

CIRCULAR

458 SQUADRON NEWS



THE EDITOR.

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458 IN AFRICA AND BRITAIN.

by The Editor.

As was mentioned in the last issue of the News, I had the opportunity to go overseas during October, the purpose being to attend the biennial Assembly of the World Veterans Federation, to which the Air Force Association belongs, at the Hague, as one of the two Australian delegates.

I had been told some time before that it is possible to fly to Europe via Kenya, and had made up my mind to do this when the chance came. Accordingly, I took a Qantas Boeing 707 via Perth (45 minutes touch-down), over the South Indian Ocean at 35,000 ft. and 550 m.p.h., to the spectacular tropical island of Mauritius, largely inhabited by the descendents of imported Indian labourers, for another 45 minute stay. Then on to Johannesburg for the night, after 17 hours airborne. It would have been possible to fly direct to Nairobi from Mauritius but the Bank had booked me via Jo'burg. Qantas made the long trip pretty comfortable (the aircraft was half empty), and after trying several airlines on this journey, I think Qantas did give the best service though they were all good.

After a day in South Africa (I don't know of any 458ers in Johannesburg), I then went north, via B.O.A.C. VC 10 (600 m.p.h. at 37,000ft.) to Nairobi, arriving at 2310. Here I had the very great pleasure of finding our former Squadron C.O. and Squadron Past-President Colonel Bruce McKenzie, and his bride, Christine, waiting at the airport to meet me. Here let me say that Bruce remembers 458 and the Air Force as keenly as the keenest 458er among us. He has risen to very senior status in the new Republic of Kenya as Minister for Agriculture. This, in a primary producing country, is a very important Ministry and Bruce runs it with the determined drive, the perception, and the ability to get on with people which we remember in him as C.O. In build he is now back to something nearer his wartime weight and the famed whiskers are still there, though not quite as ginger in colour.

I stayed in Kenya for four nights—three of them with the McKenzies, and was able to have an intensive look at things which, apart from the 458 interest, was of considerable interest to me as the Honorary Secretary, in Sydney, of the Kenya-Australia Society.

I don't want to take Readers on too much of a "Trip" but perhaps a summary of these four 'highlight' days could be of interest.

Bruce and Christine have a large two-storied bungalow in Nairobi where Bruce's eldest daughter Sandy lives with them. Incidentally, Kenya seems to share with Australia the pleasant practice of using Christian names easily. Certainly Bruce seemed to be so known throughout Kenya.

It proved possible for me to attend the Kenyan Parliament during Question Time—English being the language and the proceedings very Westminster-style. I met a number of Kenyan Ministers and had lunch with the Australian High Commissioner, Mr. W.R. Crocker, an experienced diplomat who started his career with the British Colonial Service, and with Mr. Malcolm

458 in Africa and Britain (cont.)

Macdonald, British Roving Ambassador in Africa and former Secretary of State for the Dominions, and also dined with Mr. Crocker at his residence.

I spent some hours with Christine McKenzie and a driver touring the Nairobi Game Park in a Land Rover. We saw large numbers of Zebra, Giraffe, Eland and other deer, monkeys and two sleepy lions who had recently eaten and merely yawned at the ring of cars around, waiting for them to move.

Nakuru, in the Rift Valley, where I drove to stay one night with Bishop Neville Langford-Smith, a former Australian, is in country which reminded me of Australia, particularly where the tall and attractive light-green-trunked Fever Trees were varied by Gum trees. Lake Nakuru is a soda lake but is one of the relatively few breeding grounds of the Flamingo and was covered with many thousands of these pink and red/black winged birds. Nearby is the Crater--the largest extinct volcanic crater in the world, 35 miles round.

Back to Nairobi and a flight with Bruce and several senior Civil Servants to Miewa where Bruce laid the foundation stone of a Rice Mill. Then a quick tour of coffee and tea growing areas not far from Nairobi. And so, by East African Airways, on to Rome.

My clear impression of Kenya was of a new country being well and fairly governed and making the utmost use of every possibility of development. It is a place to visit.

I spent one night in Rome which seemed little altered from war years--and who would expect the Eternal City to alter?

So off by K.L.M. over the Alps by day to the Hague and my Conference. This being a matter of ex-service interest I have it in mind to give a brief account later in this News; but this article is 458-oriented.

458 Reunion in London.

At the close of my ten days in England, during which I met several groups of old friends and relatives of my own and of my wife, I went to a Reunion of 458 Squadron U.K. Flight, organised at the Path Finders Club in London. We had succeeded in getting the two 458 Albums to London (Bob Bruce and Sam Barlow being intermediaries) and U.K. members and their wives were able to see them for the first time during the Reunion.

