

# 458

## SQUADRON NEWS



JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL, G.P.O. 5289, SYDNEY, N.S.W., AUSTRALIA.

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458 SQUADRON COUNCIL OFFICE - BEARERS .

SQUADRON PRESIDENT: Jack Lewis (Q.)	SQUADRON VICE PRESIDENTS:
SQUADRON TREASURER: Peter Alexander (NSW)	-----Australia: Stan. Longhurst (NSW)
SQUADRON SECRETARY: Graeme Coombes (ACT)	Bill Clues (W.A.),
HON. SQUADRON AUDITOR: Frank Ward (NSW)	Canada: Jim. Donaldson (Manitoba)
	U.K. Peter Leonard (Wales)
	New Zealand Kevin George

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\*Please note change.

### PASSING OF THE LAST WARTIME C.O. Vale, Jack Dowling.

After many difficult years of chronic illness, 458's last surviving wartime C.O. has passed on. A regular officer of the R.A.A.F., he was born in Stawell, Victoria. He had a successful continuing career in the R.A.A.F. after the war years, culminating before his retirement in the rank of Air Commodore and command in Vietnam during that war. On 458, of course, he took over command of 458 from Bruce McKenzie at Bone in north Africa. He was well-liked by all who knew him; we respect his memory and achievements and give our sympathy to his widow who looked after him so lovingly for so many years of disabling illness.

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REUNIONS COMING. The gathering of members in W.A. continues to promise an excellent attendance and good time. Also, this issue brings first details of next year's All-States Reunion in Queensland. We hope members respond to the request for preliminary (non-commitmental) indication of intention to attend!

CROWEATERS' COMMENTS.

from Ted.Creighton.

Flight Activity. The period May to August is one of hibernation for the S.A.Flight. News is almost non-existent--but then "No news is Good News."

The Australian Blue Ensign. We have been advised of a proposed S.A.branch of the Australian Flag Association. Members interested in helping to oppose the push to change the Australian Blue Ensign may contact Mrs.Alice Page at telephone 248 2470 to obtain further details of the proposed S.A.branch.

The Talbot. The problems relating to the Talbot were discussed at a recent meeting of the President, Treasurer and Secretary. Any member with bright ideas as regards a new "home" for the Flight convenient for both Anzac Day and welcoming interstate members is invited to contact any one of the aforementioned.

Personal Par. Treasurer Bert Ravenscroft has had another short holiday in Daw Park Repatriation Hospital. While he is not yet back to chopping the wood, he has snuck in a round or two of golf.

Diary Note. Out with your diary NOW and mark in Sundya 22nd November for our Annual Pre-Christmas Get-together at the Adelaide Airport Aviation Institute. Usual arrangements apply--i.e. bring your own tucker, but buy your drinks from the bar. If you're really keen BBQ facilities are available. Should you wish to sizzle a snag or char a chop. We are looking forward to a good roll-up. Doors open at 12 Noon.

TRIBUTE TO THE SHOWELL FAMILY.

Their home city of Renmark has recently paid a considerable tribute to the Showell family--as true pioneers of the Riverland. The family contribution to the region's development in fruitgrowing and tourism during the past 100 years was recognised in July when the family was honoured by a civic reception given by the Renmark Council.

A Full page of the Murray Pioneer article reveals that Ian's father, Harry Showell reached Renmark from North Wales in 1892 and began experimenting with all types of vine and tree planting. He concentrated on sultanas and became the first fruitgrower to dry fruit on racks. Harry had a keen scientific mind and was awarded a Fellowship of the Royal Society for Scientific Research for work done on the parasitic wasp attack on driedfruit grubs. The "Showell Process" of machine spraying an emulsified oil is still used to-day to clean dried fruit. Harry Showell died in 1938.

After five years overseas Ian returned from service with 458 Squadron and joined his now-late brother Lynn, who had served in the Army, to run the 200 acre family property left by their father and which the brothers decided to divide. Lynn made a great contribution to the agricultural community whilst Ian continued in the footsteps of his innovative father. He built his first houseboat in 1961, based on an idea gained at the Bitter Lakes near the Suez Canal in Egypt. In 1962 Ian bought the 1100 acres of land now known as the Jane Eliza Development. He donated, from this, the reserve for the 458 Squadron Memorial Garden. His contribution to tourism had been rewarded in 1986 when he was presented with the O.A.M.

As regards the Development (now unfortunately in Receivership) Ian says the place is there and it is successful. He would only be disappointed if new owners "didn't look after it and improve it."

79 years young Ian is enjoying a life of semi-retirement running his small fruit block--or is it fruit and nut, for it includes a planting of pistachios.

