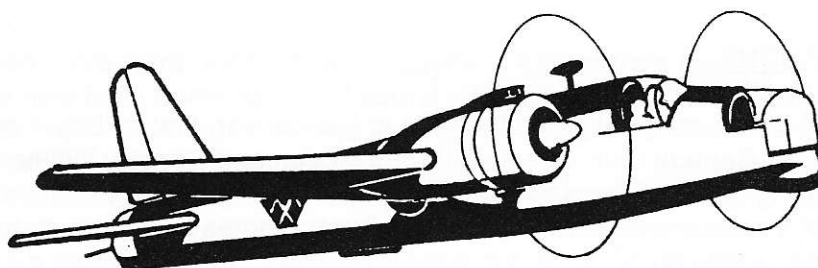


458

SQUADRON NEWS



RAAF

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458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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UPDATES

The Port Macquarie All-States Reunion

As previously advised – enrolments excellent. We expect to enclose further details of attendances in this issue. Members attending are reminded that the balance of their enrolment subs will now be appreciated. Address to Pete Pettit, 26 Dudley Avenue, Roseville, NSW, 2069: Tel. 0294165464.

The Squadron History 3rd Edition Still moving. We have received proofs of early chapters to proof read and are assured that others will be with us soon. We regret the long time this is taking, but this is a commercial publishers venture – unlike the first two editions which we had to finance ourselves.

CANUCK CAUCUS

From Bryan Quinlan, Western Canada

The month of June was highlighted by visits to Vancouver, first by David and Judy Westgarth on an organised cross-Canada tour; closely followed by Jim and Dorothy Whittem who are on extended holiday travelling across Canada and to New York visiting family and friends. Plans to assemble the small band of Vancouver 458ers to greet our Aussie mates had to be curtailed due to the sad passing of Tom Lindsay's wife on 8th June, the day David and Judy arrived and a call to Ben Gruenwald, which revealed that he was recuperating from a recent heart attack and was resting at home. Our deepest sympathies go out to Tom and family and we wish Ben a full and speedy recovery. Also drew a blank on Jack and Dorothy Reynolds who had a previously arrangement commitment on the only free day available to David and Judy during their short stay in Vancouver. So it evolved that Joan and I picked up David and Judy at their hotel and took them on a three hour drive through the Fraser Valley to show them our farming community for comparison with their beef cattle farm back home. We had a most enjoyable visit with them, punctuated with a midway stop for lunch and picture taking at a scenic golf course at the east end of the valley. Two days later, we waved "goodbye" to them as their train breezed through West Vancouver at 7 am en route to the Whistler Ski Resort and the continuation of their tour east. They left armed with the Canadian membership list and telephone numbers, where known, for possible contact if compatible with their schedule and, in particular to get in touch with Mick Reid when in the Toronto area. A recent letter from David comprehensively covered the story of their experiences and adventures across Canada and in New York, and the arduous 30-hour return trip, 26 hours of which by air.

Jim and Dorothy Whittem have provided me with the explicit details of their Canadian itinerary so it was totally my misreading goof to be surprised to get a call from Jim on June 15 advising they were at their friend's home in the Vancouver area when I was expecting them in July! Result – some fast phoning for local arrangements and e-mails and faxes to John Hays and Glenn Hoosier in Edmonton and Mick in Mississauga to ensure no mix-up in their itinerary dates. Locally, it was arranged to meet Jim and Dorothy and their long-time friends and Vancouver hosts, Bill and Marion Jansen, along with Jack and Dorothy Reynolds, for lunch at one of Vancouver scenic venues overlooking the city. As before, Tim and Ben were unfortunately unable to attend. We had a most interesting and enjoyable get-together followed by a visit to the nearby tropical garden conservatory. Jim, Jack and I had the opportunity to discuss some 458 policy matters, particularly in regard to Canadian flight input and its current and future status. I expect Jim will report to the October All States on the viewpoints of Canadian members who he was able to make contact with while in Canada. We are looking forward to another meeting with Jim and Dorothy upon their return through Vancouver en route home and are alerting Frank Laughlin and Sid Winchester of their proposed visit to Vancouver Island at that time.

