

RAAF

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458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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EDITORIAL

As the Squadron News continues publication towards its completion of fifty years of continued, uninterrupted, quarterly publication (in November 1999), and we plan for a special issue then, the Squadron has continued its accustomed successful course around the world. Our correspondents are describing events in the various Flight reports. For our editorial self who marched in Sydney we noticed excellent attendances both of marchers and spectators. We were particularly pleased with the substantial number of uniformed, Air Force personnel who marched, many wearing parents' medals on the right side of their uniforms. Individually the Editor was very happy to be accompanied on the march by one of his grandsons (Lachlan). Pete Pettit marched with his son AND grandson. If, in future years, the march continues annually – and it is most important for Australia that it does – children and grandchildren, as well as serving personnel will be required to do it. They must be encouraged, not treated as second class marchers, and they can't be turned on suddenly five years hence.

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THE CORNSTALK COMMUNICATION from Jock McGowen

At the outset all of us must join together to give to Peter Alexander our hearty congratulations on a fantastic job of 50 years of the Squadron News, nobody but Peter could have had the drive to keep it going so long. I think it the longest continuous publication of any Australian wartime news; again Peter our thanks for keeping the gang together for so long.

I, along with other Flight correspondents, received a letter of thanks from our President in Western Australia, Jim Palmer, for the work we have done in the past and will continue to do in future while we hang on in there, thank you Jim it was nice to have the letter.

Our Anzac Day has passed once more; we had the usual number and we again were happy to have the venue at the Masonic Centre, thanks to Eric and Noel, those attending were Marshal Allan, Peter Alexander, David Baker, Jack Baker, Sam Barlow, Harry Baines, Don Bitmead, Bob Bruce, Keith Cousins, Laurie Crowley, Bill Clough (Joining Member)), Merv Hargreaves, Bob Low, Bob Lyndon, Jock McGowen, Bob Millar, Eric Munkman, Norm Peasley, Pete Pettit, Tom Ridgway, Bob Smith, Bill Turier, George Unitt, Noel Walter, Frank Ward, Jim Whitem with his Canadian Air Force Wife Dorothy. We were honoured this year to have our dear old Middle East Padre attending our re-union. We do not see a lot of Fred McKay these days, he like most of us is getting older, but he seemed to enjoy a drop or two of Red.

Fred is an Hon. Member of 458 and he is so welcome to join us whenever he can, he assures us that Meg is well and we give them both our best wishes and our love.

There will be a wreath laying at our Cenotaph on May 7, for Bomber Command Squadrons, with a lunch at Parliament to follow. 458 will be well represented.

The Air Force Association will be running another tour from the 20th to the 25th of September next. The tour takes in Eden and the surrounding districts, the cost is \$415 twin share including travel costs, accommodation, meals, etc. Good value, book through the Air Force Association.

We heard from Fred James after he read of the passing of Jack Aitken, he claims to be the oldest remaining 458er, at 87 years; do we hear any advance on 87? Let's hear from you.

Laurie Crowley was in Cairns recently and called on Earl Hetherington, who proudly showed Laurie his new Jaguar, what a pity Earl ever got rid of the Zindapp motor bike with Side Car, probably worth more than the Jaguar now.

Pete Pettit is battling on with the Anecdote Booklet and will need input from the Squadron members out there. I have read the draft of what has been done so far and Pete deserves a medal for his efforts. Come on you Guys, help is needed. There are only about 10 or 12 who have made contributions so far, and it is hard to believe that only 12 can offer help. **Come on now** – pen to paper, Peter will censor anything that may offend.

On April 16, there was another well attended TAFE Lunch at the Ryde College; always popular, the food is so good, no complaints and that is important.

It was good to see Jim Whitem at the Anzac Day meeting after his four way by-pass, he drove down from Port Macquarie and has gone on to Canberra, good going Jim.

There are three questions that could be answered by those out there:

1. Can somebody supply a list of the cars and motor bikes that made up 458's car park at Protville?
2. Can anyone supply a photo of the two Wimpys that landed in the water on the beach at Alghero so crews got out without wetting their feet, or nearly so?

We have received a donation to Squadron Funds from Elaine Irwin, Cy's widow, in his memory – most gratefully received Elaine, we all thank you so much.

This one has 6 jet engines, 48 main landing wheels plus 4 nose wheels, and a wingspan of 290 feet (Wimpy 85 feet) load capacity Wimpy about 2 tons, the AN-225 "Cossak" load capacity 250 tons, take off weight about 600 tons. Only one has been built. They built 11000 odd Wimpys.

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Ted Jewell, Secretary.

At the Melbourne Bowling Club, June Dean, Jack and Margaret Ellis and friend June McIntyre, Don and Shirley Granger, Ken and Joanne Hinton, Yank Martin, Barbara Pearce, Rupert Pearce, Tom Primrose's daughter, Eleanor and Mavis Singe were waiting. Thanks to our ladies for the cakes, altogether a pleasant day.

We express our thanks to the young brigade for their growing interest and support. Keep it up and the Flight too will continue to stay young.

