



THE EDITOR.

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FIFTY YEARS ON....

458ers served, with some pride, in the Australian Air Force during the years of the second World War. They are a part of the mainstream, therefore, of Australian Military Aviation in its most active period and are entitled to feel pride in it. True it is we came in only semi-willingly, most of us, because someone had started something. True also, no doubt, that we cared little and knew less about the prior history of the Air Force into which we had come. Enough to serve, to cope with our share in the adventures overseas, and to return home. Having returned and in time settled down, perhaps some of us have felt an interest in the Air Force which went before and the close-knit professional Air Force which has followed after us.

Anyway, this year, 1964, has brought the occasion for looking back and summing up Air Force History a bit. The year has been the fiftieth anniversary of the first military flying by Australians--though not of the R.A.A.F. which, as such, was formed on March 31st., 1921. Readers will recall that the celebrations, culminating in dinners held in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne, were drawn to attention in the last issue of the "News".

Perhaps a bit of "potted" Air Force history will be of some interest to some of our readers.

The first four Australians learned to fly military aircraft at Point Cook in August 1914. They learned on the Box Kite. The R.A.A.F. Museum has preserved a French Deperdussin aircraft as an example of Australia's oldest military plane but, after featuring it in the celebration publicity recently the organisers have been a bit taken aback to learn from the two surviving members of the "First Four" that the Deperdussin was only used for taxi-ing practice.

Australia put several Squadrons into the field during the ensuing war--Nos. 1 to 4 serving overseas in the Middle East and France with a variety of slow-moving, slow climbing craft. They were armed with small bombs and pilots shot at the enemy with pistols. The aircraft were death traps. In some the Observer cuddled the petrol tanks. If these were hit by incendiary enemy bullets, the crew could choose between incineration and jumping. There were no parachutes in those days.

At the end of the war which had seen the formal formation of the Royal Air Force in England, there was high-level debate in Defence circles for some length of time in Australia. The British Government presented 100 aircraft, with spares, to Australia; and with support from Prime Minister W. Hughes, and Defence Minister (a famous one) Senator George Pearce, the new A.A.F., soon to be the R.A.A.F., came into being with Wing Cmdr. R. Williams as its Chief of Air Staff. He held this office until 1938.

The new force grew slowly: it had not much money. It bought land at Laverton (for Nos. 1 and 2 Squadrons) and at Richmond (for 3 and 4 Squadrons). There were 308 men in uniform. In these years names to be historic in the R.A.A.F. appear in the records---Wackett, Cole, McNamara, V.C., Wrigley, Cobby, Lukis, Jones, Bladin, McCauley, Goble and Scherger are some.

Aircraft were obtained in small numbers and policy subject to constant ministerial reviews and changes. At one stage a proposal to abolish the Air Force came from the Dept. of Defence and received serious consideration from the Scullin government.

After Munich there was a stir up in the R.A.A.F.--as in the R.A.F.--and with war, an R.A.F. Air Chief Marshal (Sir Charles Burnett) became C.A.S. This of course

50 Years On.... was the close of the R.A.A.F.'s first era. Now there came the great expansion--in two ways. First through the Empire Air Training Scheme in which very many Australians completed training overseas in Canada, Rhodesia, and Britain and, together with Australian groundstaff, went into R.A.F. Units or such R.A.A.F. Squadrons as 458 which first became operational overseas. Australian E.A.T.S. Squadrons had numbers from 450 up to 467. The R.A.A.F. at home always hoped to get the U.K. Australians into R.A.A.F. Wings and perhaps a group as the Canadians did. Air Marshal Williams who was in charge of Kodak House in London devoted a lot of frustrating effort in trying to achieve an R.A.A.F. Group. The R.A.A.F. in Australia probably still remembers this failure as something not to occur again.

At home a similar expansion, with Air Marshal George Jones, as C.A.S., continued, with support of the American Pacific in view. Here again, in a way, we had to play a secondary role--this time to the U.S.A.A.F.

With the war's end came a return to civil life for the vast majority of the surviving R.A.A.F. A number of successful wartime entrants of course stayed on and have made a career in the smaller peacetime R.A.A.F. But there was an inevitable period of recession. Another R.A.F. airman, Sir Donald Hardman, was C.A.S. for a time, being succeeded by R.A.A.F. Sir John McCauley and he by Sir Frederick Scherger. The current C.A.S. is Sir Valston Hancock. The present R.A.A.F. for its size very effective and well-equipped, grew steadily, though with the usual story of difficult and delayed policy decisions, out of the post-war recession. It is highly professional and self-contained, as is the R.A.F. It is attracting a lot of skilled and capable young airmen.

