


RAAF

JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL G P O Box 5289, NSW, AUSTRALIA, 2001

Year 50. No. 197

February 1999

458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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EDITORIAL

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In this, the first issue of our 50th Year of continued publication of 458 Squadron News we send greetings for the New Year to all our readers.

In this year, very appropriately, the Squadron has achieved the ending of a long irritation. Our wartime Crest has finally been officially accepted and registered. Readers know the long story. The winged torpedo design was created (Hugh Hamlet was the designer) in the desert. For some administrative reason, it was never formally registered by the Inspector of RAF Badges – the Chester Herald. The Squadron of course has stayed with the design and continued to use it. After the war Squadron Officers went through the formality of a petition to the Queen for its registration.

Readers will find in this issue some very welcome copy from the Squadron in Canada: this makes a substantial part of this issue and is a demonstration of the strength of 458 in Canada.

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The twilight, Torp attack was on the harbour, at Tobruk, October 26, 1942, while Pete was with 38 Squadron. He, Bruce McKenzie, Bryan and others from 38 Squadron joined those of us of 458 on Malta, in the Strike Duty force, I believe, in March '43.

(Ed: We well remember George Penfold and send him our best. Those meetings, some years ago now, were with the World Veterans Federation. In those days we always had an informal, social (alcoholic) gathering of the Canadians, New Zealanders and Australians – and how much the same folk they were! Canada and New Zealand no longer belong to the WVF, but our suspicion is that if present day young Australians, New Zealand and Canadian servicemen got together they would still be the same folk.)

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We have had a letter from John Wainwright, the Air Force Officer, who was our guest at the All States Reunion dinner. He said in part "We were very impressed that your Association has flourished over so many years and with the spirit of the people who make it work. You must, I am sure, have been congratulated on the great job you have done in organising the reunion this year. As I said in the toast, I think that the esprit de corps which you demonstrate is vital to a Defence Force, and I believe that you would be welcome to visit any RAAF Base which is close to your reunions, and to leave behind you at the Base perhaps a small display which records the history of your Squadron and your Association. As the Defence Reform Program affects RAAF more and more, the sense of unity in the Air Force is becoming diluted, and any demonstration of such esprit de corps, dedication and sense of duty as you will display will certainly help RAAF to maintain its tradition and culture". After the Squadron Dinner we found one set of miniature medals. If the owner contacts me I'll send them on.

Since Caloundra social activities have been nil. What with Christmas upon us, and different members going away it was decided to postpone a get together. March has been considered for a luncheon to be held - more details later.

Letter received from one Keith Wilkinson, 23 Ferndale Park, Pedmore, Stourbridge, West Midlands, England. Information was required from any 458 members who may have known his father, Kenneth Wilkinson from Lancaster, who joined the Royal Air Force in 1941 then joined 458 at Bone in 1943 as a rear gunner/wireless operator. He flew with Jack Christianson (pilot), Fred Briggs, Bill Parnby and Eric Petty. Keith would be pleased to hear from any member with information they may be able to pass on. He is in the process of writing up a family history. (Keith has been widely in touch with Flight Secretaries.)

Personal news so far to hand:

Theo Ravenscroft is still a very sick man, trips back and forth to Townsville for medical treatment takes its toll on Theo. We wish him well.

Eric Lloyd is progressing, still has many visits to doctors for medical attention.

Arthur Jones continues to progress well in his recover after open heart surgery late last year at Greenslopes Hospital. Arthur had expected to pay a visit to the reunion at Caloundra to catch up with many of his friends, when his heart problem arose. Harry Dorge has been very ill in Toowoomba Hospital with a blood infection still evident after knee surgery some 3 years ago. Harry was transferred to Greenslopes Hospital early January for further tests. Since he was admitted he suffered an Angina attack, and had open heart surgery last August. Vale. I write with sadness of the passing of my old friend Frank Wilks on the 1st January, 1999. I first met Frank when I was posted to Amberley, November 1940. We were posted overseas together and joined 458 January 1942. Frank was in a Hospital for 3 years and then went to a Nursing Home where he passed away. Our thoughts are with Hilda.

