

1944 CALENDAR

- **January 1944:** Based at Bone, Algeria, intense anti-submarine warfare continued; on the 8th (via Blida) described as the 'biggest swamp yet' along with 36 Sqd & 500 Squadron, involving 13 Wellingtons & 16 crews led by CO W/Cdr Dowling: 36 mostly night sorties, 4 sightings, 2 attacks on U-boats. The Squadron commenced using the Mark XIV Wellington, nicknamed the 'Leigh Light' carrying special radar gear & a retractable searchlight. Convoy escort work continued. **23rd:** Detachment to Malta with 6 aircraft for anti-submarine ops
- **February:** Detachments to Grottaglie, Italy (with 6 aircraft) and to Ghisonaccia, Corsica, France (this time with 17 groundcrew) for U-boat swamp ops; On route to Corsica one aircraft ditched due to ice build-up on the wings with 6 of the 9 on-board losing their lives. Anti-sub & anti-shipping night patrols continued. Natural hot springs in the mountains near Ghis. provided washing facilities, a unique situation. Convoy escorts and U-boat hunt ops continued out of Bone with some 2nd pilots returning for a second tour as crew Captain (1st pilot). RNZAF Pilot Officer Kevin George & crew escorted a British battleship carrying PM Winston Churchill
- **March:** Out of Ghis. another aircraft ditched when both engines cut out. Quite a few problems with water in fuel and tyres bursting on gravel runway during this period. Bone ops continued despite heavy rain & poor runway conditions with bombing of shipping, U-boat hunts with depth charges & convoy escorts 'Neighbour' etc.
- **April:** Out of Ghis. another aircraft ditched due to engine cut out, very icy severe weather/seas only 2 survivors. Ghis. detachment returned to Bone the second week of April. The Squadron chaplain S/Ldr Bob Davies visited and stayed for Easter. Detachment to Luqa, Malta with 8 aircrews to do anti-submarine sweeps
- **Anzac Day:** Ground-staff and aircrew laid a wreath during the ceremony at the War Memorial in Valletta, Malta
- **May:** From Bone, S/Ldr Knight's crew made successful attack and sank U-731. Returning at dusk to Luqa from a patrol, in 100% cloud, F/O McMillan's aircraft crashed off the end of the runway. F/O Bullen, the navigator, heroically rescued the only other survivor of the crash. **May 21st:** Squadron to Alghero, Sardinia, Italy
- **June:** D-Day landings at Normandy on the 6th; After completing the move to Alghero, first ops on the night of the 13th with 10 aircraft on U-boat hunts
- **July:** anti-shipping patrols continued; training in cooperation with Beaufighters of 272 Sqd; aircraft had much improved bomb sights & very high frequency radios installed. Ops included bombing raids on enemy shipping, land targets such as: oil refinery (at Imperia, Italy), railway, mills, industry (at Vado Ligure, Italy)
- **August:** RAAF statistics for 458 since Oct '42: 1,765 sorties = 141,020 hours flown. Malaria was a big health issue while at Alghero. The 15th: the Squadron participated in **Operation 'Dragoon'**, the second D-Day landings as the Allies invaded southern France. Squadron ops included anti-submarine, bombing raids: set fire to oil storage at St Louis du Rhone and attacks on enemy E- and R-boats moving to interfere with Allied convoys & landings. Bombing ops on ports.
- **September 2nd:** Logistics tested (700km journey by air/sea/land), Squadron moves to Foggia, Italy to exert pressure on the enemy's other flank; **Sept 11th:** detachment to Ancona, Italy at the nearby aerodrome at Falconara. Ops commenced (the 14th) on enemy shipping but deteriorating weather rain/mud impeded flying. On the 24th & 27th enemy shipping bombed and hit. The second occasion assisted by rocket armed Beaufighters from 272 Sqd. New Commanding Officer: W/Cdr R. Mackay DFC
- **October:** ops resumed after poor weather, on the 20th/21st bombing of enemy shipping/E-boats with 272 Sqd **13th:** Detachment to La Vallon, southern France
- **November:** night ops targets continued (shipping, E-boats, barges) and several Air-Sea Rescue sorties flown
- **December:** the Falconara detachment returned to Foggia. Cold and rain set in with heavy snowfalls and flying largely diminished. Detachment to Leghorn, Italy; **25th:** hearty celebrations in a northern hemisphere white Christmas included a message of gratitude & season's greetings from the Australian Prime Minister.



A. Anderson, C. Brain,
Captain J. Aitken,
E. Jewell, G. Connors,
J. James took part in
Operation Dragoon



R.I.P H. McMillan & crew
J. Wagstaffe, R. Williamson and A. Huntley



New CO: Wing Commander
Rodney Mackay, Sept '44



Anzac Day 1944, Malta