

1942 CALENDAR

- **January: 6th, 8th 1942: Holme, UK:** The first nights of ops in the new year, the targets were German battleships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, in the port of Brest
- **January: 9th and 28th:** Bombing of Cherbourg (a potential launching point for Hitler to invade Britain) and Boulogne. The events of the heroic loss of Captain F/O Hickey's crew (targeting Cherbourg) is described at: www.458raafsqadron.org/education/lest-we-forget 'R-1785 A Ring Cycle'
- In the winter RAAF personnel had the opportunity of meeting their senior RAAF Officer in Europe: Air Marshal Richard Williams who visited the base. He was one of the first four Australian military men to fly a military aircraft, a Bristol Box Kite in 1914
- **February 14th:** orders received for the Squadron to be posted to Middle East Command to reinforce the Suez area. At this time many RAAF men made applications to transfer back home to Australia due to the impending threat of the Japanese forces
- **Feb 22nd:** first aircrew fly to Egypt via Gibraltar & Malta (besieged by the Luftwaffe). CO W/Cdr Mulholland's aircraft shot down by enemy fighters in the Mediterranean. Only the rear gunner survived. S/Ldr "Johnno" Johnston became the Squadron's second CO. Ferrying of 32 aircraft was a time consuming job.
- **March 19th:** groundcrew boarding trains leave Holme-on-Spalding Moor for the Middle East (then by ship via the southern tip of Africa)
- **Anzac Day:** all personnel transiting between the UK & the Middle East. Aircrews made the journey a few times (from Egypt to Sudan to Nigeria to the UK)
- **May 23rd; May 30th:** groundcrew arrive at Suez, Egypt (after 69 days); then move to Fayid, Egypt, the Canal Zone Air Force Station, servicing B24's
- **June:** Sections of the groundcrew: detachments to Lydda, St Jean and Aqir, Palestine, with servicing of USAAF B24's at Lydda. 458er Laurie Crowley's name was on 6 of the first bombs dropped in Europe by the USAAF on the Ploesti oil complex in Romania, main source of fuel for the German army in Nth Africa.
- **September 1st:** After 5-6 months in transit, all personnel now present in the Middle East. The Squadron reformed at Shallufa, Egypt (2 miles from the Suez Canal) with Mk. VIII Wellington aircraft (some aircrew had temporarily been assigned to 37, 70, 104, 108, 148 RAF Squadrons, in July/August)
- **September/October:** training in low flying and torpedo dropping operations
- **November 1st - 11th:** Bombing of enemy shipping targets located NW of Tobruk and north of Benghazi, in support of the Battle of El Alamein (preventing the reinforcement of German forces by sea from Europe). **13th & 17th:** Berca detachment & torpedo strike detachment sent to Tobruk in search of the Italian fleet
- **November 29th, 30th:** anti-submarine patrols in the Mediterranean and mine laying in locations such as the gulf of Sirte (off Libya)
- **December:** From the 4th to the 25th, Ops consisted of anti-shiping strikes off Tripoli with torpedos and mine laying
- **December 25th:** At Shallufa, the Squadron had its first desert Christmas dinner; there was plenty of beer on early issue that day

CO W/Cdr Johnston



R.I.P Crew lost over Cherbourg, France 8/1/1942. L-R: Fred Hinton, Bob Birnie, Peter Hickey, Albert Austin, Vic Johnstone, Wally Forgan

