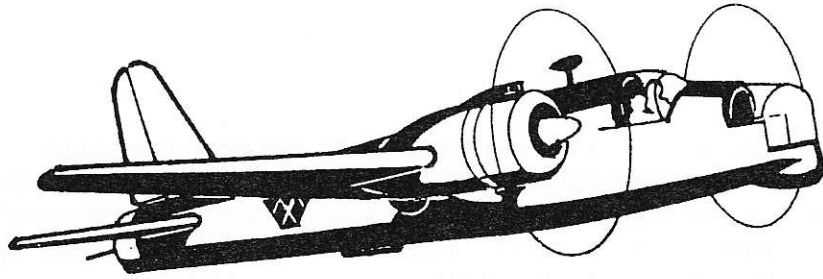


458

SQUADRON NEWS



RAAF

JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL, GPO Box 5289, SYDNEY, 2001, AUSTRALIA
Year 54, No. 214. AUGUST, 2003.

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CORNSTALK COMMENTS. from Eric Munkman.

The next Reunion. Since the Orange Reunion we have made the decision that there will be one more All-States Reunion--the LAST. N.S.W. will organise it. Further details later. This follows the Questionnaire circulated to all members. The majority favoured a six day reunion though some suggested 2 or 3 days. For these members, why not come for that period, remembering it will be the last.

The sick Parade. Bob Smith has recovered from his operation and is able to get around. Says it is the best recovery ever--he has had many operations previously. Col. Fereday has not been well--two operations and still hospitalised. Merv. Hargraves not well--having tests and transfusions. We wish them all well!

VALE! We have been advised that Wal Clarke passed away on May 27th. Wal was one of our older members--in his 90s we believe--he kept in touch over the years. The Squadron History (pp 142-3) tells the story of the crash of Russ

McMillan's crew, including Wal. Our sympathy goes to Ralph Bailey on the passing of his wife Min on August 6th. Peter Pettit and Bob Bruce attended the funeral service for Ken Crago who died in June aged 79. We shall remember with affection these members who have "flown on ahead."

From Rinso. received a 'phone call from Eric "Rinso" Purcell and he told me that since the Reunion the Mayor and locals call him Rinso: even the school kids going to school call to him from the bus "Hey! Rinso!" As he is to us.

CANUCK CAUCUS. from Bryan Quinlan.

First item of importance the welcome news from the recent Squadron Council meeting at Orange--the news of the appointment of Mickey Reid as Canadian Vice President. Our membership unanimously endorse this recognition of Mickey's unfailing dedication to strengthening the bonds of friendship formed on 458 so long ago. Congratulations Mickey, and similarly to our dear friend Norm Duke as Squadron President. Mickey has asked me to include the following message of appreciation: "Please convey to Peter Alexander, the Council and all gathered at Orange my sincere thanks for appointing me as Vice President,, representing the Canadian Flight. I am honoured and I am deeply moved by this appointment."

Meeting with Diane. Very pleased to report that the long-delayed meeting with Diane Atherton took place in June when our Vancouver 458 Contingent, minus Ben Gruenwald, who is unfortunately mostly house-bound, met Diane for lunch at the Van Dusen Gardens, one of Vancouver's garden showplaces.. I know I speak for Tom Lindsay, Jack and Dorothy Reynolds, and Joan and I in saying how much we enjoyed the occasion, and Diane's outgoing, friendly personality. A typical Aussie and obviously a chip off the old block. I gave Diane a copy of the Squadron News which contained her Dad's letter. We look forward to further get-togethers with Diane.

Left to right. Bryan Quinlan, Joan, Diane, Jack, Dorothy, Tom in Van Dusens....



Canuck Caucus (cont.).

A call from Bert Markland advised of the unwelcomenews of a recent heart attack. His problem included a fall, fortunately with no broken bones but proving that their move to proximity to family was very timely. Another call was from Tom Rowan with news that he has purchased an RV (camper/recreational vehicle) to allow him and his wife to do some limited travelling. Tom keeps busy with keeping house and fishing.