On their visit to Edmonton to attend Dorothy's WD Reunion, John Hays and family entertained Jim at their lakeside summer cottage. Have heard from both John and Jim indicating an enjoyable get-together. I suspect that there might have been some elbow-bending activity. Unfortunately, Glenn Hoosier's year of bad luck continued when he was laid low by an appendix operation, so he was unable to attend. We wish Glenn a quick 'mend' and an end to his series of misfortunes (broken ribs earlier). Other news included a call from Jim Donaldson advising that his wife Peg is now out of hospital and at home recuperating from pneumonia. Jim also advised that he had received the replica Malta Commemorative medal, which for heritage reasons is important for those who saw service there.

From Mick Reid – Further East

As you may be aware we Canucks have had visitors from Down Under in the past six weeks. Dependable Bryan alerted us to their itineraries. They were anxious to meet as many ex-458 as possible. We had high hopes of first welcoming David and Judy Westgarth whom we contacted on the night of arrival but they and their tour were off the next morning for an overnight at Niagara Falls, and on their return to Toronto, a tour of the city. Fortunately managed to reach them again by phone for a welcoming chat only to learn they were off to New York the next morning. David and Judy faxed from New York the details of their return to Toronto to connect with their flight back to OZ. We looked forward to the opportunity. It was just not to be. Their flight was grounded on account of thunder

storms and eventually cancelled. We were unable to learn anything further from the airline. Love's labour lost. Hopefully they are now back home safe and sound in Duramana. It is likely that while stranded awaiting return to Toronto they would have time to become well acquainted with many disappointed Canucks other than our disappointed selves.

On the other hand the Whittems, Jim and Dorothy, were masters of their ship and made a four-wheeled landing on our tarmac drive way on schedule. Their luxury camper was crewed by Dorothy Whittem's sister and husband who joined in toasting the occasion. The Whittems, we were to learn, were no strangers to Canada. Jim had "seen Niagara Falls in all seasons" and Dorothy, born a Canuck in Regina the centre of Canada's wheat belt, had served in the RCAF as a 'meteorological observer' at Service Flying Training School. Jim's training ground at Claresholm, Alberta, where Dorothy, he claims taught him 'to look into her eyes and tell weather.' Obviously, Jim passed the test! Post-war he taught veterinary pathology and later accepted government positions all leading to a seven-year posting to Washington DC as Australian Science Counsellor. Somehow, Jim found time for sailing but to hold a steady course, he had to rely on Dorothy, his first mate and met. officer.

We kept the hangar doors swinging to and fro. Our guests were content to take things easy after several weeks of visiting family and friends in Canada. Fortunately, a sunny day, an historic spot on a nearby shore of Lake Ontario and a still breeze provided our visitors with a great view of countless small boats, sails filled, racing before a wind or abaft – the beam. Whatever, they certainly knew. And so it was sad adieu when they boarded a flight to Newark, USA to visit a son. Veteran happy campers.

It was with great sadness that we received word of Tim O'Rileys passing. Our deepest Sympathies go to Barbara and the family. He was a steadfast member of our crew and or friendship has endured the years. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

CROWEATERS COMMENTARY from Pat Cribb

Our mid-year lunch on July 12 at the Kensington Hotel was a very happy occasion with 40 guests - wives, partners, children, grandchildren and friends. Present were several original 458ers, Colin Hutchinson, Bert Oliver, Bert Ravenscroft, Reg Priest, Syd Bartram and Peter Thom. Bert Oliver supplied us with wine from his vineyard, which was much appreciated.

Also present was Mrs Michelle Rowe; who has recently contacted us with regard to her father, Flying Officer Peter Henry Hedgcock, a member of the Squadron from January 1942 serving in Italy and Gibraltar. Michelle would very much like to hear from anyone who knew him. Her address is C/o P.O. Box 740, Blackwood, SA, 5150. Her father joined up in Melbourne.

President Col Hutchinson, recently visited the Australian War Memorial in Canberra to stand again in front of the list of names of the Australians who died while serving with 458 and, as he said "To quietly reflect on honour, valour, comradeship, service, sacrifice and the futility of war, and the many other thoughts which crowd in on one in such circumstances".

There are five members of SA. Flight going to the Port Macquarie Reunion. We wish you all a jolly good time.

