

JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL, G P O Box 5289, SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, Year 52, No. 208 November 2001

458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

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Editor: Peter Alexander (Fax: 9299 5590) (Tel: 9299 2830) Publisher: Eric Munkman (Tel: 02 9972 0641)

Flight Correspondents

WĂ	Ted Jewell. 61 Wyaree Road, Mandurah, WA, 6210
NZ	Kevin George, 20 Kowhai Avenue, Kaikohe, New Zealand
SA	Mrs Pat Cribb, 3/2 Stuart Street, Burnside, SA, 5066
Canada	Bryan Quinlan, 1460 Haywood Avenue, West Vancouver, B.C. V7T IV6, Canada
Victoria	Rupert Pearce, 46 Mt Pleasant Road, Nunawading, Victoria, 3131
UK	Norman Duke, Orchard Cottage, Guildford Road, Cranleigh, Surrey, England
NSW	Merv Hargraves, 79 Beach Street, Coogee, NSW, 2034
Qld	Jack Lewis, 5 Cupania Road, Victoria Point, Queensland, 4165

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL ALL-STATES REUNION, 2001

The 34th All States Reunion of 458 Squadron, RAAF, was attended by nearly 100 458ers, wives and friends. Port Macquarie was found to be an attractive, prosperous country town in an area which is prosperous and developing. The party stayed together in one large motel and living and eating breakfast and dinners together, reinforced the long standing Squadron cohesion. There were organised and comfortable bus tours around beautiful and scenic country of the Hastings and MacLeay River territory. While the country is dry, it is still beautiful and historic.

There was a brief Memorial Service attended by the Mayor and presiding officers of the local branch of the RAAF Association followed by a Mayoral reception.

Prior to the formal dinner was a meeting of the Squadron Council with delegates from all Flights, including overseas Flights, that discussed an agenda and elected Office Bearers. There is a new Squadron President in Ron Miller from the NSW country city of Griffith (Ron having been involved in an accident was unable to be present, but is looking forward to the period of office). Squadron Council recorded the Squadron's appreciation to Kevin George for his continuing and devoted service to the Squadron. Vice Presidents were elected for Australia in Ted Jewell from WA, and Johnny Excell from SA. Other overseas Vice Presidents were re-elected.

It is worth commenting that, unlike other Air Force Squadron Associations, 458 has always attracted equal support from air crew and ground crew. The difference is hardly remembered now. This equality is illustrated by the fact that of 30 Squadron Presidents 16 have been from the ground staff and 14 from air crew (10 pilots).

The Squadron decided that it would hold another All States Reunion next year and Squadron Council is currently investigating possibilities.

CORNSTALK COMMENTARY from Merv Hargraves.

The All States Reunion held last month at Port Macquarie was as usual a great success and enjoyed by those 458ers and spouses who attended, some ninety in all. It was a great advantage to be all accommodated at the El Paso Motel and to be able to dine together morning and evening.

There was good representation of members from NSW, our National President, Kevin George from NZ, Jim Palmer and Bill Kelleher from WA, Syd Bartram, Bert Ravenscroft, John Ringwood and Ruth Senn from SA., Roy Pearce, Bill Flenje and Rupert Pearce from Vic. Selwyn Foote, Bert Garland, Erle Hetherington, Peter Hagan, Eric Kelly, Jack Lewis, Eric Lloyd, Dud McKay and Cyril Murray from Queensland, also Col Fereday from ACT.

Sunday arrivals met over drinks and a light evening meal. Monday there was a bus tour of the Hastings Valley, Lake Cathie, North Haven, Laurieton, lunch at Timbertown returning via the Cassegraine winery.

Tuesday morning a memorial service was held at the local airport, followed by a Civic Reception and excellent lunch at the Council Chambers. On Wednesday we had a pleasant day on the river with a barbecue lunch and a tour of the canal developments on the river. Thursday two bus loads set off to tour the Macleay Valley, first to Kempsey then to Crescent Head for morning tea, after to South West Rocks for a very good lunch at the Country Club. Next on to inspect the Trial Bay Goal, convict built, also used to house internees during WW1. From there we had the added excitement of seeing several whales playing off the headland. On the return journey a visit to the Smokey Cape Lighthouse provided a wonderful view along the coast. Friday was a free day except for delegates. In the evening a formal dinner was enjoyed by all, winding up a very pleasant week. Unfortunately, due to heavy booking, there will be no Christmas luncheon this year. Also, because of the minimal return and extra work involved we did not have a Melbourne Cup Sweep.

