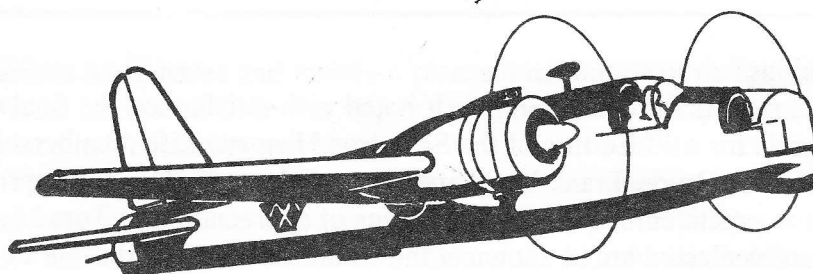


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SQUADRON NEWS



RAAF

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458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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Squadron Treasurer
Squadron Secretary
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SQUADRON ELECTS NEW ZEALAND PRESIDENT

Squadron Council meeting in Geelong elected Kevin George of New Zealand as its Squadron President for the ensuing period. Kevin, a Squadron Pilot, and in post war times, an Aviation Pilot, has regularly attended Squadron conferences and has been NZ Flight Correspondent for a number of years. Kevin declared himself surprised at his nomination but continues the energetic support for Squadron activities including attending the NSW Anzac Day march and reunion. He is the 29th Squadron President, and the first from New Zealand. Squadron members have commented that unlike some other Squadron associations, which are either heavily air crew or heavily groundstaff, the 458 Association has consisted equally of both. This is illustrated by the fact of the 28 Squadron Presidents 16 have been groundstaff and 13 aircrew. Of the aircrew 9 were pilots.

Council's Decisions

Council received reports from each Flight. It noted with satisfaction the final official adoption of the Squadron Crest and proposals for a 3rd Edition of the Squadron History. Life membership of the Squadron Association was conferred on Bob Bruce, Frank Ward and Henry Etherton. Council approved the distribution of Squadron addresses as far as practicable. It awarded plaques of appreciation to Tom Moore and Eric Munkman. Squadron officers as elected are as shown at the commencement of this News. The next Squadron Reunion within 2 years will be in New South Wales.

Other Events of the Reunion

Victoria Flight, under the energetic leadership of Mick Singe, Rupert Pearce and Neil Dean had organised an enjoyable number of exploratory bus rides around coastal areas of Victoria, as well as a welcoming reception, a Memorial Service and a final Squadron Dinner. Squadron Council recorded its thanks to Victoria. It agreed that, subject to their approval, phone numbers of Flight Correspondents will be shown with their addresses in the Squadron News in future.

The Memorial Service

A brief Memorial Service was organised in Geelong at which Squadron President, Jim Palmer, read an invocation; the officiating Clergyman read a letter from Padre Fred McKay, and Peter Alexander spoke of the Squadron's operational history. Fred McKay passed on shortly after this time and a reference to him and his Air Force and other contributions is elsewhere in this edition.

SQUADRON PLAQUE IN CANBERRA

458 Squadron was invited a short while ago to join a group of other Australian Squadrons in placing plaques in commemoration of the Squadron near the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Most of the Squadrons concerned were Fighter Squadrons but a number of these served with 458 in the Middle East. The event was very efficiently organised by Air Commodore Dave Bowden, President of the Fighter Squadrons. The plaques of bronze were made in Melbourne costing \$478 and installed by the War Memorial at a charge of \$100, but the Australian Minister for Veterans Affairs granted \$400 and the associated functions (lunch, dinner) provided the funds to cover the installation. At the Ceremony, at which the Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Errol McCormack and many Senior Ex-Service figures were present, was in this writer's opinion a very satisfactory Air Force occasion and quite emotionally moving. A wreath was placed for 458 by Graeme Coombes. Other 458ers able to attend were Col Fereday, Laurie Crowley and Peter Alexander. The plaques will finally be placed adjoining the War Memorial. - PCA.