That is a skeleton outline of 50 years. It makes no mention of many highlights of bravery and technical brilliance which have occurred but it hints at the background of recent celebration of 50 years.

Celebrations in Sydney. On the Federal level, the Air Force Association organised the 50th Anniversary celebrations culminating with a Dinner in Sydney. This was attended by the surviving two of the first four airmen--Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams and Mr. D.T. Manwell. The Ministers for Defence and Air, The C.A.S., Air Marshals Jones and McCauley, the Director-General of Civil Aviation, the Chief of the Army General Staff, the 1st Naval Member, the Chairman of Qantas, Sir Hudson Fysh, Air Vice Marshals Wackett and Bladin, the Secretary Dept. of Air, Mr. McFarlane and many other well-known Aviation figures attended.

The Hotel was decorated with models of various R.A.A.F. aircraft, modern rockets and equipment and there were a Bloodhound missile and a Jindivik target aircraft outside the entrance. An A.T.C. guard saluted the Administrator of the Commonwealth with a Royal Salute and the various Air Marshals and Generals with General Salutes. The R.A.A.F. Central Band, from Melbourne, played music. There was a first rate dinner and some historic speeches--including Sir Richard Williams on the first 50 years; and the present C.A.S. on the Future of Flying.

Banners and 458ers. Many Squadron banners were on display, including 458's, and several 458ers were seen at the Dinner. These included Cyril Irwin, Fred Strom, Stuart Currington, Joe Pratt and of course Graeme Coombes and Peter Alexander, the latter two being two of the three-man organising committee. Attendance totalled about 220.

Blue Uniforms. There isn't space nor is this the place for much more on this subject. But one story is of interest:--the origin of the R.A.A.F.'s blue uniforms--distinctive as they are from the other Royal and Allied Air Forces. It appears that Air Marshal Williams was looking for the right blue when he came across some navy cloth which, out of several dips in dye, was still short of one dip before issue to the R.A.N. This was the blue he wanted and the one he chose.

Q. FLIGHT NEWS.

from

Len. MacDonnell, 49, Pennyson Street, Norman Park, Q.

Winter Social. Our Winter Social on 6th. June, 1964 followed, as always where the ladies are concerned, the successful pattern which has developed over the years. Just over 120 people attended. All of them voted it a most enjoyable "get-together".

Once upon a time we were prepared for a financial loss on these occasions, but that never seems to happen, and our finances once again improved as a result. A great help towards this successful outcome is the fact that we are able to use a really excellent Army Drill Hall for our functions, at a purely nominal rental.

Q.Flight News (cont.)The Next All-States.

In Queensland we are all looking forward to the next "All-States Reunion", which we hope will be as big a success as all those that have preceded it. As an innovation for Interstate members it is more than likely that all our functions will be held at the Gold Coast. At first contemplation this may seem beyond the pocket of visitors, but in this regard the Gold Coast has been maligned, and as soon as investigations have been completed, all State Secretaries will be advised of arrangements, accommodation, etc.

Jim Holliday Overseas.

Jim is at the moment on an overseas trip, allied to business, which will cover most comprehensively all the enlightened parts of the world as far as "Health Education" is concerned. We are hoping its not going to be too much of a busman's holiday, and that he will manage a spot of relaxation before he returns just before Christmas.

A Daughter for the McLoughlins.

Bernie McLoughlin, after a late start in the marriage stakes, has shewn us it's never too late to begin. He and his wife are now the proud possessors of a daughter, and we're all tickled pink to see how enthusiastic a parent Bernie has become.

458ers AT COWRA.

The week end ending August 16th as a very busy ex-Air Force period. Not only was there the 50th Anniversary Dinner on the 14th but the Cowra Aircrew Reunion followed immediately on the Saturday and Sunday. This presented a tight schedule to the quite substantial number of loyal and enthusiastic airmen who attended both--as they were expected to do. Also on the Saturday, in Sydney, there was the Polish Ex-servicemens' Ball at which the Polish branch of the A.F.A. is concerned. And a very gay occasion it is always. Some of those at the Dinner, also quite a few, made it here too.

Cowra attracted the usual large attendance of aircrew--who would never think of missing this yearly event. The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Sir Valston Hancock attended and was a principal speaker at the Dinner.