The Murray Pioneer referred to Ian's incredible vision and courage and said he has left his mark on Renmark in a way few can match.

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SANDGROPER SAY.....

from Ted,Jewell.

Our W.A.Flight Gathering in Perth is well on course for the Get-together in October. We have had a very good response from our own members,also interstate members,as about 25 have sent their acceptances to come over to the West. Most have sent their cheques:so,with our own W.A. members,we are looking forward to a great reunion with a week of interesting functions

Through the Winter. Over the winter months we have been fairly quiet as far as to Flight functions. We had a good turn out for a Sunday lunch at Brian and Margaret Hicks home early in July. Both are Associate members. The ladies bring a hot dish and sweets. It was a very enjoyable day. Our next function is a BBQ at our home in Mandurah. Most members will be coming down from Perth on 30th August so we are hoping the weather will be kind. We have had plenty of cold wet and windy weather lately.

Personal Pars.Our house has been upside down for some time as my wife, Elsie,has been in hospital for three weeks,having slipped over and broken her leg. She is at home now but with a leg in a fibreglass casing;so she will not be able to get around much for a while. Bill Clues has informed me of the passing of Mrs.Amy Power on Sunday 2nd August. Amy was the widow of 458 member,the late "Peter" (Butch) Power who was well known on the Squadron. Several members will attend the funeral. All the best, Ted.

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TRIBUTE TO BERT THOMPSON.

458 Squadron Council and the Squadron Officers have paid tribute to Bert Thompson who passed on after some years of ill health. Bert was a Navigator,with Robin Knight's crew and an Accountant. For many years he acted as honorary Auditor for both Council and N.S.W.Flight. His devotion to the Squadron was marked. Many 458ers attended his funeral service and expressed their sympathy to his lady,Kitty,and family. We shall remember Bert!

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VIC.FLIGHT NEWS.

from Stan.Tarczynski.

VALE! It is with deep regret that we record the passing,after an extremely long illness,of our Commanding Officer,Air Commodore Jack Dowling. Also our deepest sympathy to Peg.Cuthbertson. Both Gordon and Peg have been staunch supporters of Victorian Flight before moving to Queensland.

Anzac Day. Last Anzac day saw the usual attenders despite extremely good weather;it was noticeable that ethnic groups swelled the number of on-lookers. Led by President Mick Singe and the banner-bearers from No 2 flight A.T.C.,Preston other marchers were Vin.Clohesy,Jack Fleming,Bill Hurford,Stan.Tarczynski,Gordon Nash,Stan.Cartledge with grand daughter Karen,Eddy Bradshaw,Rupert Pearce,Tom Primrose and Murray Wearne from 459. Back at the Melbourne Bowling Club were Yank Martin,Ern.Laming,Bill Henry, Harry Ashworth,and hard-working sandwich-maker,etc,Ian Alison.

The A.G.M.The Annual General Meeting was deferred to June 19th as Mick and Mavis Singe were over in Wales,visiting Peter Leonard in Wales. There were no changes in the election of office bearers--all were returned unopposed. Following the meeting was the Annual Dinner and those present for both were Mick and Mavis Singe,Bill Hurford,Vin and Mavis Clohesy, Jack and Vivienne Morris,Neil and June Dean,Jack and Margaret Ellis, Harold and Kath.Martin,Ern and Helen Laming,Jack and Dot Fleming,Dave Evans, Ken.Morkham,Rupert Pearce, Bill Henry,and Stan.Tarczynski. There were apologies from Beth Pearce,Ann Hurford,Beat Morkham and Elaine Timms.

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THE CORNSTALK COMMUNICATION.

from Jock McGowen.

It was mid July that we received the sad news of the passing of our old mate "Red Jack" Baker,quite suddenly,at his home of Maitland. 458 was represented at the funeral by Max and Marge Richards and Bill Fiddes who went up from Nelson Bay. Our sincere sympathy to the family.

Cornstalk Communication (cont.)

Also, we have had news of the passing of Bill Waite in the U.K.

The Turn of the Tide. On 15th July there was a March and Church Service at St. Andrews Cathedral to commemorate the "Turn of the Tide"--the time when, 50 years ago, we could begin to see the results of our wartime work and the start of the long road back--in the Pacific or North Africa. 458ers who attended were Peter Alexander, Eric Munkman, Jack Aitken, Noel Walter, Don. Bitmead, and Joe Pratt.

State Assembly of the RAAF Association. This was held (being the 45th) in June and two events occurred to please 458---Stan Longhurst was recommended (to the RAAFA National Council) for Life Membership of the RAAFA and Fred. Strom was recommended for a Certificate of Merit. (NOTE: these recommendations were duly approved by the National Council, meeting at RAAF Base, Richmond during August and will be presented in November--details to follow--Ed.)