There were really no difficulties in our recognising one another even after twenty years. Bill Waitt with Mrs. Waitt, came down from the North, and Dewi Davies came up from Wales. Squadron members present, in most cases with their wives, were Bill Anton, Bill Waitt, Sid. Thompsett, Mick Mason, Dewi Davies, Harry Bishop, Leo Armstrong, and Peter Alexander. Bruce McKenzie had written from Kenya to Air Marshal Sir Geoffrey Tuttle (who was our Group Captain at Protville and wrote the Foreword to the Squadron History "We Find and Destroy") and Air Marshal Sir Hugh Lloyd who commanded M.A.C.A.F. in our time in the Mediterranean to tell them the Reunion was on. They both came to the Reunion and we felt very much honoured.

I gave those present the remembrances of their Australian Squadron mates, including those whose names they might have forgotten and who might have forgotten their names, but who would be well remembered face to face. For me this was an occasion never to forget. A number of members unable to come sent remembrances and I must mention Bill Facey (who sent me through Sid Thompsett a souvenir of Devonshire) and Bill Swann. After the Reunion ended, Dewi Davies and I had a few more drinks at the hotel in honour of our Squadron service together of nearly 25 years before. Incidentally, making this London Reunion makes me, I believe, the only 458er to have been to a Reunion of all the Flights. Some detailed news of U.K. 458ers appears below.

From London I flew by Comet of Olympic Airways to Athens for three days thence by Air France and Pan Am. via Bangkok to Hong Kong for one days sightseeing and shopping and so home to Sydney after a months absence.

We are now hoping that Bruce McKenzie will visit Australia early in 1968--this will be a compulsory Parade for all 458ers--and a great occasion!

--P.C.A.

Q.FLIGHT NEWS.

from Jim Holliday, 43, Stella St., Holland Park, Queensland, 4121.

General Election.

Our General meeting and Annual Election of officers resulted in the re-election of Chas. Richardson to the office of President for the third time in succession. A very popular choice and the only, if protesting, candidate. Eric (Digger) Kelly told Chas. in no uncertain terms that he could blame his election on himself for having done a God-awful good job. We, on the sidelines, didn't interfere in this family

Q. Flight News (cont.)

squabble. We weren't too sure what crew-member Digger was insinuating to his former skipper Chas., but we did guess that Digger was pleased to see Chas. getting a bit of work to do.

Jack Lewis' resignation from the office of Treasurer wasn't accepted. His competence and canniness bundled him back in again. Yours truly has been more than a little lazy with secretarial duties these last few months so Clive Wyman was elected to keep his pencils sharpened and crutches near at hand.

The usual stalwarts were re-elected as committee and all were given a special elixir blood-transfusion and special batteries to sit on so that planning for the 1970 Jubilee Re-Union may proceed at breakneck pace and ascend to Himalayan heights of grandeur and finesse.

Already, the re-invigorated committee have sat---nay, that's not the word--- paced the room and scratched out much treasured and, in many cases, last remaining hairs from heads and already plans are shaping psychedelically. However they will remain secret until they are let out. Might we suggest that you set aside a dollar or two each week. In 2½ years time you'll have a tidy sum to come to the sun at Surfers Paradise, 1970.

Talking of fun...

our Melbourne Cup Sweep was a huge financial success. Thanks to the splendid support and ageing shoulders put to the wheel. We thank all for their efforts, not forgetting Bernie McLoughlin (Seven books), and Clive Wyman and Chas. Warren (Five books each). The winner was Mrs. G. Cook of the Gordon Postle retinue, second went to Cliff Mannion's household, while Isla Garland, wife of Bert, filled third place. Thank you, one and all.

One very good feature of the M.C.S. is the correspondence we receive from members far and wide. Our blue water mariner from Green Island, Erle Hetherington, writes of an informal reunion in Cairns; Snow Atherton came from Hughenden to Cairns for the 21st birthday of daughter Dianne, who is a Sister at Cairns Base Hospital. Erle hoped to muster Jack Dew from Tully, Danny Dangaard from Mareeba and Jack Plunkett from Cairns to make the most of the occasion. Snow, says Erle, has his own aircraft.

Stan Parker reports that Alf Peake has shifted camp to Inkerman. Bernie Hughes is still at Erskineville, Tim McQuaid still running the races, the football and the Annual Show at Barcaldine as well as his own business. Theo Ravenscroft sends a 'Hello!' from Longreach. Kel Kellam is well enough now to invest in the Melbourne Cup. Bill Snowden sends a cheery 'Cheerio!' in many languages from the Migrant Hostel. And finally Jack Lewis did a mighty job at the Shrine of Remembrance on Battle of Britain Day.