CANUCK CAUCUS from Brian Quinlan

Bob Bruce's note attached to the minutes of the Geelong Conference reads "Col represents you fellows well" – a timely lead into my intended first priority which is to express Can. Flight's heartfelt appreciation to Colin Fereday, Graeme Coombes and Jim Whitem for so ably representing our interests at Squadron functions – past, present and in the future. We are sorry that Graeme's involvement has been reduced by health problems and we send our very best wishes. We welcome Jim's appointment as a second Honorary Canuck delegate and know that he and Colin will do us proud! Colin sent me a very enjoyable informal and comprehensive overview of the conference and discussions on Can. Flight suggested agenda items, including a print of the recently (Finally!) approved Squadron crest. It is planned to send a reduced-size print to our Flight members with the May edition of the News. We derived considerable satisfaction from the opportunity to contribute input from such a great distance and we hope that these items were constructive and productive. We are very pleased that the "Talking Stick" will fulfill its intended role as a symbol of the Australian-Canadian 458 bond at future conferences and we are fully supportive of the decision to recognise Eric Munkman's dedicated years of service in the publication of the 458 News and other Squadron activities. Also, we are looking forward with great anticipation to the decision of the sub-committee with respect to a revised edition of "We Find and Destroy". On the domestic scene, there was a very enjoyable luncheon reunion at the local Legion, involving Tony Mauro, Tom Lindsay, myself and Tony's younger brother Victor, an ex-Navy type. Tony and Tom were radar

bashers on 458 in 1943-44 on various Med. bases and maintain pleasant memories of their association with Peter. Ernie Ireland, who lives in the interior of B.C. was another member of the group. Regretfully, the reason for Tony's stay at his brother's place in Vancouver was his recuperation from a recent stroke and Tony returned to his Oliver, B.C. home on 1 May. Tony remains upbeat and has not lost his hearty sense of humour.

Mick Read advised by phone and fax that he has re-discovered and talked by phone to Alan Ruggles, a Protville 458er, who was temporarily "lost" due to an incorrect Apt member and the bloody-minded Postal Service. Al reports recent angina problems but is still golfing with a 10 handicap! In addition, in March Mick and Marg enjoyed a visit by the Duke's daughter Jane and husband David, who were married last Sept., and had a great time showing the recently weds the sights and highlights around and about Mississauga. The couple next visited with Jane's twin sister Tina and husband Ralph in Vancouver.

Sid and Joyce Winchester advise of an action-filled first quarter of 2000 with a trip to Mexico and entertaining visitors to their home in Parksville, B.C. on Vancouver Island. They appear to be thriving on their busy schedule. Sid's recent letter included an amusing little personal post-war story, but will have to save it until the next report due to the already extended length of this one.

Cheers from the land of the Maple Leaf! Bryan.

THE PASSING OF FRED McKAY

The Very Rev. Dr. Fred McKay, AC, CMG, OBE has been known to and admired by 458ers and other Air Force people since the time of his being an RAAF Chaplain in the Middle East. Not only of course to airmen. He was a distinguished public figure as head of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia. Based in the north of Australia the Flying Doctor provides a rapid, airborne medical service to the remote areas of that vast bush country.

As a Presbyterian Clergyman, Fred had an equally distinguished career being successively Moderator in NSW, and Moderator General of the Church in Australia. He attended 458 functions – as well as functions of other Middle East Squadrons as regularly as he could. 458 organised a function to commemorate his 50 years of Ordination. He was highly honoured by his country and will be remembered with great warmth by all who knew him. To Meg and his family our sympathy. We feel amidst much copy commemorating Fred we might best publish the letter he wrote to a Clergyman present at the recent Squadron Ceremony in Geelong.

"I am thrilled that you are having the exciting privilege of being part of the 458 Squadron Reunion. I couldn't think of a better mate because my long friendship with you makes me believe that you will sense in special way the unforgettable bonds which were mutually forged between the Middle East Chaplains and the total family of young men of this famous Wellington Squadron whose record of active service is a saga of champions and dedicated achievement under changing and rugged conditions.

The sentiments of the three Mediterranean Padres, Bob Davies, John McNamara and myself Fred McKay are intermingled with sacred and proud memories of lives which were lost and the succession of dangerous and courageous exploits of the whole Squadron.