[illegible]

- Kevin George

[illegible]

A number of 458ers, after a tour in UK with 458, served on other Air Force Units. One of these was a former 458 pilot - Bill McFadden. After his 458 tour Bill served with 69 Squadron RAF where he had an active and successful tour including a successful attack on a ship. Bill who ended the war with the rank of Wing Commander has our continuing congratulations.

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AIR FORCE AND REPATRIATION HAPPENINGS

Some of the current happenings in the ex-service world (some very long drawn out!) are the following:

Bomber Command Memorial As previously reported, for about four years now RAAFA has been striving, with keen support of relevant Squadron Associations, to obtain in Canberra an acceptable memorial to the achievements of the tens of thousands who served in Bomber Command, and particularly the 3,500 young Australians who died with Bomber Command. After two years arguing if and where, with the National Capital Authority, and another two years arguing the format of the Memorial with the Australian War Memorial, we are inching forward. The operative word is acceptable: the Bomber Command Squadrons want a Memorial that means something; the Australian War Memorial has wanted what it calls "good contemporary sculpture". This seems to have meant odd bits of metal floating in the air, allegedly representing bomb doors or ailerons. To this Bomber Command has said no. Now new designs are being called for, one or two of which might be acceptable. The struggle proceeds.

Bomber Command Squadrons have recently held an annual lunch at Parliament House in Sydney, after a wreath laying at the Cenotaph. It was well attended and was addressed by a serving Air Commodore.

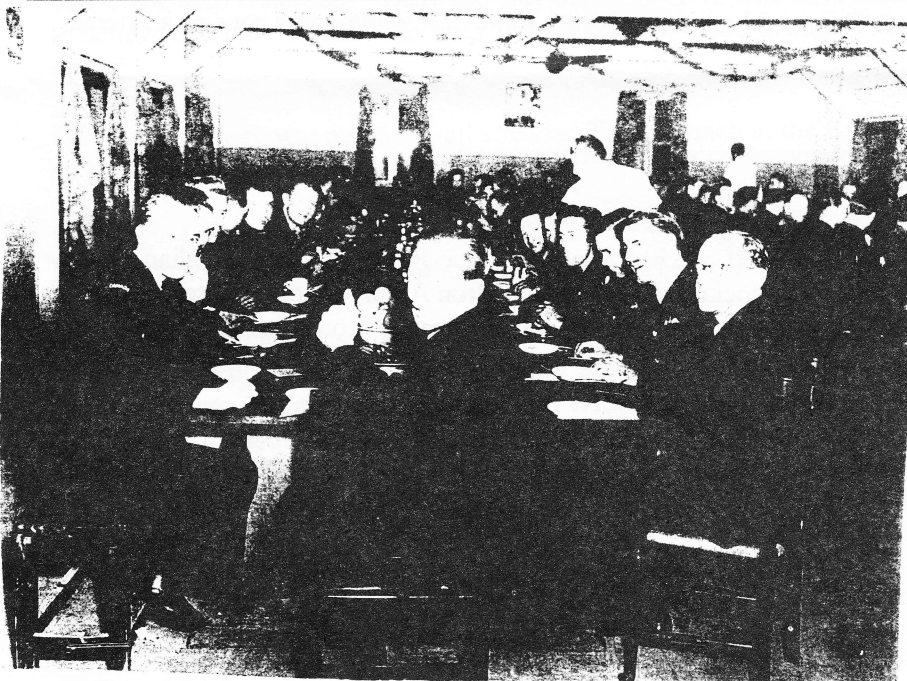
Repatriation Items - Radiation: Many Australian and British ex-Servicemen were exposed, quite recklessly in our opinion, by Service Command at Woomera and/or Monte Bello to radiation from atomic/nuclear experiments. In our observation they have been suffering/dying in excessive numbers from various cancers, etc. The Australian Government, after a long resistance, has agreed to an epidemiological review. There have been long and ungenerous delays, obviously. Korea and Vietnam The Federal Government is at various stages of inquiries into the morbidity/mortality of Korean and Vietnam theatre veterans – and in some cases their children and grandchildren. Lasting have been the effects of chemical sprays/radiation and other things declared at the time to be harmless.

Military Compensation This means the equivalent of repatriation for peacetime servicemen. There has been (another) inquiry into what is certainly an unsatisfactory system. In ex-service association views this report is also unsatisfactory. We have recommended its rejection.

Commemorations A party of veterans, widows and others recently visited Sandakan for the opening of a Museum. Sandakan was the scene of Japanese brutality of a kind and degree that even the Japanese Army exceeded nowhere in World War II. The commemorations there were very moving. A commemoration pending in October 1999 will mark the 100th Anniversary of Australian participation in the Boer War. This will include a ride by 100 riders in Light Horse uniforms in Canberra, with ceremonies at Parliament House and the War Memorial. AVADSC is sponsoring this event.

Your Editor is maintaining activity in the ex-service world as National Secretary of RAAFA and AVADSC, but has retired after 20 years as Convener of the Celtic Council of Australia – as well as the Chair of sundry Scottish Organisations.

AT SHALLUFA – Christmas 1943



L to R Quinlan, Unitt,
MacGibbon, Tomlinson
Thompson, Tracey, + +