An R.A.F. Victor aircraft provided a highlight flying over from Edinburgh for the occasion and breaking cloud to the second over Cowra. It did two runs over and many were the cameras trained on it.

Sam Barlow and Don Bitmead did a quick run up and back by road to attend and there they joined Harry Baines in the enjoyments traditional to a Cowra Reunion.

CORNSTALK COMMENTARY.

from Cyril Irwin, 17, Vincent Street,
Canterbury, N.S.W.

Annual Family Picnic at Warwick Farm.

On Sunday 28th. July, the Flight's annual family picnic was held at Warwick Farm Racecourse where, thanks to Graeme Coombes, we enjoyed the facilities of the Course. The new venue was voted by all present to be the best-ever spot for our picnic. The weather was on our side--an ideal sunny day.

Twenty squadron members, with wives, families and friends attended. Total attendance from the youngest to the oldest numbered over 80. Squadron members there were: Jack Miller, Jack Baker, Bob Bruce, Cyril Irwin, Fred Strom, Don Bitmead, Bob Smith, Stuart Ricketts, Bob Lyndon, Frank Ward, Les Piggott, Alan Macmaster, Ron Hills, Peter Alexander, Sam Barlow, Doug Bennett, Tom Moore, Graeme Coombes, Eric Munkman. Visitors we were pleased to see, with their families, included Jack Mahoney, John Keough, Bill Cotton and Fred Saddler.

For the record the coming junior speedsters in our squadron family were:

Girls under 4 years old:	1st. Brenda Piggott, 2nd. Ann Ricketts;
Boys " "	Ian Ward
Girls under 9 " "	Robyn Mahoney Julie Alexander;
Boys " "	Richard Bennett Graham Bennett;
Girls " 12 " "	Lyn Miller Roslyn Gale;
Boys " "	Peter Hills Ken Smith;
Pogo Stick--Girls	Lyn Miller;
--Boys	Richard Smith

In the "big girls" competition--Throwing the rolling pin---Edna Piggott.

There was plenty of ice cream--devotedly served out by Tom Moore--and soft drinks and sweets for the children and mum and Dad were able to enjoy an ale or two.

Thanks to Squadron members who kept things "going" on the day:--Kemp Beach (Sports):

Cornstalk Commentary (cont.)

Bob Lyndon (Hot Plate), Fred Strom and Bob Bruce (Beer), and Tom Moore (Ice cream). Finally, our thanks to Graeme Coombes who was able to arrange for the use of Warwick Farm Leger Reserve.

Other Squadrons' Dancing. On 18th. July a Squadron party of 6 attended the Annual Ball of 463/467 Squadron Association, held at Anthony Horderns. We spent an enjoyable evening with these Lancaster boys. Guest of Honour was Air Commodore Charles Pearce, A.O.C. Richmond Station. 467 and 463 Squadrons were part of 5 Group, Bomber Command in the war years and were stationed at Waddington. Among their commanding officers was W/Cdr. R. Kingsford-Smith of Sydney.

458 Squadron was also represented by Peter and Rita Alexander at the at the 460 Squadron Annual Ball at the Hotel Australia on August 1st.

Sporting Evenings. 458 is taking part in the A.F.A. inter-branch Carpet Bowls and Darts competition at the Air Force Club. We have a game there every few weeks on a Saturday evening and have supper together after the game. We were successful against the Parramatta branch on Saturday 27th. July. Players included Jack and Glad Baker, Cyril Irwin and Noel Spurling. Next game is against Coogee-Randwick.

What's Next. 1. Melbourne Cup Competition. Please support our Melbourne Cup Competition--our one main annual money-raiser.

2. Air Force Ball. We are having a large party at the Ball on September 11th at the Trocadero. Kemp Beach's daughter is a debutante this year. Peter Alexander's daughter Julie is a Flower girl.

3. Golf-the President's Cup. This annual event will be held at Tuggerah on 18th. October. This will be in conjunction with a holiday weekend at Waikiki Holiday cabins, Tuggerah--see the separate notice.

JACK RISELEY BETTER.

We are delighted to report that Jack is making a remarkable recovery from his serious illness. He is reported to be contemplating part-time work again--having lost some weight but looking well.

LEN STEWART IN THE EAST.