Sad to report that Maisie Barlow, widow of Sam, passed away recently after a long illness.

As this is the last bulletin for this year we extend greetings for a Happy Christmas and a pleasant New Year.

SANDGROPERS SAY from Ted Jewell

I haven't much time to write this Newsletter as I have only received a note that the editor wants the news by November 5. I have to write this tonight in a hurry as early in the morning I am off for seven days holiday; it has taken a week to come from Sydney.

I have to report the passing of two of our Squadron Ladies, who were staunch members; Mrs Lily "Poss" Dale, wife of the late Tim Dale, Mrs. Alice Gannaway, wife of the late Ron Gannaway. Also a well known member of the Squadron, Ben Cormack, who passed away while watching TV – a heart attack they said.

I turned 80 last week on October 25, had a big party on the Sunday, still a bit of life yet "I hope".

Our President Bill Clues has had a spell in Hollywood Hospital of several weeks, with a very high sugar level, he is home now but has to take it easy.

I feel very honoured to have been elected as a Squadron Vice President at the Council at Port Macquarie. We have our Christmas Dinner for WA Flight on December 2, at Miss Mauds in Perth – should be a great day! This Newsletter should be the last one of the year, so from everyone in WA Flight a very Merry Christmas to all 458 Members and a Happy New Year.

"Q" FLIGHT NEWS from Jack Lewis

Congratulations for another Reunion. Thanks must go to NSW and the venue selected, Port Macquarie is a lovely place.

All the trips were so very interesting for us and thoroughly enjoyed. "Q" Flight represented by Sel and Joan Foote, Ilsa and Bert Garland, Jack and Evelyn Lewis, Eric and Kath Kelly – the Brisbane lot. From Cairns Erle Hetherington looking so fit and well for his years and driving all that way down in his treasured and trusted Jag. From the North Coast Dud and Enid McKay, Hettie and Cyril Murray. Eric Lloyd and his son Peter, Eric had a slight Mishap at the Reunion – now doing well. President Eric was in touch after arriving home and was talking to Bridie who said the Dr was keeping an eye on him.

Before going to the Reunion I has been in contact with the wives of our very ill members. Jack Baxter is going downhill and most things for his health care have to be personally attended to. Bob Helyer with Alzeimers according to his wife does not recognise anyone nor take in what is said to him. Bob Coles after his stroke is confined to his room at home. Bill Chapman has had a Pace Maker inserted and goes along quietly. Jim Mackay cannot be without his oxygen beside him – it was good to talk to him on one of his better days. Harry Dorge intended to go to the reunion, but had a Pacemaker inserted a few days prior. He phoned me to say he had to cancel. Bernie McLoughlin is having trouble with his eyes and finds difficulty in seeing and reading. President Eric and Bernie will be attending a Royal Air Force Memorial Mass at St. Lucia on November 4. No news from other "Q" Flight members settled throughout Queensland. Regards to everyone – it was good to see so many at the Reunion.

BRITISH BULLETIN from Norman Duke

<u>UK Reunion Market Weighton</u> Although numbers were small, those present spent a very enjoyable Reunion weekend. Jack Christianson, Mo Borne, Ken and Kathleen Morris, Bill Heeley, Jack Ball, Bill Eden and his daughter, and Frank Robertson kept the flag flying. In the unavoidable absence of Norman and Joyce Duke, Jack Christianson stepped in as Orderly Officer for the weekend and he sends the following report: The autumn reunion took place in the Holme-on-Spalding Moor area on Sunday September 30 and Monday October 1. A dinner was held at the Londesborough Arms Hotel, Market Weighton, Yorks and although only nine were able to attend (mainly due too anno domini and illness) the small number created a very informal atmosphere for reminiscence and friendship. On the following morning the group visited the church at Holme-on-Spalding Moor, viewing in particular the Squadron Banner in the church and the graves of those Squadron Members who lost their lives whilst serving at the aerodrome (which of course no longer exists) at Holme-on-Spalding Moor and laid flowers at the Squadron Memorial, as well as viewing the photographs portraying the Squadron activities during the 1941/42 period, in the offices of Rotherhams (who now occupy part of the aerodrome associated with 458 Squadron). Finally the party retired to the "Cross Keys" to imbibe the local sustenance.