For the ageing airman, the Air Force Association has started a Bowls Association. Direct your inquiry to Len Shapcott, Tenth Avenue, Kedron, Brisbane.

PASSING OF BOB DRINNAN.

Sadly we record the death, at 53 years of age, on Sunday, November 26th, 1967, of Bob Drinnan, one of the most popular and best-liked Wellington Captains to have served on 458 Squadron.

Bob trained as a pilot in Australia in 1940, then spent a lengthy period on instructing duties in South Africa, where he met and married his wife, Pat.

Transferred to England and later to the Middle East, Bob was posted to an O.T.U. at Ein-Shemer in Palestine early in 1944, where his outstanding record and ability earned him the distinction of appointment as a Wellington crew captain. He formed his crew, with Al. Wheat as second pilot, Ken. Brown as Navigator, and Bob Smith, Jack Taylor and Bob Lyndon as wireless-air gunners, and after completing their operational training, Bob and his crew joined 458 Squadron in July, 1944, at Alghero, Sardinia.

During his tour of operations with the Squadron, Bob became well-known among aircrew and groundstaff as an extremely capable pilot---he made some 43 operational flights, pressing home determined attacks on shipping and shore targets at night under the most difficult flying conditions, and on many occasions under concentrated opposition from the enemy.

He flew on operations with the Squadron from Alghero, Foggia, Ancona and Gibraltar---he gained his commission in February, 1945.

Tour-expired at Gibraltar, Bob and his crew were posted back to Ein-Shemer for instructing duties, and he was later posted home to Australia.

In civvy life, Bob was extremely successful in the Insurance field---at the time of his death he was with the South British Insurance Company in Adelaide, working with Mel. Priest. He was also the South Australian Flight Secretary.

Passing of Bob Drinnan

Bob was a born leader of men and yet loved by all under his command. He was intensely proud of his wife, Pat, his daughters, Dianne, Hazel and Pepita, and his sons, Robert and Donald.

Ken Brown, from Victoria, represented Bob's crew at his cremation in Adelaide, on November 28th; also present were about 15 Squadron members from South Australia.

Our sympathy goes to Pat Drinnan and to Bob's children-- he will always be remembered with great affection as a true friend by his crewmembers and by his Squadron associates.

We salute him!

E.W.L.

NEW SOUTH NOTES.

from Cy. Irwin, 61, Park Avenue, Ashfield, N.S.W. 2131.

Air Force Association Ball.

At the Trocadero, September 8th. A 458 Party of 20 attended and had a good night, complete with champagne and the works. This year we had a very charming debutante to be presented to the Governor of N.S.W., His Excellency Sir Roden Cutler, V.C., and Lady Cutler, in the person of Mary Beach, daughter of Kemp and Joan. Also, Melanie Alexander, Peter's daughter, was in the show, as a Flower Girl.

President's Cup Golf Day.

At Parklea Golf Course, Baulkham Hills, on Sunday 10th. September. Cy. Irwin ran out the winner of the President's Cup, with Eric Munkman as runner-up. The Visitors' Trophy went to Reg. Mullins, with Lew Ranger as runner-up. Reg. also captured the Nearest the Pin Prize. Our annual teams battle with the Armidale Old Boys was lost by the Squadron team, so the historical 'Pot' stays once again with Armidale. Mention must be made of Bob Bruce--too sick to play but turned in a very nice effort on the barbecue and fed the multitude. Thanks, Bob.

Melbourne Cup Sweep.

This year, first prize went (\$60) to the Bush--to the Holland family at Wellington (Dutch Holland); second horse and prize of \$30 went to Usher Newton and third to the Fred Ayres family. The special prize for the drawer of the horse to run last (Tupaki) went to Ken Crago. My thanks through these pages to all who assisted by return of books.

Pot Pourri of News.

Bob Osborne has accepted an assignment of work in Hong Kong. He is with Jackson Waine and Harpers Ltd., 1617 Central Buildings, Pedder St., Hong Kong. We wish him well in his new position and hope to hear from him occasionally.

N.S.W. Flight has made a donation towards the upkeep of the Airmen's Memorial School at Evase, New Guinea. We think that the object is a good one, and we have been informed that gifts of reading matter, magazines, etc will be appreciated. These would be forwarded to the School should any member care to help.

Min Simpson.

Members will remember Min Doman, wife of the late Ern Doman, who was a very popular N.S.W. Flight Committee member. Min has re-married and is living at Marrickville as Mrs. Ray Simpson. We wish Min, the two boys and Ray every happiness for the future.

Christmas.

This will be the last News report for 1967 and N.S.W. Flight wishes Squadron members and families in other States the very best for a happy Christmas, with good health and success during 1968.