Len, who is a Squadron Vice President, was seen briefly in Sydney in August during an intensive business trip from Perth. He had half an hour with Squadron Treasurer Cyril Irwin, Bob Smith, and fellow Squadron Vice President Peter Alexander in the Air Force Club, before going on to Melbourne where he had a phone call with Shorty Wilson.

SHORTY IN ROBINVALE.

We have it especially for mention that Shorty Wilson represented the Victorian Flight at Robinvale on the weekend of 8/9th. August. He says he went to ensure that Bluey Firth was properly equipped for his journey on the road.

BRITISH BULLETIN.

from Sid Thompsett, 369, Downham Way, Bromley, Kent.

Passing of two 458ers. It is with very much regret that I have to report the deaths of two of our members. On March 27th., after 9 months illness, W.G. Allen passed away at the Royal South Hants. Hospital, Southampton; and on May 2nd., quite suddenly, in his photographic studio at King's Lynn, John (Dick) Rutter, aged 62. I have sent our condolences to their widows.

Lofty Chalmers in London. Earlier in March I had the pleasant surprise of a call from Lofty Chalmers; he was calling from Harry Bishop's office, being a fellow crewmember. We thought it nice to have an Aussie over here for Anzac Day; but no luck as Lofty had made other arrangements, quite forgetting about Anzac Day. He had arranged to go to Moscow for the May Day celebrations, but we have been able to arrange a get-together since then, and we are hoping for a farewell get together before he leaves our shores on July 21st.

Anzac in London. Our Anzac Day celebrations went off very well. The wreath-laying at the Cenotaph was carried out by Leon Armstrong. There was quite a

British Bulletin (cont.) number of members at the Cenotaph--also Mrs. Allen (widow of W.G.Allen). This was followed by the service at Westminster Abbey. Due to other commitments no one was able to get to Australia House for the tea, but were able to get to the Reunion in the evening. Everyone had a very nice time but we would have liked to see a few more old faces there. I had heard from W.Harry that he would be attending but he just didn't turn up; we were a little disappointed as it would have been his first visit; but never mind there is always another time.

Mick in Hospital. I mustn't forget this. On the Sunday following our Reunion, Mick Mason had to enter hospital for a slight operation. If you had heard all the cracks! Apparently he cannot be fussed around (his daughter Doreen reports) By all accounts everything went off alright. Another old member who has been having a lot of trouble over the last few years is Hugh (Ham) Hamlet. Apparently he gets a lot of trouble with his leg.

Cheerio and all the best.

VICTORIAN VIEWPOINT.

from Shorty Wilson, 78, Carnarvon Road, Strathmore, Vic.

(Editorial Note: these notes just missed the last issue of the News. But we are certain Headers will want to have them.)

Anzac Day, 1964. Rain threatened but did not eventuate. Flight President Ian Alison called the roll and those present and answering were:

Arthur Green	Yank Martin	Stan Tarczynski	Bob McKinna	Harold Young
Gordon Cuthbertson	Bill Dinnis	Lloyd Simpson	Ted Kennedy	Geoff. Matthews
John Bilney	Jim Whittem	Norm. Cugley	Lisle Wurr	Ron Yates
Bill Carr	Shorty Wilson	Harry Ashworth	Harry Jenkins	Jim Timms
Jim Munday	Shorty Taylor	Keith Clymo	Tom Wishart	Ern. Laming
Bill Hurford	Bill Bailey.			

After the March, the Reunion. Most of the Flight went on to Harry Ashworth's premises for the reunion and annual elections. Before calling for nominations, Ian Alison spoke of the importance of the continuance of the Flight and its activities. The following were then elected:

President: Ern. Laming;
 Vice Presidents: Gordon Cuthbertson and Harry Ashworth;
 Treasurer/Secretary: Shorty Wilson;
 Committee: N. Cugley, J. Munday, B. McKinna, H. Martin, L. Wurr,
 A. Green, B. Carr, J. Timms, I. Alison, R. Yates, J. Jenkins.

Gossip of Anzac Day. Senior Male Nurse Harry Jenkins, one of the three only in Australia, is organist at the Heidelberg Military Hospital; Grandpa McKinna proudly boasting about his granddaughter; Ian Higlett on duty during the March as a S. John's First Aid officer. Good show, Ian.

Shorty Wilson is now a Systems Specialist in the Aircraft Engineering Branch at the Central Office of the Department of Civil Aviation; Nice to have Bill Dinnis marching with us. Most will remember him as a Fitter IIE of skill and a First World War veteran. He is still hale and hearty.