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CROWEATERS CHIT CHAT from Ted Creighton

Because of the confusion existing at the conclusion of the November AGM, members need to note the following:

1. Sunday, April 25 is ANZAC DAY. The date is not negotiable and the march will take place on that day. Monday 26th is the holiday to satisfy the sports minded.
2. As the Gouger Café does not open on a Sunday, our Anzac Day Luncheon will have to be transferred to the Talbot Village Restaurant at the rear of the Hotel. More will be known when the RSL March Committee finally and publicly confirms all arrangements for the day.

SEARCH FOR NEWS of Eric Petty. Late December a call came from SA Flight Associate Lyne Skinner. Lyne alerted me that in his copy of the Oct-Dec issue of "Airmail RAF Asscn Magazine" he read that a Keith Wilkinson was trying to trace three RAF 458ers, viz: Eric Petty, Bill Parnaby and J A Christianson. He was about to write to Norman Duke when the penny dropped. I re-read his British Bulletin in our own November newsletter which sets out the only contact they have yet to make is ERIC PETTY.

ROLL ON 2000. Most of our oldies have had their share of trials and tribulations just lately. Cheer up blokes – there is plenty of 1999 left for things to get better!

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A TRIBUTE TO JOCK PATTISON

Col Fereday writes from Canberra : I am sorry to convey the sad news of the death on January 3, 1999 – from lung cancer – of an old 458 stalwart, Jock Pattison, an ex-armourer, who lived at Holme on Spalding Moor. I had a letter from Jock in early October 1998 in which he mentioned he was about to have a medical examination for a lung “shadow” – he was then in good health and spirits – and now, just 3 months later, Frank Robertson – whose letter is enclosed in copy form – has sent us the sad news of Jock’s passing. I have written back to Frank expressing great appreciation from all of us here for Frank’s care to ensure that a fine Squadron member and patriot was given a fitting, honorable Service Ceremony at his (Jock’s) funeral. Only a week ago I had written to both Frank and Jock conveying my best wishes and sending Jock a Calendar of Canberra views in return for a treasured Calendar of Yorkshire scenes – sadly Jock will never see my small reciprocal token but he knew how

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Since the above was received Col Fereday has referred, through Bob Bruce, some further details. The day of Jock's funeral dawned with heaviest snowfall of the winter. It can be impossible to ascend the hill to the ancient Parish Church in such weather but, however, rain cleared the snow. The 458 badge was placed by the lectern and the Australian and Air Force Ensigns beside the central pillars. The church was packed. The local Gliding Club provided a low level flyover. A wreath was prepared by Frank Robertson with a copy of the Australian Flag and 458 Badge. The family were proud and pleased by the tributes and large congregation., Later, there was an adjournment to the Hare and Hounds for food and appropriate drink. This is reported to have lasted for some time!!

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We have been invited to attend this Service to be held at St. Martin's Church, Cromwell Road, South Yarra. Meet at the Air Forces Memorial Centre 1100 hours to arrive at the Church and be seated by 1125 hours.

To end on a sad note, we lost another faithful member this month, Jock Pattison another victim of cancer. Jock was one of our oldest members at 81, who joined the Squadron as an armourer in 1941 and remained behind when 458 left Holme in 1942. He lived at Holme upon Spalding Moor, and was given a great send-off at his memorial service at the Church on the Hill. Peter Cochrane and Frank Robertson attended, and a wreath was laid on our behalf. A friend from the Pocklington Flying Club – Bernie Svenson – carried out a low level flypast in a Pawnee glider tug. Jock would have appreciated the 'send off' at the Hare & Hounds after the service. Best wishes to all

My visit of last April to Sydney for Anzac Day, and subsequently to visit some of my Australian cousins, was so enjoyable that it may become an annual affair, as I have decided to do it again in April. Kind Regards.