I have to admit that there is something fascinating and intriguing about the spirit which binds the 458 Family together. For instance it is great that Theo Ravenscroft comes to Reunions from the floods of Longreach, that Ted Jewell from Mandurah in the wild and woolly west never misses with the something good in his kitbag, that Bob Bruce and Jock McGowen forgot all about the Olympic Games at their doorstep and hoist the 458 flag from the Harbour Bridge. That Grandfather Eric Munkman puts Kerry Packer to shame by his publishing prowess, that Tom Moore walks out of his lovely property and comes with paint-brush in hand, that the indefatigable Peter Alexander, and Pete Pettit too, never give up in their hunt for new stories, and that Jim Palmer is always around just like Bruce McKenzie at Protville. And what about everybody else? And the gaggle of lovely wives? It's a bit silly mentioning names! Please give everybody at Geelong the blessings of "The Terrible Three". May you all have a mighty time! Fred."

Many 458ers attended Fred's Memorial Service at St. Stephen's Church, Sydney. Among those there was Bishop Bob Davies from Hobart. Father Johnny McNamara passed on some years ago.

THE SQUADRON HISTORY

Progress continues to be made with the 3rd Edition of We Find and Destroy. We are not quite ready to announce details and seek support, but it looks as though we may be able to publish a hard back edition at around \$30 perhaps plus postage and packing. We continue to receive contributions to the substantial Appendix Pete Pettit has collected of additional stories.

SUPPORT FROM CANADA

Squadron News acknowledges with thanks contributions towards publication costs from a substantial number of Canadian Flight members. May we mention particularly Tony Mauro – well known SI operator. Tony is recovering from a disabling stroke but retains his energy, interest and humour.

VICTORIAN VIEWS - from Rupert Pearce

The 33rd Reunion at Geelong:-

We know that many travelled a long way to come to Geelong and we were pleased that it was a week of good comradeship. We noted that some of our regular members could not come because of ill health and even after registering the Campbells, the Hintons, Peg Holliday and the Walters did not make it. We hope they are much better now. Ken and June Brown, Audrey and Hilary Cruttenden, Ruth Li, Des and Betty Munday and Jean Rodwell were welcome at Meet Your Mates and 102 at the Dinner. Ian Redpath, the Victorian and Test batsman, was the guest speaker.

The outings averaged approx. 72 members and were enjoyed.

The Memorabilia Room attracted much interest with its miniature airfield, its photo albums and its history sheets. Congratulations to Jock McGowan, Don Bitmead, Keith Cousins and Pete Pettit for preserving the history of the Squadron. Many members spent time there and these items made a very real contribution to the success of the Re-Union. Thanks to the generous donations towards the cost of running the Reunion and the gifts of items from Victorian Members for the raffles, plus the support from all those who bought tickets, the Reunion will show a profit. Neil Dean has received a number of letters from members thanking the Flight for a great week.

BBQ at the Ellis Home at Dromona on 20.2.2000

Those who came to enjoy the day were Barbara and Roy Pearce, Rupert Pearce, Norma Pollard, Mavis and Mick Singe, June Schoppe and Charlie, June and Lawry, friends of our hosts. There were a number of apologies.

Visit to Hamilton 27.3.2000

Margaret and Roy Rabone kindly invited Norma Pollard and Rupert Pearce to their home on this night and a pleasant evening was spent.

Memorial Service to Padre Fred McKay

June and Ken Brown and Mick Singe attended this Service in Melbourne. Padre McKay was well known and loved by those who served in the Middle East.

ANZAC DAY:

President Mick was the leader of our small band. Those who marched were Jim Anderson Ed. Bradshaw, John Bilney, Stan Cartledge, Neil Dean, Jack Ellis, Ken Fleming, Roy Pearce and Murray Weaver a friend from another Squadron. Also with us was Karen, granddaughter of Stan Cartledge, Hillary Cruttenden and Brett Boatman, grandson of Mick Hunter. Ron Eggers used the RACV car to attend the March and the Shrine Service. Audrey Cruttenden marched with the WAAAF contingent. Our banner was again carried by cadets from No. 2 ATC Flight. Later at the Melbourne Bowling Club, were Margaret Ellis, Don and Shirley Granger, Yank and Cath Martin, Barbara Pearce, Rupert Pearce, Norma Pollard, Tom and Rita Primrose and their

daughter, Eleanor Buzza. (No McKenzie tartan kilt for Tom this year, his father was a Seaforth Highlander) missing in action WWI. With finger food, drinks and lots of talk it was a pleasant day.