Once again Frank Robertson's contribution to the local arrangements was seen in evidence in the programme of activities for the group throughout their visit to the area, and those attending thanked him appropriately. The last Squadron Newsletter sent to our old friend Bert Sleight, a faithful supporter for many years, has been returned unopened and marked 'deceased'. We knew he had heart problems for several years, but it was a shock to receive the news in this way.

I have received another request too reactivate the 458 'grapevine', this time from Thomas Passerello of Lakefield, Ontario, Canada. His uncle was <u>Thomas Peter Scandifffi</u> a W/02 Observer/Navigator in the RCAF, who served with 458 in Malta and Egypt on torpedo Wellingtons. His nephew informs me that died (missing in action) on June 16, 1943, and is commemorated on the memorial at El Alamein. Mr. Passarello is seeking information from anyone who knew his uncle and anything from Squadron records, to help him compile a family memorial archive. His address: 1123 Moodie drive, Lakefield, Ontario, Canada. KOL 2H0. Lastly we wish to thank Jack Baker who represented the UK flight at the Squadron Council meeting at Port Macquarie. Our numbers may be dwindling, but the Spirit is willing and 458 must never die. Our fraternal greetings to you all Norm.

CROWEATERS SAY S.A. from Pat Cribb

We mourn the loss of Bert Oliver and will greatly miss his unstinting generosity over the years, especially at our Squadron luncheons, which were crowned with very special dry red wines from his family vineyards.

Ian Showell has also sadly passed away, but of Ian, Fee says "He is probably up there designing a better harp", as borne out by the Murray Pioneer newspaper in its full-page articles on Ian's considerable contributions and inventions for the benefit of the River districts.

We are also saddened by the loss of Tim O'Riley: Col Hutchinson attended his funeral service at Stirling.

We extend to Barbara O'Riley, Fee Showell and Marjorie Oliver, and their families, our sincere condolences.

The travellers have returned from the Port Macquarie Reunion singing the praises of the organisers. They all had a wonderful time meeting again with old friends, and voted the El Paso Motel a perfect venue, the management being extremely helpful. Full marks to all who made the Reunion such a success.

The Conference was pleased with the report from South Australia re the 458 Memorial Garden at Renmark and for the three photographs taken by the Renmark R.S.L. showing how the palms have grown.

The committee will decide on the venue for the next 458 Reunion in 18 months' time.

There has been a change in the venue for our Annual General Meeting and Christmas Lunch, as the Royal Oak Hotel has not completed renovations. Make sure you come to the Kensington Hotel, 23 Regent Street, Kensington, on Sunday December 2, at 11.00 am.

KIWI CALL from Kevin George

No news from NZ but the very successful Reunion at Port Macquarie does call for favourable comment. The 'all in' price for all meals and trips was a very good idea and great value for money. The management at El Paso were very kind to us and it may be difficult to find such accommodating people elsewhere for future reunions. Dining together day after day as we did, created a most congenial atmosphere which reminded me of good times spent in Squadron messes 58 years ago. Kind regards, Kevin.

CANUCK CAUCUS from Bryan Quinlan

On September 17, the day before Jim and Dorothy Whittem's return to Oz after their lengthy holiday in Canada and the USA visiting family and friends, they were able to squeeze in a lunch session with Tom Lindsay and myself, along with their Vancouver hosts, Bill and Muriel Jensen. Jim and Tom were able to compare notes about their coincidental time on 458 and the outcome was a most enjoyable couple of hours. After all their travels Jim and Dorothy looked remarkably fit and rested. Unfortunately they were not able to contact Frank Laughlin, Sid Winchester or Les Mathews during their visit to Vancouver Island.