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I received the last issue of "458 Squadron News" and noted the death of "Orch", one of our Flight Commanders of 1 Flight. I also note your request for anything interesting – before we "fade off into history". I have had two heart attacks in the past two years, if I am spared I'll hit 79 on November 1, 1998, so perhaps it is time to fade. I have one little story – about 458 – which I haven't seen elsewhere: When we were stationed at Bone, Algeria, in the Fall of 1943, many of us came down with yellow jaundice. Health authorities blamed it on insufficient vegetables and fresh meat. Our medical officer was able to scare up vegetables from the countryside – but couldn't purchase any fresh meat in spite of our camp being overrun with the native Arab's sheep. They realised that their money would likely be worthless after the war, so they asked high for what they had to sell – I think it was 5,000 francs for one sheep. This was a ridiculous price so two or three of our Aussie mates hustled a fine fat sheep into their tent – killed it and dressed it. Within five minutes the shepherd was running round looking for his sheep. He was told to get lost! The fresh meat and vegetables revived the Squadron members somewhat, but the portions were too small to enable the whole Squadron to partake of the fresh meat. The head, fleece and intestines of the sheep were deposited in a bag and dropped far out in the Med. I was told, after I had left the Squadron, that sometime later this bag drifted and was deposited on the beach near where we were camped. There the Arabs found it. All the best.

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- You know some people are just not satisfied to be safe and sound on Mother Earth, they have to take on tasks not quite as dangerous as flying in a Wimpy but our NSW President, Eric, with tickets given by his grand children took a walk over the Arch of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He said it was great. I am and many others are prepared to believe him.
- We record the loss in Queensland of Frank Wilkes and from NSW Flight we send our sympathy to the family.
- While on that sad subject we record the recent passing of Walter Sullivan. Walter was a navigator and a fairly early member of 458, and on his return to civilian life, spent much of his time acting in TV shows and plays. We have not seen him for some time but Pete Pettit kept in touch with him.
- Another sad loss to us all was Jack Aitken, Jack did not attend many Squadron functions, except of course the TAFE lunches, Jack was an early pilot on 458 and on return to Australia he did a lot of flying with Cloud Seeding DC3 of CSIRO and a pilot with Butler Airlines. Jack was a very interesting fellow to talk to about the early days of flying. He is survived by Dorothy and sons John, David, Peter and daughter Jane, and their children. It was an honour to be invited to the private funeral, and I was asked by Dorothy to convey her thanks to 458 for the constant supply of information by way of the Newsletter. Our sympathy to Dorothy and the family.
- After a heart problem it is good to know that Jimmy Whitem is back at home and flourishing.
- New South Wales members – don't forget Anzac Day. Same venue as last year – the Masonic Centre, Goulburn Street, Sydney.

Pete Pettit is making up a list of anecdotes for future publication. Give Pete some help. His appeal follows: A 3rd Edition of We Find and Destroy is being prepared and it is hoped that a collection of anecdotes of Squadron life will form part of the project. They could be presented as an annexure or, if enough turn up, as a separate publication. So far only about half a dozen people have made a contribution and there must be a thousand stories out there waiting to be published, so let's have 'em! The anonymity of all guilty parties will be preserved by guarantee! All contributions to Pete Pettit: By mail to – 26 Dudley Avenue, Roseville, NSW 2069, by phone to: (02) 94165464, by E-mail to pettit@mpx.com.au

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The Bomber Command Memorial

The form of this Memorial to the courage and achievement of the three and a half thousand young Australians who died with Bomber Command in WWII (the largest Australian casualty list in WWII) continues to be debated. The Bomber Command Squadrons Committee, including 458 Squadron representatives, who are the survivors of those who served with Bomber Command, unanimously agreed on a fine design by the noted Sculptor, Dennis Adams.

The administration of the War Memorial has chosen to differ. They still, we suspect, hanker after another "good contemporary sculpture" - like the RAAF Memorial now in Anzac Parade. Bomber Command will not agree to any meaningless memorial. Now the War Memorial is calling for three more designs.

The Air Force Retirement Estate, Turrumurra This continues a slow process of negotiations with Banks and Councils. The hope is that units will be available for purchase in about 12 months.

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