KIWI CALL: from Kevin George

Unfortunately my contribution to the February Newsletter arrived too late for publication. The principal items in that letter were advice of the death of Mary Pryde in November and Irene Green in February. Mary was with us at Caloundra. Irene has been virtually bedridden since a stroke in September of 1997.

Our five NZ members, with the three surviving wives, continue in fairly good health.

Ron and Mary Verity joined Dawn and I for the Reunion at Geelong which we all enjoyed. It was well up to the usual high standard for these Reunions and we congratulate the hardworking organisers of it. It is encouraging to see the attendance at All States Reunions holding up so well.

I have since been to Sydney for Anzac Day and it is also encouraging to note the continuing health and vigour of NSW Flight.

There has been some talk of mini reunions. I feel that any such reunions should be additional to the eighteen monthly All States reunions. If these were to be interrupted by smaller reunions, there would some loss of continuity which could be detrimental to the size and life of our beloved association. I send my kindest regards and best wishes to all members. Kevin George.

"Q" FLIGHT COMMENTARY from Jack Lewis

Our members were down this year. 458 numbers are becoming smaller as each Anzac Day passes. The AGM venue was the refurbished old Treasury Hotel, much more peaceful than the Irish Club. The President and Secretary were re-elected, nobody else to take their place. We welcomed Fred Kleckham again this year, Fred flies down from Mackay each year. I would like to see others make the effort to attend on Anzac Day and help keep the old banner flying.

Thanks to Victoria for a very good and most enjoyable Reunion. The "Q" Flight members attending were Sel & Joan Foote, Eric & Bridie Lloyd, Eric and Kath Kelly, Bert & Isla Garland, Jack & Evelyn Lewis, Cecil & Hettie Murray, Dud & Enid McKay, Peg Cuthbertson, Joan Russell. We are all looking forward to the next Reunion in NSW in about 2001.

President Eric goes into Greenslopes Hospital 12th May for eye surgery, we wish him all the best.

Kath Kelly, two sisters and a daughter are off to Canada and Alaska while Eric convalesces at home. Happy holiday Kath.

I have not received any news from any members in other parts of Queensland so news is rather short. No doubt those in the north of the State will welcome a break from the cyclone and flood devastation.

CROWEATERS COMMENTARY from Pat Cribb

The 33rd All States Reunion in Geelong was a great success. Arrangements were made down to the last detail to ensure all participants enjoyed the functions and bus trips. Congratulations to Victoria flight, with special thanks from SA members attending - Col and Yvonne Hutchinson, Bert and Marjorie Oliver, Syd and Pat Bertram, Bert Ravenscroft, John and Barbara Ringwood, Betty Manning and Pat Cribb. Bert Oliver attended the Conference as Council Vice-President, delegates for SA Flight were President, Col Hutchinson and Secretary, Pat Cribb; Bert Ravenscroft was an observer. Regarding the relocation of the Squadron Memorial Plaque in Renmark, this matter was discussed at Squadron Council and it was left with SA Flight for resolution. The matter will be taken up with Renmark Council in consultation with Fee and Ian Showell. Lyne Skinner, who has marched in the past with Squadron is off to march in Sydney this Anzac Day. John Davies of Pt. Pirie, Ian Showell of Renmark and Buck Pedersen regret they cannot join the Anzac Day March, the Luncheon following or the dinner at Grange Golf Club on July 13, but wish to be remembered to their 458 mates. On April Fools Day this year Bert Ravenscroft read the entry in his diary of April 1, 1940 (60 years

ago), when he was initiated into Air Force training – cold showers, sleeping on the floor on a palliasse, and two weeks' rifle drill were some of the shocks. Like the rest of them, Bert, you survived it.

SANDGROPER'S SAY from Ted Jewell

News from W.A. flight is very scarce at the moment. I am writing this letter just before Anzac Day as I am off for several weeks holiday to Canberra, Anzac Day will be same as other years with our President Bill Clues placing a wreath at the Dawn Service in Kings Park and later leading the march through Perth, down to the Esplanade where the service will be held. After the Service all will find their way to Miss Maud's Restaurant for drinks and lunch. We are hoping to see a big roll up for lunch, but not too many for the March, when last year we only had 4 members fall in behind the banner. We are lucky to have the ATC Cadets to carry the banner. On Sunday 19th March I had a BBQ at my home in Mandurah, the weather turned out perfect, not too hot as it had been earlier, 23 people were here, most were up from Perth, and all had a great day. All were wanting to know when the next one was on! Members and wives were Bill & Joan Clues, Henry & Vera Etherton, Gordon & Olga Jones, Doug. Anderson, Len & Val Stewart, Nobby & Esme Nobbs, Poss Dale, Margaret Gannaway, Ben and Val Cormack and myself. The others were Associate Members.