Several calls with Sid Winchester who also had an emergency nine days in hospital with a lung infection and a subsequent diagnosis of "incipient emphysema" Coupled with wife Joyce's struggle with emphysema this has been stressful and necessary care from our Veterans Agency. Sid advises that he has heard from the skipper of his second tour crew on Coastal Command Halifaxes, which was shot down in 1944 after a shipping attack off Norway. Two of the crew were killed including Hugh "Red" Conlin who also served with 458 in the Med. The rest, with serious injuries (except Sid who was mainly unscathed) became POWs. His skipper made a recent nostalgic visit to Norway to; contact people who had befriended them. Sid also recounted a story about Elden Nielson, his 458 skipper, who sadly was institutionalised after the war and a letter Elden wrote him postwar but never posted. Subsequently he received this letter from Elden's Mother and the letter has been stored away ever since till Sid's rummaging through his memorabilia. Elden and I were close friends through our RCAF training and on 458 at Malta and Protville. I recalled Elden's crash at Maison Blanche when a tire burst on take-off, resulting in a total write-off of the aircraft but no fatalities. Sid remembered it well and still has a memento--a pair of written-off RRAF issue binoculars.

Very best wishes to all our Aussie mates.

HONOURS FOR THE HULL FAMILY.

Bill Hull's daughter, Professor Andrea Hull, Head of the Victorian College of the Arts (Part of Melbourne University) was awarded the honour of Officer of the Order of Australia in the recent Honours List Her Mother Peg had also been honoured in the Order. It must run in the family. Congratulations!

Bill advises news about Bob Scholes. Bob still in the Nursing Home and not walking well. But mentally alert as ever and very interested in 458 activities.

SANDGROPEERS SAY.....from Ted Jewell.

The latest edition of the Squadron History is a great book on 458. I have read it over so many times, it has brought back so many memories of all those years ago; I lent the book to an ex-RAF member who was with the Desert Air Force he couldn't believe the Squadron operated from so many places.

At the moment we are going through a quiet spell but as the weather warms up we have several functions coming up. Mick Singe said he will be having a BBQ at his home when they are all settled in. There is also a luncheon planned for later. I had a call from Jack Cobb a little while back. He says he cannot get around much these days. Jack is now reaching the 90 year mark.

I wonder where the 60th anniversary reunion will be held; I hope I am able to attend; at the moment everything looks rosy but we are getting older. I have to have three skin cancers cut out tomorrow, of many I have had over the

Sandgropers Say (cont.)

years, the Specialist says they go back a long way. I wonder if the time we spent in the Middle East was the start of it, getting around all the time without a shirt.

Happy to hear the All States Reunion was a great success at Orange with good attendance. All the best. Ted Jewell.

THE BRITISH BULLETIN from Norman.Duke.

I'm afraid there's a shortage of news this time, but here goes!

Reg.Bullen. I have received the sad news from Reg. that his old friend and crew-member formerly W.O H.G.Wal Clarke has died in Sydney, peacefully after a short stay in hospital, aged 94. You will recall that they were the two sole survivors of a tragic crash landing in Malta in April 1944.

Christina McKenzie. I am pleased to report a long conversation with Christina. She is in good health, and still makes frequent visits to Kenya.

U.K.Flight Reunion. We have had a fair response so far with 12 confirmed for September 21st. in Stratford upon Avon. Hopefully we may have a few more latercomers.

Best wishes to all...Norman.

CROWEATERS CATCH-UP. from Pat Cribb.

S.A.Flight's Julu lunch was extra special. The Oliver Family has grown grapes since 1848 at McLaren Vale and has donated table wines for our functions for years. This year they brought along a sample of their tribute to 458er, Bert Oliver. This was made from the best of the very old Shiraz vines at the Taranga property by Bert's granddaughter Corinna Rayment, who was at the lunch with Marjory Oliver, her mother Robin Rayment and Colin Harrington. Corinna, a sixth generation local Oliver Family member, named this wine Taranga H.J. Reserve Shiraz" 458ers who remember Bert Oliver will know that H.J. were his initials and that he was very proud that his great-grandfather planted those 1848 vines.

The lunch was attended by 29, with apologies from Brian and Joan Woodhead Peter and Monica Thom, Glen Forgan, Eric and Matti Baker, and Joyce Austin.

Reg. Priest, Kevin Tait, Syd Bartram, Lyne Skinner and Col Hutchinson were shown over the Air Force Association's Finnis Street Memorial, which had been sold prior to the AFA's move to the Torrens Parade Ground. The mementoes we saw brought back mixed feelings about people and times long gone. Stalwart Joy Martin's expert guidance was much appreciated.

We send our very best wishes to those who have not been feeling the best lately.

Q.FLIGHT NEWS. from Evelyn Lewis.

News very scarce, winter chills and it has been cold this past week and kept everyone indoors. At least we didn't have to brave the cold while in Orange.