Sadly, on July 27, one of our members, W.OP,A.G. Tim O'Riley died after a six weeks' illness. We send condolences to his wife, Barbara. Sincerely, Pat Cribb.

Mick Reid from Canada writes about crewmate Tim O'Riley

I would expect that you have already learned of the recent death of our crew mate Tim O'Riley. Tim was our Crew Rear Gunner, he died of cancer at 2.00 Friday, July 27.

George (bless him!) and Grace Unitt phoned us a week ago with the sad news having had a call from Tim's wife Barbara. Several nights later Tim's son Ian O'Riley called to say his son wanted to speak to us. She asked us to keep in touch. Understandably a most shattering experience for Barbara and the family. There is no question – God willing – we will keep in touch. She said she would be pleased to receive letters, photos or other memento. We had a brief exchange with Tim's son Ian. But when he noted the time of his father's death, he said: "You chaps would be flying about that time." That thought, for me was most significant: Time flew in the turret for all 23 of our Malta Ops. We flew in

darkness throughout. There was but one occasion when we headed home for the island – in the first light. One of the rare occasions when Tim broke the silence of the intercom: "There's a fighter on our tail, Skipper". So we went on the deck which Tim noted that we were creating a wash. We headed from Palermo Harbour, Sicily, through "Twitch Alley", the name given to that stretch of the Med. Separating southern Sicily from Pantelleria, the small island that harboured fighters in underground hangars according to intelligence. The chap on our tail may have had a hard night or was thirsty but to our knowledge he never fired a shot much less a burst, must be my age the other night. I wondered: did Tim stare him down? The other night the credit went to Tim.

Q FLIGHT COMMENTARY from Jack Lewis

I had a letter from Jack Hobbs a few weeks ago saying how he appreciated the Squadron News. Jack and his wife Sheila were planning a trip to Norfolk Island, he was hoping to check back on family history. His Mother's Grandfather was apparently deported to Norfolk Island. He married an Islander and they moved to Burnie, Tasmania, raised a family and moved to Yeoval a suburb of Cooroy Queensland, where Jack's mother married and thus Jack spent most of his life in that area. Jack has the honour of holding the No. 1 Badge of the Cooroy RSL Services and Memorial Club though is not so active as he has been in the past (like all of us). Jack has over the past twelve months been in communication with ex-458er Tom Lindsay of Canada, others out there may remember him. I had a short note from Enid McKay enclosing a funeral notice of Bob Dangaard from Mareeba paper. Doug and Enid have been spending time at Freshwater with three of their daughters. Freshwater is their 'second home'.

I am getting on my feet again after major surgery for the repair of an aneurysm in the aortic artery at the end of May. Regards.

SANDGROPPERS SAY from Ted Jewell

Not a great lot to say for the Newsletter, I have been away for three weeks holiday and have had no news from members. A very pleasant lunch was held at the home of Phil and Shirley Hicks, Phil was flying Catalinas during the war years, there were only 3 – 458 members who came along, Bill and Joan Clues, Henry and Vera Etherton, Ted Jewell and also Margaret Gannaway; others were friends and associate members. We find our members are very few these days, I guess most are getting older and find it hard to get around.

The All States Reunion sounds like it is going to be well attended. I would have liked to be going this time – maybe the next, wherever it will be – I would really hope that I can go once more. I rang Bill Clues the other day and he is still riding his bike, but was unlucky to fall off and was feeling sore. Regards.

VICTORIAN VIEWS from Rupert Pearce

Social Notes: Lunch at the Manningham Club July 17. Members attending were June and Neil Dean, Margaret and Jack Ellis, Sue Eggers, Shirley and Don Granger, Joan and Ken Hinton, Rupert Pearce, Mavis and Mick Singe. Apologies received from Marjorie and John Bilney, Bill Fordyce, Barbara and Roy Pearce and Norma Pollard. Our next lunch at the Manningham is planned for Tuesday 20th November.

Personal Items

Eric Jewell was 80 on 10th June – Congratulations.

Beatrice Morkham has had a stroke and is presently at the Mercy Health Service, Albury. Some of our members are known to be on the sick list. Harry Ashworth, Cath and Yank Martin and Barbara Pearce. Our thoughts are with you.