BROTHER, HOW'S YOUR CONSCIENCE ?

The N.S.W. Committee has asked its Flight members to to make sure they send in their Annual Fee covering the 50cents due for the Squadron News. The News has been going out regularly for over 18 years helping to keep 458ers in touch. This costs money. Please send your sub to the Flight Secretary promptly.

TO ALL OUR READERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD: THE SQUADRON NEWS WISHES YOU ALL HAPPINESS.
FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR 1968.

CORRESPONDENCE: Letters to the Editor.From Jack Carter, Upstream from Dirranbandi, Queensland.

Dear Peter,

This is the Conbaculdaray. The name is my own, a contraction of Condamine, Balonne, Culgoa, Darling and Murray, ---and Australia's longest stream. I started following it when as a little mountain creek it flowed easterly from the slopes of Mount Superbus towards the Pacific a mere sixty or seventy miles away. Turned back by Mt. Wilson it flows northwards towards the headwater tributaries of the Dawson and Burnett systems, is frustrated in its attempts to break through the ranges and finally turns south at Chinchilla, its most northerly point and decides to make for the Southern Ocean at Goolwa, South Australia, a total distance of 2,330 miles. (Readers will find it interesting to trace this course of the Darling River from Queensland to the Australian Bight, ---Editor.). On the way up from Victoria I camped at the headwaters of all its southern tributaries, failed for the third time to locate Jack Ind in the Macquarie Basin, but met convivial spirits near the birth of the Bogan who wished to be remembered to Stuey Currington, so convivial in fact that I forget their names. I also met Stuey's wife, Margaret's, father Mr. Paterson. Stuart is Manager for Dalgety--N.Z. in Darwin. At Toowoomba, a memorable week-end with Frank and Hilda Wilks, just returned from a world tour in which Frank met people he knew in England during the war. In partnership with Neil Johnson Frank has the Darling Downs franchise for Mercedes and Jaguar, two sons, Geoff. and Rod. and daughter Robin. Regards from him to former Squadron comrades, particularly Fred. Kleckham, with whom he absconded from Fayid with Major Nero to bring back---after kerosene tin fuselage repairs---a written-off Liberator. After I had arranged late dinner for them too.

Fred. is in Port Moresby, New Guinea. I deviated a bit from the stream, to Tara to see Bob Helyar who has a flourishing garage, in a rapidly growing town, of which Bob is justifiably proud, having been very active in local government. Bob and Jessie have one son, Rob, who is 17 and at Toowoomba Grammar School (and should look up Rod. Wilks) and Daughter Jean. (12.)

We discussed devious ways of landing in a Hurricane, as distinct from a Typhoon, Whirlwind, Monsoon or other phenomena but with comparable results. Bob's regards to old friends and appreciation of the Squadron Association. He gave me news of Bob Male, who sold his St. George property and is now at Hervey Bay. Doubtless there will be other 458ers en route. I know of two, Ian Showell at Renmark and Johnny Excell at Murray Bridge.....I expect to hole up at Bourke for a couple of weeks.

My best wishes to Cy. Irwin and a small contribution to a wedding present.

Regards to all,

Jack Carter.

From Mrs. Alison Wheatley, 106, Park Street, South Yarra, Victoria, 3141.

Dear Mr. Alexander,

Thanks for your very nice letter, I feel I know you quite well as Basil always let me read your letters and was always talking about you.

It was a great shock to me when Basil died; he was as fit as a fiddle and still the same humourous type, except he couldn't eat solid food for the last few months, he lived on egg flips and ice cream but still didn't lose weight. I talked him into going to the Doctor, he was X-rayed then went to hospital overnight for a test. He was then called into hospital for another test, and it was cancer; but operable. He was quite happy, took all his mail and his typewriter thinking he would be O.K. in a few days. He went in on the Monday night and died the following Sunday. He was buried on the Monday, at least cremated.

The people in Singapore were marvellous....The Shipping Superintendent Bill Townie did everything. He and Basil were at sea together 20 years ago. We had the Service at the Connell House Chapel (Connell House is the Merchant Seamen's Hotel where we used to stay) then to the Crematorium....His Ashes were buried at sea off the Australian Coast just the way Basil wanted it---we sat down years ago and talked things over. He had the Australian Flag over his coffin too. The "Galle" was in port so all the officers and crew were at the service. My brother came over from New Zealand and when my affairs are fixed up he is paying my fare over there to live if I wish but I have been here thirty years and I think I will be coming back here to settle down.....

Well, Peter, (I feel I can call you that), that is all, I hope you can read my writing as I am a shocking writer. Will keep in touch

yours sincerely,

Alison Wheatley.