Arrival of Ken Brown from Katunga, John Jenkins and Ern Bradshar.

Tom Wishart as a welcome stranger. We hope his duties as a Technical Officer on the Mirage project have now lessened a bit and will allow him to come along more often.

Warm welcome given to Jim Whittem by all. Jim was skipper of the crew in which Ron Yates flew, so they had lots to talk about.

Annual Country Day. All the fun of the farm for the Flight and its families on 17th. May. George and Thelma Riddoch kindly offered to hold this annual event on their sheep property at Burrum Beet this year. It was fine and sunny and members came from as far apart as Robinvale, Hamilton and Melbourne to the 93 mile post on the Melbourne-Adelaide Highway. Squadron members attending included: Vin Clohesy Dave Firth Gordon Cuthbertson Allan Brown Shorty Wilson Lloyd Simpson Harold Young Harry Ashworth John Bilney Bill Carr Norm. Cugley Jack Fleming Roy Rabone Gordon Wise Harry Dorge Ted Kennedy.

Victorian Viewpoint (cont.)

A high and fast flying fox with a drop of about 40 feet was a centre of attraction to the children. Look, Mum, no hands!

There was horse riding, cattle feeding, a hay ride, lambs to be fondled, and plenty of novelty events. A rooster catching competition and mushrooms galore, as large as plates. A grand day--and our thanks to George and Thelma for a very successful day. Apologies were received from

Ern Laming---in camp with the Air Training Corps;

Kevin Guiney, home duties looking after wife Helen and newly arrived daughter Catherine--6 lbs. 11 Oz; Congratulations!

Congratulations were in order and extended to charming and friendly Rosa Godden who was wearing quite a sparkler on the third finger, left hand. Yes Bill Carr and Rosa have announced their engagement. They make a fine couple and in addition to being Bill's choice, Rosa is an extremely popular girl with those who have met her.

Cabaret Dance. A Cabaret Dance is to be held on August 14th at the Melbourne Bowling Club. We hope this will become established as an Annual Dance.

OTHER SQUADRONS: I. 450 SQUADRON.

This series of articles will outline for Readers' interest the wartime history of other Squadrons which, like 458, were formed as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme.

450 was a Fighter Squadron in the Middle East. Its members went into action first against the Vichy French in 1941 with Hurricanes and in a sort of Squadron marriage with 260 Squadron R.A.F. 450 at that stage had no pilots and 260 no ground-staff. (458 too of course at one stage had its ground and air crews separated). They attacked airfields in Syria before moving to Haifa and Burg-el-Arab.

In 1942 the Squadron, now with some Kittihawks, fought with the 8th Army in the Desert. It passed, in combat, through such ground bases as Gambut, Sidi Azeiz, Ghel, Zuara, commanded in turn by Squadron Leaders Williams, Barber and Bartle. One of its pilots was Bobby Gibbes.

Support of the Armies carried the Squadron with 239 Wing to Malta and brought operations in support of the invasion of Sicily in the form of interdiction of enemy transport behind the fighting line.

The Desert Air Force of which 450 was part moved from Sicily onto the Italian mainland in August 1943, being in fact a section of M.A.T.A.F. Agnone, Grottaglie, Bari, Foggia, Mileni, San Angelo--these are some of the places through which 450 passed with its fighters. By this time the R.A.A.F. groundstaff (who included quite a few who had served with 458 and were well known) had served for three years without relief. They carried on with continued efficiency. The Kittihawks continued to strafe bridges and railway lines and they encountered considerable enemy flak.

Fighter Squadrons generally had more Commanding Officers than did bomber or Coastal Squadrons and this was illustrated with 450. Among its C.O.s now came Welshman, who was killed, Sands, Hudson, Gleeson and finally Jack Doyle. The Squadron kept fairly close company with 3 Squadron which was similarly engaged; the two squadrons had a constant interchange of personnel.

Falerium Foiano and Iesi. At the latter place, 458 had a detachment and there was a memorable reunion and exchange of visits between old friends of the ground-staff. 450 was now acting as a Fighter-bomber Squadron. For example, in September, 1944, it bombed a supply train at Castel Bolognese and scored six direct hits with bombs.

In April 1945 surrender of German forces in Italy and Austria brought a victorious end to the long journey the Desert Air Force had travelled from El Alamein.

450 Squadron is organised in Australia, in the peacetime world, as are most of the other R.A.A.F. Squadrons which fought through the War, and its members 'get together' from time to time.