HONORARY MEMBERS

We welcome Peter Hedgcock, son of P.H. Hedgcock (deceased) and Christopher Orchard, son of G.S. Orchard (deceased) who joins with brother Roland as an Honorary Member.

THE ALL STATES REUNION 2001 – Attendance List

Pete Pettit reports:

Our All-States Reunion will be held at the El Paso Motel in Port Macquarie from the 14th until the 19th October. The motel is an admirably located three star family owned and operated establishment which will accommodate us all and provide the space and rooms we need for meetings and the display of our albums and memorabilia. The Motel Management has agreed to collect arrivals by air, coach or train but needs to know the ETA for each. Would those planning to use this service please contact either myself or preferably the El Paso directly at 29 Clarence Street, Port Macquarie, 2444; Phone (02) 6583 1944 about 2 weeks before the Reunion.

Following is a list of those planning to attend as at August 7:

NSW;

Addinall, Bill & Mavis; Alexander, Peter & Rita; Archbold, Wall & Dora; Baines, Harry & Nita; Baker, Jack & Grace; Bartram, Syd & Pat; Bitmead, Don, Bev & Peter; Bruce, Bob; Campbell, Horrie & Marie; Cousins, Keith & Cassie; Crowley, Laurie & Betty; Dunn, John & Moya; Gibbons, John & Vic; Hamilton, Jack & Elsie; Hargraves, Merv & Raush; Holland, Dutchy & Betty; Hull, Bill & Peggy; Johnson, Bill & Gwen; Longhurst, Jean; McDonald, Mavis & Bruce; Miller, Ron & Enid; Moore, Tom & Val; Munkman, Eric & Dorothy; Pettit, Pete & June; Ridgeway, Tom & Bel; Smith, Bob & Dorothy; Turier, Bill & Dorothy; Unitt, George & Grace; Walter, Noel & Nita; Westgarth, Davis & Judy; Whittem, Jim & Dorothy.

QUEENSLAND

Baillie, Peter & Jean; Foote, Selwyn & Joan; Garland, Bert & Isla; Hetherington, Erle; Kelly, Eric & Kath; Lewis, Jack & Evelyn; Lloyd, Eric & Bridie; McKay, Dud & Enid; Murray, Cyril & Hetty.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Bartram, Syd & Pat; Excell, John; Ravenscroft, Bert; Senn, Ruth; Ringwood, John & Barbara.

VICTORIA

Dean, Neil & June; Flentje, Bill & Betty; Pearce, Roy & Barbara; Pearce, Rupert; Pollard, Norma.

ACT

Fereday, Col.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Palmer, Jim & Lucy; Kelliher, Bill & Flip

NEW ZEALAND

George, Kevin & Dawn.

THE BRITISH BULLETIN from Norman Duke

UK Reunion Dinner, September 30 - Londesborough Arms, Market Weighton.

Confirmations to date 7 Hotel reservations. Current total estimate for reunion dinner 16. Please advise N.L.D. and any further names a.s.a.p.

Leon and Doreen Armstrong have had a recent welcome addition to their family with a new great granddaughter Emily. Many congratulations. Ken Wilkinson, whose father flew with Jack

Christianson's crew, recently visited one of 458's former operational bases at Alghero, Sardinia and stayed at the beach Hotel dei Pini, which is built literally on top of the Squadron tented campsite where his father served. I wonder if the hotel has any ghosts? Best regards.

CORNSTALK COMMENTS from Merv Hargraves

I have had trouble finding anything to report. I have spoken to Eric, one of our members George Bradd died recently, also two widows, Iris Ricketts and Marj Rickard have passed on. Our condolences to all families. Bob Bruce is recovering well after his operation and will be back in

circulation soon. Peter Alexander will be in Singapore in September attending a meeting of the Asia-Pacific World Veterans Association. This year he completes more than forty years as National Secretary of the RAAF Association and will not stand for re-election.

There have been more than 100 registered for the Port Macquarie reunion. Anyone requiring transport from the airport or station should notify Pete Pettit or the motel.

A Squadron Luncheon will be held at Ryde TAFE on August 30, meeting at noon for a meal at 12.30pm.