I am sad to report the passing of a well known identity in the Squadron, Charlie McCarthy. Charlie was 88 years. Bill Clues, myself and Nunday Carpenter were present at the service.

CORNSTALK COMMENTARY from Pete Pettit

The All States Reunion at Geelong proved a great success for all NSW Flight members attending and all offer congratulations to Victoria Flight for a very well organised performance – they even seem to have had a direct line to 'Hughie' for the weather. It was good to see so many Squadron members taking part in the various activities and even more at the final dinner. The only mishap seems to have been the Q flight member who had some difficulty getting into his caravan and was consequently late on parade and not dressed in his usual sartorial splendour. The Anzac Day Parade passed off well for the NSW Flight who were able to march without the benefit of rain. Eric (in his thirtieth year as Flight President) led the march together with our Squadron President Kevin George over from NZ. It was good to see our numbers being supplemented by 3 grandsons of Peter Alexander, sons of Merv Hargreaves and (Black) Jack Baker, and David Longhurst (-wearing Stan's medals).

At the reunion Frank Ward was presented with a Life Membership Certificate for his sterling work on behalf of the Squadron over many years and Merv Hargreaves was elected to the Flight Committee. It was good to see recently ill members Wal Archbold, Don Bitmead and Jock McGowen (assisted by their very supportive wives) at the Reunion, all looking well on the way to full recovery although Jock has had to decline further work on the Flight Committee. He has been a tower of strength for a very long time and thoroughly deserves our warmest gratitude. Unfortunately we have also to record the death of Col McCrae of Beverley Hills on April 1st. So passes another of 458's Scots. We did not see much of Col and are unsure of his 458 crew. But God go with him.

Bomber Command

Ex-Bomber Command people in Sydney have agreed to form a Bomber Command Association open to all who served on Bomber Command or are related to or friends of those who did. This is not to take over from Squadron Associations, but to be a background in reserve. All those interested should contact Eric Munkman, Tel: 02 9972 0641. Annual subscription \$5.00.

CORRESPONDENCE: Letters to the Editor

From Mick Reid, 1539 Glenwatson Drive, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

Dear Peter ---- Congratulations. Fifty years editing 458 Squadron's News is a notable achievement most deserving of all the high level recognition and tributes carried in this great issue. We on the other side of the

world are indebted to you and all, such as Sam Barlow and Eric Munkman who continue to share your commitment. Still recall Bruce McKenzie sending early issues to us, from England, usually with a note telling us to "... get with it!" And here you are decades later, hopefully still ready, if able, to serve your mates. Then issue's mast head sure appropo on this occasion with the young Peter on a mission and now, after 50 years, taking a well earned breather. Good on you, your distaff, family and all.

Amid all the acclaim, I was saddened to read of the death, among others, of Ted Creighton. Marg and I had the pleasure of meeting Ted and Freda in 1990 when they patiently awaited our arrival at the Adelaide Station and then whisked us off to our hotel. A day or so later, a great luncheon meeting with them and members of the Flight. Since then we exchanged cards at Christmas. We have kept Ted's card of '94. Ted had noted: "When I sent the original of this to Freda back in 1944, I little thought I would be personalising a photo copy 50 years on." (The Squadron's card sent from Italy. Now coloured with personal greetings.) Sadly, our recent card to Freda carried condolences.

Trust you and your wife, Rita, enjoyed a joyous Christmas and may the New Year bring you much happiness and good health. Lang may your lum reek. Mick.

ED. For any Sassenach descendant that good wish means – long may there be smoke in your chimney. We appreciate the good wish even though we now rely on air conditioning.

From Col Fereday:

Col started some comments on this subject at the Geelong dinner and we invited him to make his point in the News. The Fair Sex

The folks at home mainly mothers, wives, fiancées girl friends and other lady friends gave much moral support to Squadron members on operational duty by sending lots of mail including air-letters, letters, fruit cakes, parcels of comfort items, etc. Our morale was greatly boosted by these kindnesses – some from new friends made when on service.