Read the report forwarded by Dave Westgarth he had written for his local R.S.L. Club about the 458 Reunion in Orange, well written and I'm sure agreed by all who attended. Was yet another great Reunion thanks to all who helped make it a success.

Q.Flight News (cont.)

Luncheon. Have managed to gather some 17 458ers and wives to attend a luncheon at the Sheraton Hotel in Brisbane on 20th August. Lovely place to dine especially on a wednesday--Senior Citizens Day and one can select many delicacies at a much reduced price.

VALE--Passing of Eric Lloyd. On 3rd June. Eric was a noted early period aircrew member, of whom the History contains much information. After the war he returned to Queensland and became private secretary to the State Premier. Winning a by-election for the seat of Kedron he remained in Parliament for 21 years, becoming Deputy Leader of the Labor Party. After Parliament he went into the Real Estate business.. He remained a keen 458er right through his life, regularly attending Reunions. Our sympathy to Bridie and the family of two sons. We shall remember him.

KIWI CALL from Kevin George.

Our five N.Z. members are in fairly good health. However eyesight problems have cost Ron Verity his Drivers Licence and threaten that of Jack Pryde. Despite being institutionalised, Joan Green can still carry on a telephone conversation

The Orange Reunion was well up to the usual standard and we congratulate the organisers. The area surrounding Orange is diverse and interesting. Still attractive though rather dry when we were there. We note that the inland Reunions have been just as successful as the ones on the coast. Jack Pryde and I had a most enjoyable Australian holiday, staying first with my cousins at Nowra and later with Laurie and Betty Crowley on their 3,700 acre farm. Jack and Laurie, both being farmers had much in common. Jack and I were both very impressed with the energy and ability of the Crowley Family who are managing through a very severe drought surprisingly well.

With kind regards, Kevin.

FROM HARRY GODFREY.

Thanks for allowing me space to have my say about the aircraft fires. You make the comment...the way matters of history can arise over the years....when we moved from Kabrit to LG 237 on the Cairo/Alex road, one day Normie Kobelke (they had been supping the fleshpots of Cairo) and his gang returned and he stuck his head into our tent and said "Godfrey, you're dead" He had been to the RAAF Office and there--I was dead. He said he had tried to fix it up, as had Johnno. My inquiries yielded "A mistake had been made and rectified." I thought I was the only Godfrey flying in the M.E. and left it alone. A few years ago I bought Jim Hollidays's book "The RAAF POWS of Lamsdorf" and on p.30 was "navigator Ron Godfrey was killed instantly". RAAF, Cziro had also thought I was the only one. Six months after my demise my mother received two official letters, one confirming my being alive, the other confirming my death, both on the same day.

Re history again, after the war Schmidt's "With Rommel in the Desert" "an hour or two before midnight, the first parachute flares opened above us.. bombs thundered down from low-flying aircraft...we were hammered all through the night...a grim night;..shewed that it cost more men and panzers than some armored engagements had done. The Wimps did a bit of good, Nice to know.

Between tours three aircrews (pilots Freddie Derry, RCAF, Shepherd, RNZAF and myself) "rested" on 205 Gp.Com.Flight; three ICs, Maryland q6, Proctor, and an