Many Events. There will be a Memorial Service at the Cenotaph on September 15th at noon and an Air Force Commemoration Service in St. Andrews Cathedral on Sunday September 20th at 10.30 a.m. Squadron members will be welcomed at these events.

Work has started on a planning for a proposed Memorial for RAAF members of Bomber Command planned for Anzac Parade, Canberra. This will mark permanently the extraordinary cold courage of the young Australians who kept on night after night operating over Europe, or enduring the hardships of life in besieged Britain. It will not commemorate particular Commanders or strategies. Eric Munkman represents 458 on the Committee that is organising the affair and Peter Alexander is its Hon. Secretary.

An Air Force luncheon was held at the Clubhouse of the Royal Motor Yacht Club early in August with some 45 attending. A great success at \$18-00 perhead with drinks extra. Next luncheon on 25th November. Those interested ring Eric Munkman on 451-0824. Sounds good.

Please keep up membership of the Air Force Association---we need all the help we can get to assist those worse off than ourselves.

Our best wishes to our old mates Lofty Bracker, Arthur Jollow and Bill Chapman, up Newcastle way--keep it going, old mates.

Finally, will members please use my home address (see Page 1)--NOT the Box number. Nothing else changes. Jock

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Q. FLIGHT NEWS. from Jim Holliday.

In this issue is a Prospectus for the 1993 Reunion. The venue is the Mermaid Waters Resort and the time Sunday May 23rd. to Saturday 29th. Originally we planned to hold the Reunion in Brisbane but could not arrange reasonably priced accomodation under the one roof. We had to turn once more to the Gold Coast. We were not disappointed: nor will you be. The Mermaid Waters Resort is first class. The appointments are splendid. Three levels of price are offered---- \$50/\$60/\$70 per night per room. There are dining facilities at reasonable prices and several bars and a liquor sale outlet adjacent. A courtesy bus to nearby Casino and shopping facilities. Please note that the Registration Coupon (in the Prospectus) is to be returned to Ron. Russell, 39 Avanti Avenue, Mermaid Waters Q. 4218 (Tel: 075 720 831). All queries to Ron who is Reunion Organiser.

Winter Social. Our winter social at the Russells was poorly attended. First, the Queensland/Scotland Rugby match clashed with it. So, we lost the McLoughlins, the Footes, and the Wymans. Then, the Kellys had booked a New Zealand tour, the Dud. McKays were scheduled to go to a married daughter on a South Pacific Isle and the Garlands were on the eve of an extensive European tour to visit their son in London. Illness prevented the Wilks and distance the Kleckhams and the Hobbs. Still the nucleus made up a most enjoyable day (who wouldn't in the gardens surrounding the pool at the Russells!)- comprising the Lewis', Stones, Baxters, Peg. Cuthbertson, the Lloyds, the Gilkes, the Bailies, and the Hollidays.

Q.Flight News (cont.)

The Bailies have now moved from Mooloolaba to Southport. The Lloyds were resident at the Mermaid Waters Resort and declared it excellent.

News from Jim Browne that he had broken up his large property outside Dalby and at last retired. Still flies his C172.

A 'phone call from Bob Dangaard (from Mareeba) to advise the sad news that Bev.,wife of Erle Hetherington,died in Cairns Hospital after surgery. All our sympathy to Erle. Bob,himself,had just been discharged from hospital after surgery.

Note--Jim Holliday himself has been in hospital again with a massive stomach ulcer. Our sympathies. Get well soon,Jim---Ed.)

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THE BRITISH BULLETIN.

from Sid.Thompsett.

How time flies! It certainly doesn't seem like three months since I last wrote. They say this is what happens when you get older.

I have to inform you that Bill Waite who,over the years,has been a regular member of the U.K.Flight passed away on May 31st at the age of 80.

(Ed. Bill was a W.A.G. who crewed with J.A.F.McKay and such other 458 mates as Cyril Edwards and Hal Lee. Our sympathies to his family)

There is some good news. Betty Johnston,widow of Guy who died quite a few years ago has informed me that she has remarried--on June 20th. Betty has kept in touch with the UK Flight ever since,so I would like to pass on our congratulations and wish her and John,her husband,health and happiness.

Reminder. Can I remind those U.K.Flight members who have not yet paid their subs for 1992. We work to a very tight budget so every members's money is vital. So,please,can you all let me have a cheque and keep us solvent.

That's about all for this time,so wishing all in Aussie best of luck--Sid.

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TO RUPE HOLMES-FAREWELL!