Our publisher has been overseas for a number of weeks which has held up production in all his projects. However, he now assures us that things are moving again and we expect to receive more copy for proof reading within the next week or so. The whole publishing thing is quite beyond our control and we can only apologise to buyers for the fact that it is taking so long to fill their orders.

George Bradd's widow, Majorie, has thanked Squadron Council for the information provided to George over the years and wishes the Squadron success in its future endeavours.

CORRESPONDENCE

From Jim Palmer

Dear Peter, We were naturally sorry to hear that you were forced to take some sick leave over the Anzac period and sincerely hope that you have well and truly recovered before now. Lucy and I also had an interesting experience on Anzac day this year. As Lucy's father, a member of the 12th Battalion, was involved in the landing at Gallipoli on the morning of 25/4/1915 we for some years talked about going to the Dawn Service at Albany from where, as you will no doubt know, the original Anzac convoy left Australia. As it was a week's Federation celebration there this year we decided to go just for Tuesday and the two services on Wednesday morning. We were fortunate enough to get tickets to the dawn service held at the Memorial to the Desert Corps near the top of Mt. Clarence. The monument is a replica of the one destroyed near Port Said on the Suez Canal during the Six Day War by the Egyptians. It was a very impressive service attended by 1200 – 1400 people including the Governor of WA and several Federal and State MPs. An identical service was held at Anzac Park on the shore of Princess Royal Harbour. – Jim.

From Jenny Pratt, Fareham, Hampshire, England

Dear Sir, I am writing to you and hope this letter will reach you despite the only address I have is 16years old! I write to tell you of the death of my dear dad, Bill "Splitpin" Swann, who sadly died 23.11.00. He was attached to your Squadron sometime 1940? – 1943? and served most of that time with 458 in Egypt. He used to talk about his colleagues such a lot, and told me lots of "stories" that I felt I had to contact you. I know he attended the reunion in London in April 1982.

I'm sorry it's taken six months to try and contact you, but I have tried finding a new address on the Internet etc. Here's hoping I'm lucky! I do hope this letter reaches '458' and really look forward to hearing from you. Yours faithfully, Jenny Pratt (Bill's daughter),

(ED. 458ers who were at Holme-on-Spalding Moor or in Egypt will remember the tall, slender Flight Sergeant fitter of the Squadron's early days. We were glad to have occasional contact with him, send our condolences to his family and our thanks to Jenny Pratt for contacting us.)

RECEIVED FROM Bryan Quinlan

Intended, no doubt, for the 3rd edition of the History from 458er John Rowan, Dates on 458 January 1943 to 20 August 1943. Locations; Malta, Blida, Protville; Trade/Function: W/AG – ASV Operator. Crew Members/Associates; J. Withecomb Crew, W, Gunner, Nav., W/Ags John Askew, Glen Hoosier, self. Also flew with Douglas crew to complete tour.

Comments/Special Experiences and/or Memories on 458: The enclosed card was given to an assembly of W/Ags in our Malta billet in 1943 by Walt Sullivan, an Australian Navigator. I understand that Sullivan attended one of the Winnipeg reunions. Just a little souvenir from long ago! Does he remember if still with us? I was one of the W/Ags left to come with a ferry crew bringing extra Wimpeys to the Middle East. By the time I joined my crew on Malta they had already completed some trips and when they became tour-ex, I still had some to complete. According to my log book (and memory) these trips were done with the *Wild* Belgian F/L Douglas. On my second last trip while working the S.L., I picked up what I thought was a large merchant ship and two destroyers. It was a moonless dark night so a flare was dropped for illumination. On inspection the contact proved to be a light cruiser. *We...re going in to attack!* We fired our torp or torps – I can't remember how many – missed anyway – and they never fired a shot at us! I did one more final trip with Douglas and that was it for me. Shortly after Merv Kinley, from Paddockwood, Sask., went with Douglas as a rear gunner. The same thing happened only this time they got nailed and were shot down. Merv was drowned, but the rest of the crew survived, were picked up and became POWs. Must have been a German cruiser as the Iti fleet had surrendered. I remember the night we slept, or sat, under the aircraft in Malta waiting for the strike call if the Iti fleet was sighted. Impression at the time – try and slow them down if they come out fighting – most of you fellows won't come back if they do but slow them down until allied warships can get into position. Never mind – they came out flying the white flag!

