



ANZAC DAY Thursday 25-Apr-2024

VICE-PRESIDENT REPORT

“They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old”

Another year passes and “The Ode” *rings true* even more for those of us past our Spring and Summer, and into the Autumn of our lives.

Another ANZAC Day for our young people (children, young adults) and “The Ode” gathers more meaning for them too.

Thank you to the Executive Committee for all the work in the past year.

Thank you to everyone for your support, in all the ways that you can, including just being here today.

As always, we honour our loved ones who served to help win the freedoms we enjoy today – freedom from despots, dictators and ideas made into law that will eventually come to nothing. We think of all from 458 that never came back.

To that point, this year, let us honour:

SGT Athol Louis OPAS, Service Number – 400354, Date of birth - 08 Nov 1920, Place of birth – Caulfield, Victoria. Place of enlistment - Melbourne.

Athol’s father, Joseph, signed his joining papers. Athol’s personnel file says his religion was Jewish, that he attended Melbourne High School, and that he was employed as a leather worker before enlisting.

From his 41-page Personnel File we can see his postings:



Prisoner
12-8-42 **J. A. T. P. AUSTRALIA**

R.A.A.F. Form P/P. 75.
(September, 1939.)
R.A.F. Form 1530

Before compiling this form read the Notes to R.A.A.F. Supplement to Appendix III (Part II) War Manual Part II.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

AIRMAN'S RECORD SHEET (Active Service—Overseas.)

Official No. 400554 Name OPAS, Adol Louis Rank T/Sgt (Pi).
WOAG '371 (In full in block capitals surname, first). (Or acting appointment).

Mustering ~~Overseas (FC)~~ Special Qualifications _____
(e.g., Gas Instructor, Fire Fighter, Boxing Instructor).

Date of Birth 3.11.20. Religion Jewish Occupation in Civil Life Leather Worker.

Last Enlisted 18.8.40. Current Engagement D of War & 12 months.

If Reservist, which Class ("E," 1-5) ---- Whether Married, Single, or Widower S.

Name and Address of Person (or Persons) to be informed of Casualties:
Mr J H Opas
9 Jackson St St Kilda
(In Pencil).

Relationship Father.
(In Pencil).

Any alteration to above (e.g., Promotions) to be made by crossing out and writing above.



SECTION 1.—MOVEMENTS AND CASUALTIES.			SECTION 2.— PROMOTIONS, ACTING APPOINTMENTS (PAID OR UNPAID), REDUCTIONS, REMUSTERINGS.		
Unit FROM which.	Unit TO which.	Date of effect.	*Authority.	Description.	Date of Effect.
	1 ITS	18.8.40.		AG2 Aircrew	18.8.40.
1 ITS	2 E D	14.9.40.		FAC	
2 E D	Overseas	3.10.40.		T/Sgt (Pd) WO/AG 'Spl'	17.4.41.
AUSTRALIA	CANADA				
	2 WTS	28.10.40.			
2 WTS	2 B & G S	16.4.41.			
2 B & G S	Debert	21.4.41.			
Debert	Overseas	18.5.41.			
CANADA	UK.				
UK.	3 P.R.C.	7-6-41			
3 P.R.C.	21 O.T.U	4-6-41			
21 O.T.U.	458 Sqn Holme, Yorks	14-9-41			
458 (RAAF) Sqn	San Holme Beath presumed	19-3-42			
		12-8-42			
		CCL 1113			

Athol took part in 458's very **first** operation against Germany on 20-Oct-1941. He was a front gunner. From page 8 of WFAD:



20 Oct 41 * 458 Squadron operated against the enemy, German Europe, for the (first time) on 20 October 1941. This was about six weeks from its formation date and a signal of congratulations came from Group and its commander (Air Vice-Marshal R.D. Oxland).
 Ten aircraft under the personal leadership of the CO, W/Cdr Mulholland, attacked Emden and the docks of German-occupied Antwerp and Rotterdam. This was the culmination of Mulholland's diligence and drive and indeed of the efforts of thousands of people throughout the Allied world: factory workers in Britain making Wellingtons; hoarse-voiced NCOs drilling rookies in training camps;

From the 458 Unit History, pages 15, 17, 20, 40:

20, 22, 29-Oct-1941, 27-Dec-1941, 7-Jan-1942 based at Home -on-Spalding Moor.