We have learned belatedly of the passing of Rupe Holmes formerly of Dubbo. After making a distinguished local career and retiring near Sydney. His was a sudden passing,we understand. Sympathy to the family.

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CANUCK CAUCUS.

from Jim Donaldson.

The 6th Aircrew Reunion was a complete success,the unofficial total stood at 3980 and when you add wives we must be in the range of 7000. I took a rough count as to whom came from where--results in alphabetical order---Australia 72;Bermuda 1;Channel Islands 1;Cyprus 1;Mexico 1; New Zealand 26;South Africa 3;Spain 2;U.K. 201,USA 104. These figures do not include wives or travelling companions.

And now for 458! In total we had 11 couples and two singles and were joined by 11 couples and two singles from 36 and 38 Squadrons some of whom were based at Malta and completed their tours with 458 We also picked up four odds and sods,who were friends of someone,to reach 52. It reminded me of some of the Mess parties that just started and grew and grew. We started the Reunion by boarding an honest to goodness U.K. Doubledecker bus to the Forks (junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers), We boarded the Paddlewheel Queen for a three hour cruise with dinner, dancing and an open bar. I was a bit surprised at the civility of the evening until I remembered the passing of the years and that members are now married. What a difference a wife makes especially when she has had time to train the savage beast. Unfortunately my wife was not able to be with me,as she is not in the best of health.

Our old friends Colin Fereday and Mickey Reid after they left hooked up with a friend called Cy Deane at Lake of Two Mountains where Colin tried the local Pickerel fillets--with his morning sherry eye opener--before the bush trail and a canoe.

We did toast old mates on the Paddlewheel Queen: memories lived again and many incidents of the past were relived possibly with a few slight exaggerations thrown in for good measure. I did sink three battleships from the rear turret. Didn't I?? To the best of my knowledge everyone had a good time. I know I did. God bless Jim.

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KIWI CALL.

from Kevin George.

I have recently made contact with a Wellington woman who is writing a Life of Nola Luxford. Nola was a N Z actress who founded and led the Anzac Club in New York after the Americans came into the war. She is well known to thousands of NZers and Australians who trained in Canada and spent fabulous leaves periods in New York--as I did. The low tariff at the Piccadilly Hotel, the free theatre tickets and the abundant invitations into the homes of wealthy and generous Americans were mainly a result of Nola's wide contacts and prodigious efforts. She did all this at great personal sacrifice, in monetary terms at least, as her successful acting career was put on hold. She obviously loved every one of us. Perhaps she sensed that tough times lay ahead of us, as for many they did.

The writer of the biography, which I believe it is, was most grateful for a few reminiscences I was able to pass on to her and urged me to write to Nola as she felt she would love a letter. Nola is still alive and does NOT LIKE to be reminded of her age, which must be in the late 80s.

Some Squadron members may also feel impelled to write to Nola. Even if the contributions do not make the book, contributions will be appreciated. The writer is Carole van Grondelle, 128 Tasman Street, Wellington, 6002, N.Z.

NOLA's address is 5167, Angeles Crest Highway, La Canada, Los Angeles, CA91011. Carole warned that I may not get a reply as Nola's eyes are not the best. Nola visited New Zealand some years ago (and Australia---Ed.) and her visit was widely reported by the media. She received awards for her wartime efforts from both New Zealand and America, as I recall.

Kevin George.

(Ed. Kevin and his lady passed through Sydney recently and met a number of 458ers at the City of Sydney R.S.L. Club for a pleasant chat)

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BOOK REVIEW. "The RAAF Ground Staff of the Desert Air Force Squadrons" by E.S. Johnston.

This book, written after diligent research by one who served in the M.E. fills a very useful niche in Australian Air Force History. It is quite clear that, right from the time of first recruitment and embarkation, Eric Johnston was in it. It will recall vividly, when read, how we as young men felt and what our experiences, both personal and operational were like.

Names familiar to 458ers are regularly to be seen as the story progresses. To quote a few--Tom Primrose, Ern. Laming, Lance Wood, Forbes Paulet, Chas Warren, Jock McGowen, Jack Fleming are a few of many names mentioned. While the Yellow Draft plays a major role in the story--being the draft specifically sent to the M.E. from Australia, the men of the Squadrons sent to or transferred to the M.E. (whether the groundstaff concerned were Squadron or Blue draft in origin) are also covered.

Any 458 wife or child who wants a picture of those years--or indeed any 458er who wants to revive old memories (and quickly revived they will be) should read this book.

Obtainable from the author at 19 Qu'Appelle Street, Point Lonsdale, 3225 Victoria. (We believe the price is \$30-00 plus postage).

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