Since returning home, Jim has sent an update of their activities, including a report on the All States Reunion and a trip to Canberra. On behalf of all Canadian Flight members, I wish to thank Jim and Colin for expressing our viewpoint at the All States Conference. Very much appreciated.

Ernie Ireland reported in with the news of a heart attack last May and potential plans to move to the Calgary, Alberta area to be closer to family members. A recent letter from Ernie indicated that he is making progress in his recovery and he is now trying to get the O.K. from his doctor to travel, so we won't be surprised to hear that he is going to fulfill his earlier plans to visit in Vancouver with Tom Lindsay.

Congratulations are in order to Mick and Mary Reid on their 57th on October 28 and still very much in love and still as perky as ever – well, almost! Jack Hays keeps me well supplied with jokes via e-mail

and has now swapped golf for carpet bowling. Just as well with Edmonton's frigid winters. Regret to report advice from Tony Mauro's brother Vic that Tony and his wife are increasingly burdened with declining health and are both in hospital. Early in October I was contacted by Tom Passerello via email and a reference from Norm Duke concerning his Uncle Tom Scandiffio, who was a navigator on 458 during 1943 and lost without trace on 16 May 1943. Later in October, Tom visited Vancouver and we got together to review his Uncle's letters home and information he had obtained to date which was contradictory to that available from "We Find and Destroy", my wartime diary and another Canadian source. With help from Jim, Pete Pettit and Keith Cousins the apparent mystery is getting closer to being solved. More about that perhaps in a future edition.

One cannot avoid reference to the tragic events of Sept 11 in New York. There is no doubt that life has been forever changed in North America and no doubt in all countries which embrace democracy and the freedom derived therefrom. It is difficult to see what lies ahead or how this type of enemy can be isolated and defeated, but defeated it must be as the alternative is unacceptable. As our 11th November Remembrance Day observance approaches it is imperative that the will of the people remains strong to ensure that the sacrifices of previous generations were not made in vain. Lastly, and on a personal level, certainly anything but least, I have learned of my confirmation as a 458 Squadron Life Member, for which I am greatly honoured and can only offer my inadequate but most sincere appreciation to the Council and the 458 membership. I shall endeavour to live up to the high standards established over the past 50 years by those responsible for creating and maintaining the closely bonded organisation still so evident in this day.

Late submission from John Hays which may be of interest to some members. He advises that at a recent W/AG meeting in Edmonton, one of their members who had been a POW at Buchenwald stated that he had received a reparation payment of \$5000 from the German Government with another \$5000 to come. John noted that the member bought lunch for all attendees. Have you heard of anything of this nature? I certainly had not. Any ex-POW's in our membership? I will leave it to you as to whether you include this item in our report.

VICTORIAN VIEWS from Rupert Pearce

Change of venue, November 20 Lunch

Because of alterations to the Dining Room at the Manningham Club this will not be available and the lunch will be held at the East Malvern R.S.L., Stanley Grose Drive at 12 noon.

Personal Notes: Dot Fleming died on September 24: Neil Dean, Rupert Pearce, Mavis and Mick Singe went to the funeral service on the 28th.

John Bilney was 80 in September. Congratulations! Members known to be on the sick list are Yank Martin and Harry Ashworth while Barbara Pearce and Jack Ramsay are recovering and June Dean is getting slowly better. We wish them well.

Notes from the RAAF Association, South Yarra. Advice has been given that the Day Club meets every Wednesday at the Centre, South Yarra, 10.30 am to 2.30 pm. A light luncheon is served, gentle exercises, card games, Scrabble and social interaction is enjoyed by all. Membership is available to all persons whether ex-service or not. Cost is \$5.00 joining and \$5.00 per day. Telephone contact: Mrs Anne Taylor 9571 5576 or Mrs Joan Gale 9831 4329. Interested members of 458 Squadron will be welcome. The first Club Day in 2002 will be Wednesday January 16.

