do a Gunnery Leader’s course. On the first morning after the CO urged them to maintain the perfect safety record of the last 6 months, they went up through low cloud when at 1200 feet an engine stopped. Dad was in the second pilot’s seat, and watched the pilot at the last moment pull the nose up and over a huge levee around a salt marsh. The middle of the fuselage hit the top of the wall and broke its back, then ploughed into the earth with a sickening ‘SCRUNCH’. Peter was

thrown into the windscreen then dropped to the bottom of the aircraft as it skated along the earth. His legs were mangled amongst the geodetic structure of the fuselage. When the aircraft came to a halt, fire began and the ammunition in the turrets was exploding like firecrackers.

Fortunately, 2 men from St John's Ambulance were bicycling along the lane and saw the crash and came to give aid. They managed to pull Dad from the wreck, (the pilot had walked away), of the others, one was killed, one broke his back, one other concussion. Peter spent 3 weeks in Ely hospital, then a convalescent hospital, then rehab, 13 weeks away from the squadron. (His story that he wrote was on-line.)

As for the Station's safety record – there were 2 other prangs, one another lost engine on take-off, and the other during fighter affiliation when a Spitfire ploughed into a Wimpy – all in all 9 pupils and 3 staff pilots killed and 3 pupils injured.

I include my latest newsletter, with an absolute cracker of another RAAF adventure! Enjoy!

Cheerio,

Prue Anthony

Daughter of Peter Jensen, 461 Squadron RAAF

10.461Sunderlanders@gmail.com

(Editor-Those who wish to receive the Sunderlanders Newsletter contact Prue Anthony via her email address.)

Wellington to Poseidon, almost 80 years apart.

By John Boydell



I have recently read an article in the Air Force News advising that an RAAF P-8A Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft has been deployed to the Mediterranean to work with NATO in the central and western areas of the Mediterranean. This aircraft is based in Sicily.

It is amazing that this deployment is history in the making after nearly 80 years when 458 Squadron was based in and operated at one time from Sicily during WWII. This brings back so many memories of the tales and stories from attendees at from the 80th Anniversary Celebrations at Williamstown in March.



DONATIONS.

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WELLINGTON PRINTS BY ARTIST DES KNOCK



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On behalf of all 458 Squadron RAAF Association Veterans and families from Australia, UK, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa, I would like to offer our sincere and heartfelt sympathies to The Royal Family on the passing of Her Royal Highness The Queen. Over the 74 years since 458 Squadron RAAF Association was formed, The Queen has sent many messages of good wishes to our beloved Veterans on occasions such as pivotal anniversaries of The Association. These messages gave our World War II Veterans a greater sense of oneself and wellbeing, knowing that 'Our Queen' was thinking of them, sharing a sense of camaraderie and understanding of the deprivations and loss that many Veterans experienced during the war. Our thoughts and prayers are with The Royal Family at this sad time. God Save The King.

From: 458 Squadron RAAF Association

Merry Christmas and a
Happy, Healthy 2023 to All.