REVISITING ALGHERO

Norman Duke has sent us a postcard he received from Keith Wilkinson which reads: Hello Norman and Joyce. This is the exact spot where 458 Squadron camped its tents in June 1944. The hotel is now built right on top of it. Anne and I stayed there this week for two nights as part of my research. I took a 1944 photo with me and have matched it up exactly by locating several rocks in the sea. Went out in a boat, spoke to several divers, but could find no trace of the two Wellingtons ditched off the coast here, but I reckon they're still down there somewhere! Best wishes from Keith and Anne Wilkinson.

We shall try to reproduce this card but, it being in colour, we are not sure if it will work. If there is a blank space at the end of this issue, readers will know that it didn't work!

PERSONALLY SPEAKING from the Editor

Readers of this issue will have been struck by several features. Firstly, and most acceptably, the major Canadian contributions. This has been very pleasing – keep it going!

Secondly by the continuing tide of members passing on. Additionally to those mentioned in Flight contributions, we have to add two major Squadron figures recently departed. Jock McGowan, a major Squadron figure who has had continuing heart problems. 458ers of course attended his funeral in Sydney. An origin 458er from Williamstown, serving in the Instrument section, in post war years he was responsible among many other contributions for the reformation of the Victorian Flight and for steadfast service to NSW Flight and the Squadron Council. He was a Squadron Vice-President. Then Ian Showell, the Engineering Officer towards the latter part of the Squadron's later service. He was a South Australian and a major figure at Renmark, his base for a fleet of river boats that served on the River Murray. He inspired the 458 Memorial Garden at Renmark and attended many Squadron Reunions.

George Bradd, a member of Jack Aitken's crew has passed on in his eighties. We shall miss him very much. We have also to farewell Iris Ricketts, widow of Stuart.. Our condolences to their families.

Whether each of us knew every other member of the Squadron well or not, nevertheless such was the indelible imprint on us from shared war time service, that it is not possible for any 458er to "fly on" without all of us being bereaved. The Elizabethan poet John Donne hearing churchbells

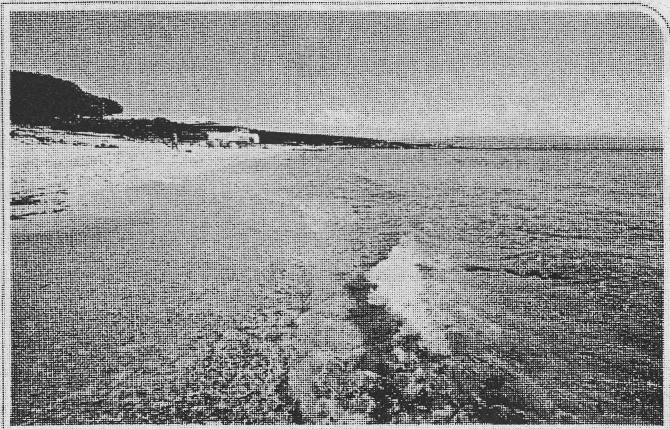
announcing a funeral wrote: "Never send to ask for whom the bell tolls – it tolls for thee. No man is an island unto himself".

It is pleasing to announce that we have re-established contact with Dick Boydell, one time Squadron Gunner Officer and member of Bruce McKenzie's crew. Your editor, on one of the Veterans Affairs Forums on which he serves, met the Warrant Officer of the RAAF – who turned out to be Dick Boydell's son, John Boydell.

Your editor, having had a bad year healthwise, is reducing his activities a little and has, in the last week, not stood for re-election as National Secretary of the RAAF Association – an Honorary Office he has been honoured to hold for 41 years. He is, however, continuing with various other ex-service activities including the Squadron commitment which is an overriding commitment.

We would normally give a summary of recent activities from Australian and International Ex-Service worlds – and both are very busy areas. However, we are keeping some space on this last page in the hope reproducing the views of Alghero Beach. So, you either have what the printer can make of the reproduction, or a blank space!

See you at Port Macquarie?



HOTEL DEI PINI