Changes to RAAFA's annual pilgrimage to Point Cook and the Annual Ecumenical Church Service at St. Martins Church, South Yarra.

- 1. The RAAFA's Annual Pilgrimage previously held in November will now be held in March in line with the RAAF Anniversary and to coincide with events arranged there by RAAF Williams.
- 2. The 2002 Annual Pilgrimage in March will replace the Church Service previously held at St. Martins Church, South Yarra.

The Port Macquarie Reunion

Congratulations to NSW Flight, to Pete Pettit and helpers for another great Reunion. The name badges, dolphins for the ladies, pelicans for the men and the map of the Squadron movements proved that Tom Moore has not lost any of his artistic talents. The Squadron mugs were a hit. The 6 Victorians were all

impressed by the tours and outings arranged, by the lovely coastal scenery around Port Macquarie, the waterways of the Hastings and Macleay Rivers, the development of the area and the homes, all the lady bowlers on the greens at Crescent Head, the history of Trial Bay Goal and the whales out in the ocean. Roy Pearce won the flight in the seaplane which he gave to Barbara and then found the pilot generously gave him a free flight. Both enjoyed the experience.

I have passed on to Christine Smith and Laurie Kew the best wishes from Grace Unitt and Laurie Crowley. Mavis and Mick Singe and Jim and Neil Dean regret their non-attendance.

THE SCANDIFFIO RESEARCH

Keith Cousins, a contemporary operator has supplied us with the following research: Sgt. SCANDIFFIO's name appears in the June 1943 summary of operations of 458 RAAF and 38 RAF Squadrons' Detachments which reads:

"16th June – Wellington Mark VIII aircraft was reported missing on operations. The members of the missing crew were as follows:

657261 Sgt. Bottomley, E.B. 11485553 Sgt. Pottage, B.L. R1002787 Sgt. Scandiffio, T.F. 1269264 Sgt. Cousins, J.R. 1165871 Sgt. Reynolds, J.G. A402920 Sgt. Flecknoe "

Going back through the records the only reference to SCANDIFFIO I could locate was on June 10 when he operated as an additional navigator with BOTTOMLEY as 2nd pilot, and another navigator, W/O Walker, on anti-sub escort for a convoy. Sgt. BOTTOMLEY's name appears several times prior to this date, all shown as 2nd pilot. My guess is that the "missing on ops"" report for June 16 could have been his (BOTTOMLEY's) first when in command and possibly SCANDIFFIO's first "in command of the nav. Table". The fact that the report specifies a Mk.VIII Wellington, when most other reports simply e.g., "Wellington XYZ" with no reference to Mark, indicates perhaps a new horse in the stable. This same report for JUNE records the safe arrival of the main body of 458 Squadron at its destination "B.N.W.A." – probably Protville, Tunisia. Also that the remaining 458 air and ground crews at the Detachment were then officially allocated to 38 Squadron Detachment at the same address – L.G.91 on the Cairo-Alexandria road, and that their operations were mainly convoy escort duties in the eastern Mediterranean.

Comments:- April 1943 Ops. Summary 458 Sqdn. – Malta Air Command advised No. 1269264 F/t. Sgt. Cousins, J.R., WOP/AG left for the UK on posting to home establishment, and yet is shown in the "missing" report above – is this another of the anomalies which have turned up over time in the official records? – or that he was posted back to 458? Also Peter Alexander's 2nd edition of "Find and Destroy" omits Scandiffio from the casualty list – could this be due to the official transfer of the 458 Detachment to the 38 Squadron Detachment dated June 15? – and yet Sgt. Flecknoe is listed among the casualties. Hope this little information on Sgt. Scandliffio may be of some help to his relative(s). Keith Cousins.

Ed., The casualty lists in the Squadron History are the "official" lists received from the various Air Forces. We have regarded them as incomplete for some time and are currently commencing correspondence with the four forces to see if they have amended their lists since 1958. They clearly operated on differing principles as Sgt. Flecknoe, an Australian, on an Australian Squadron, appeared in the Australian casualty list whereas the Canadian T.F. Scandiffio and the four RAF men were not included in the RAF or RCAF lists, for whatever reason.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL READERS!