20.10.41.	Well. IV. 21290	920792 Sgt. F.P.Mather (Capt) AUS404455 Sgt. J.H.Holmes, 2nd Pilot AUS404439 P/O MacDonnell, W. Obs. 998625 Sgt. D.F.Jennings, W/T Op AUS400354 Sgt. A.L.Opas, F.A/G. AUS401802 Sgt. I.A.Anderson, R.A/G.	Operations	1827	2337	Target an aerodrome 5 miles S.E. Rotterdam. Bombs dropped 6 bursts seen. Aircraft hit by flak in fuselage. Crew unhurt. Bombs dropped at 12,600ft - 12 - 250 and 2 - 500. Crew unhurt.
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22.10.41.	Well. IV. 21182	920792 Sgt. P.P.Mather, (Capt) AUS404455 Sgt. J.H.Holmes, 2nd Pilot AUS404439 P/O L.W.MacDonnell, Obs 998625 Sgt. D.F.Jennings, W/T AUS400354 Sgt. A.L.Opas F.A/G AUS401802 Sgt. I.S.Anderson, R.A/G.	Operations	1806	2245	Target LeHavre. Three bursts seen and fire started in target area. S/Lights hindered. Bombs dropped at 12,000ft. 4 - 500 and 6 - 250
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29.10.41	Well.1V.Z1274	Sgt. 920792 P.P.Mather, (Capt) AUS40455 Sgt. J.H.Holmes 2nd Pilot AUS40439 P/O L.W.Macdonell, OBS. 998625 Sgt. D.P.Jennings, F/O AUS400354 Sgt. A.L.Opas, R.A/G. 401802 Sgt. I.S.Anderson, R.A/G	Operations	2050	0303	Battleships, Brest. Bursts seen between two Battleships. No actual damage seen. Visibility fair. Bombs dropped at 18,000ft 7 x 500.
27.12.1941	Well.1V 1214	920792 Sgt. P.P.Mather (Capt) AUS402813 Sgt. L.D.Watson - 2nd Pilot AUS40439 P/O L.W.MacDonnell, Observer 998625 Sgt. D.P.Jennings F/O AUS400354 Sgt. A.L.Opas, F.A/Gunner 401802 Sgt. I.S.Anderson, R.A/Gunner	Operations	1701	2319	Target Dusseldorf Area. One 500lb dropped, others believed Krefeld Area. Saw bombs bursts, but could not pin-point - no results observed. Bombs dropped at 14,000ft Visibility Good.



OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

APPENDIX.....

R.A.F.
FORM 541.

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT

By..... 458 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron.....

SECRET

PAGE No. 27

(7472) Wt. 24229/1650. 180m. 8/40. P.L. 51-7751.

FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY, 1942.

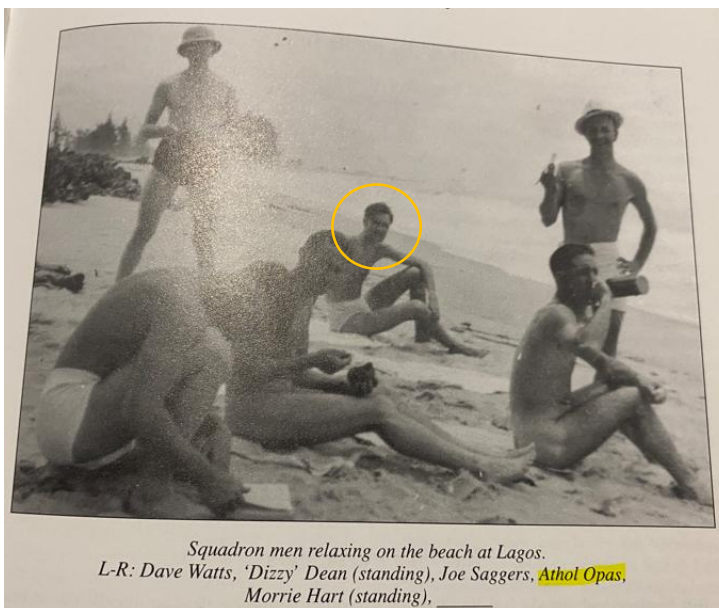
DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCES.
				Up	Down		
7-142 8.1.1942	Well. IV 1214	920792 Sgt. P.P. Mather (Capt) AUS403813 Sgt. L.D. Watson, 2nd Pilot AUS40439 P/O L.W. MacDonnell, Observer 908625 Sgt. D.F. Jennings - W/O AUS400354 Sgt. A.I. Oves, P.A./Gunner AUS401802 Sgt. L.S. Anderson, R.A./Gunner	Operations	0409	1049	Target. Battleships Brest. (Believed) 6 x 500lbs dropped at 12,000ft. Nothing observed. Visibility moderately good in gaps. Pinpoint made by Pte De L'Arceique and approach made from East Pte Du Moulin Blanc and Port Militaire, identified. Battleships position under cloud. Waited unsuccessfully for 35 mins, then attacked estimated	

From the Chapter 1 of the Official Squadron Albums:



Then the decision was made and orders given on 14-Feb-1942 to move 458 to the Middle East (pg 21 of WFAD 2002 edn)

From WFAD:



Aircrews, having ferried their Wellingtons to Egypt, returned to Britain via a number of stops, including Lagos, Nigeria. Athol and other 458ers enjoying the beach.