The fair sex did not otherwise participate in the actual life on the Squadron apart from the actresses appearing in the greatly-appreciated ENSA entertainment shows which sadly came to the Squadron only on quite rare occasions. To overcome the lack of feminine company, some members of the Squadron made friends with local girls when possible, such as when based near towns in Algeria and Sardinia. These friendships often enabled Squadron members to participate in gatherings of local people, such as at weddings and so on. In a broad-brush description, the girls seemed very similar in temperament to Australian girls - of good character, friendly and unassuming – although discussion with them could not be all that easy for those Squadron members who had forgotten their school-boy French and/or found Italian a bit difficult. On one occasion a dance was held at Alghero and this was attended by local Italian girls and allied servicemen, including many Squadron members. A good time was had by all. Those friendships between Squadron members and local young ladies usually lasted only until the Squadron moved on and then some of the young ladies – at least – transferred their friendship to those who followed us.

BRITISH BULLETIN from Norman Duke

Leon Armstrong We congratulate Leon on the award of the MBE in recognition of over 50 years service in the organisation of annual reunions for the British Pensacola Veterans Association. He had the honour and memorable experience of receiving his gong in person at Buck House from HM the Queen.

We have our usual crop of medical reports unfortunately:

Mo Borne . . . firstly we are pleased to learn that Mo is back in circulation after convalescence in Weston Super Mare from a hernia operation, and has resumed his regular lunches with David Duff at the RAFA Club in Bristol.

George Dunmore . . . George reports a big improvement in health over the past year, and adds his congratulations to Peter Alexander on the Golden Anniversary of the NEWS.

Hal Lee . . . Hal is keeping his sense of humour under the great difficulties of treatment of his afflicted tongue. I am enclosing his returned Information Sheet, and hope you can forward this to Pete Pettit for action.

Peter Leonard . . . Eileen tells me that Peter is coping bravely with Parkinson's disease. The RAFA apparently planning a convalescent home in Brecon in Wales.

Eddie Carter Jones . . . Eddie learned from a recent news item that a former 458 Electronics expert Ron Constable is credited with the invention of the microwave oven.

John Douglas . . . John suffered another stroke over the Christmas 1999 holiday. We wish him well and a speedy recovery.

Mona Mathews . . . Mona's son David has written to tell me the sad news that his mother died suddenly in her sleep, very unexpectedly. He repeated how his mother appreciated the Christmas hampers that she received from 458.

Bill Heeley . . . Is it still possible to obtain copies of the Squadron wall plaque?

Ken Morris . . . Ken clocked up the big 80 this month, and celebrated with a trip on the London Eye (ie the Big Wheel). Apparently spectacular and not to be missed. He and Kathleen are looking forward to a forthcoming cruise round the Baltic. Us oldies must keep moving or we seize up!

Ben Robinson . . . Thanks to Eric Munkman we regained contact with Ben in Huddersfield. Also . . .

Bob Spencer . . . making slow progress after recovering from his third heart attack. Good luck Bob.

Reunion 2000 . . . Stratford upon Avon again this year. October 1st and 2nd. . . . Make a date.

Who remembers P H Hedgcock?

Rupert Pearce writes to us – A Mr Peter Hedgcock of 181 Gladstone Road, Dandenong, 3175, contacted me regarding any information I had of his father, P.H. Hedgcock, who served with the Squadron as he believed as a W/OP. Gunner. His father died from cancer, I think he said in 1977 and his mother lives in Adelaide and has a War Widow's pension. He has written to Canberra asking for his father's Service Records. I said I would write to you for any information you may have regarding his service with the Squadron, any details of the crew he was with etc. Kind regards, Rupert.

Veterans Affairs in Australia

Peter Alexander was invited to (dinner at) Parliament House for the Budget. Something for the children of Vietnam Veterans with Spina Bifida. Something for the (possibly) suicidal children of Vietnam Veterans. Otherwise steady as she goes.

The Inquiry into the Gulf War Syndrome continues. The Air Commodore who commanded had 13 inoculations – most not shown on his papers. Possible causes of a Gulf War Syndrome – airborne toxins (Saddam's nerve gas) and PTSD.

The unpopular RAAF Memorial is being revised. The Korean War Memorial is liked.