At just 21 years of age, Athol was killed in action while on detachment with 108 Squadron RAF on 12 Aug 1942. The detachment is described on page 63 of WFAD 2002 edn, 108 Sqn RAF having formed at Kabrit, Egypt. It had Wellingtons, and prior to that, Liberators.

From 108 Squadron RAF Unit History:



R.A.F. Form 540

See instructions for use of this form in K.R. and A.C.I., para. 128, and War Manual, Pt. II, Chapter XX, and notes in R.A.F. Pocket Book.

OPERATIONS RECORD BOOK

Page No. 12

of (Unit or Formation) No. 108 Squadron.

No. of pages used for day _____

Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	References to Appendices
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Kabrit.

12/8/42	<p><u>Ten Wellingtons were detailed</u> for operations against Tobruk. An unfortunate accident occurred during take-off - Aircraft "W" (T.2735) and captained by Sgt. K.D. Sherman took off at 22.22 hours and immediately after leaving the ground the starboard engine cut, and the aircraft crashed into the Great Bitter Lake. It is regretted to state that the Rear Gunner (642416 Sgt.Sims A.J.R.) was killed. The remainder of the crew received injuries and were admitted to hospital. 9/10ths cloud over the target area made accurate bombing impossible - bombs were dropped and some bursts seen and a few fires started. "Y" diverted attack to Sollum owing to cloud, and bombed shipping off shore - near miss claimed. Defences over Tobruk were very heavy and accurate. It is regretted to record the loss of another of our aircraft and crew which failed to return from this operation. The crew was as under:-</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">A.402425 Sgt.Watts D. - Captain, A.402866 P/O W.Gemges - 2nd Pilot,</p>			
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Page No. 123.

Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	References to Appendices
Kabrit	12/8/42		<p style="text-align: center;">- P/O M. Harris - Navigator, A. 402596 Sgt. Hart M. - Front Gunner, A. 400350 Sgt. Ops A.L. - Wireless Optr., (All attached from 458 Squadron) 1281936 Sgt. Taylor J.H. - Rear Gunner.</p> <p>No news of any sort was received from this aircraft ("J" - AD.629) after it had taken off, and there is consequently no indication as to how, when or where this aircraft came down.</p>	

He is remembered with honour at the Commonwealth War Grave, Alamein Memorial, El Alamein War Cemetery, Egypt.
And we honour him now. A Jewish eulogy: "*May Athol's memory be a blessing for all*". **Lest We Forget.**



In Memory Of

Sergeant

ATHOL LOUIS OPAS

Service Number: 400354

Royal Australian Air Force who died on 12 August 1942 Age 21

Son of Joseph Henry and Sarah Rebecca Opas, of St Kilda, Victoria, Australia.

Remembered with Honour

ALAMEIN MEMORIAL

Column 286.



|||||
COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES
|||||

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH
WAR GRAVES COMMISSION



Australian Jewish Historical Society
COLLECTIONS

[Military](#) > Athol Louis Opas

Athol Louis Opas

Conflict:	World War II	Service:	Royal Air Force	Rank:	108 Sqn RAF Sgt #400354
Honour Roll:	KIA 12-Aug-1942 Age:21				
Buried Loc.:	C266 El Alamein War Cemetery Alamein Egypt				
Enlistment Loc.:	Melbourne VIC	Enlistment Age:			
Date of Birth:	8 November 1920	Place of Birth:	Caulfield VIC		



Eric J. JEWELL Award Applications:

1. An application from 327 AAFC Squadron, located in Gungahlin, ACT (13 km north of Canberra city), with 114 Cadets and 14 Adult Staff.



Their submission is to support a 17 year old cadet who is experiencing significant hardship (no way of getting to and from the weekly parade night, etc).



2. An application from 604 AAFC Squadron, located in Hamstead Barracks, Greenacres, SA (10km north of Adelaide), with over 120 cadets. The Squadron actively supports the SA/NT Branch of the National Malaya-Borneo Veterans Association Australia with a catafalque party at the annual Malaya-Borneo Veterans' Day Service.



Their submission is to purchase 4 glass-fronted display cabinets to house the Squadron's library books (historical & aviation, etc) and display their trophies & memorabilia. They have commented that they would take great pride in naming the library 'They Flying Officer Eric Jewell Library '.