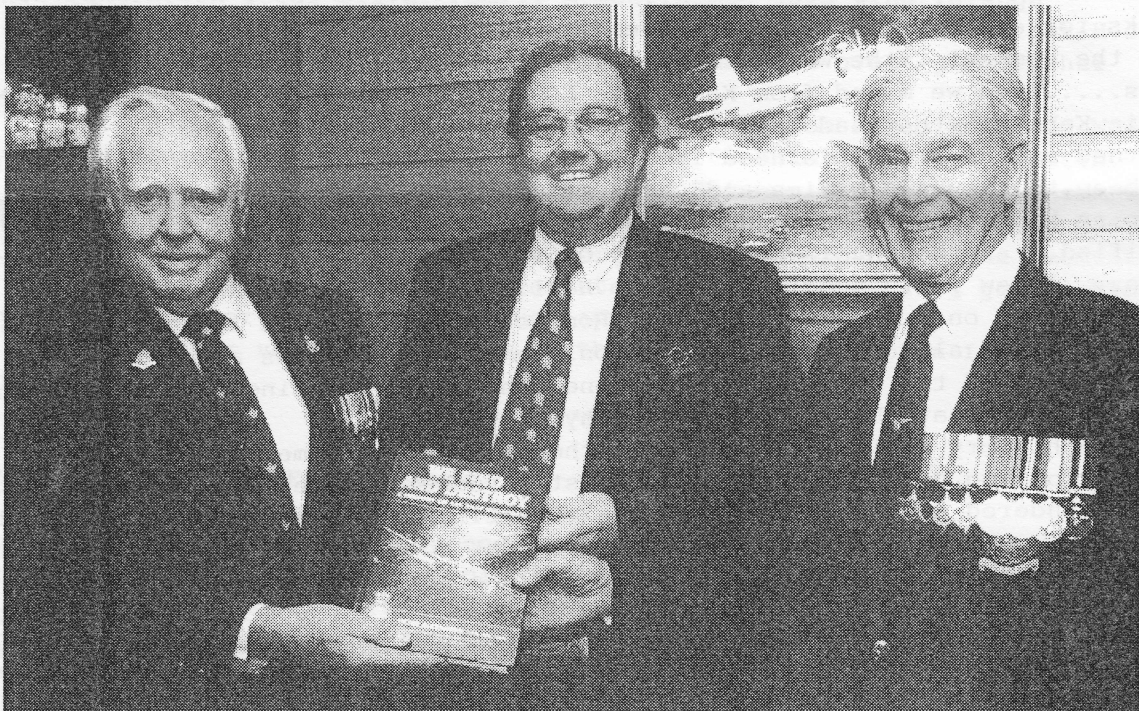
From Harry Godfrey (cont.)

old bi-plane with a 12 prop. We joined the HQ Sgts Mess. I was somewhat surprised; about 25 of us, peacetime blokes. Well organised; on the move our EPIs were last taken down, and first up. starched white linen; ironed table cloths ditto napkins, best cook, etc., sherry after a hard day at the office, liquers, coffee, beautiful cups. small portable bar. Motto: "The officers may run out of grog, but the sergeants never" And we didn't. Once we flew from Tunisia to Syria for a case of whisky. As a P.O I had a small MTRS. They were mighty men I didn't run it. Allan Everett, an Aust. corporal ran it. I was to provide a bit of muscle if needed - it never was, but I was allowed to drive the mobile workshop after suitable instruction We "won" six Merc.6-ton diesels with trailers, a Bianchi, an Itie diesel. I already had a 6-ton Jeep. First Army coughed up. Tale of a con. but it worked. We were very "civilised" but then we controlled the postings via Sgt "Izzy" Izzard of P.Staff. Thanks again.

CORRESPONDENCE; To Bev, Bitmead from her sister in law, Jenna Miller.

What a lovely night it was..we felt so honoured to be among such lovely people and thank you so much for including us. It was rather emotional to think that it could be their last reunion and I really do hope they will be able to have their 60th in two years time. Aren't they all well preserved and fit men..just can't believe they are the ages they are...one tends to think of people their age being stooped old men and that is not the case... thank you so much for including us at your dignified, happy and prestigious dinner. It was superb.

Tom Moore (L) and Eric Purcill (R) present the Book to the Mayor of Orange. Note the Aircraft.



VICTORIAN NEWS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON MAY 27th.

As our President Mick Singe had moved to W.Aust. in January, Neil Dean is now President.

Jack Ellis is now Senior Vice President.

John Bilney is now Junior Vice President.

Rupert Pearce continues as Secretary/ Treasurer.

FUTURE SOCIAL EVENTS

August 4th. Lunch at the Bentleigh Club. This has now been cancelled due to illness or other commitments.

October 27th. Lunch at the Frankston R.S.L.

December 7th. Christmas BBQ (BYO) at the Bilney's home, 28 One Tree Rd., Ferny Creek.

March 7th. 2004. A BBQ (BYO) at the Ellis's home, 5 Heales St. Dromana.

PERSONAL

Mrs. Phyllis Russell is now in a Nursing Home at Lower Templestowe.

John Bilney has had a back operation and is coming on well.

June Dean is home but needs a lot of care.

Roy Pearce has had a successful knee operation but is now trying to cope with a back problem

Tom Primrose was admitted to hospital on June 9th, the day before his 90th birthday. suffering from pneumonia. He has now returned to Brunswick Manor but is far from well

Bill Fordyce, the Grangers, the Hintons the Martins and June Schoppe have all had to restrict their social activities,

There are probably other members who should be added to this list. You are all in our thoughts and we wish you better health.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION.

Les Boyer of 27 Yaldwin St., Kyneton Vic. 3444, Tel. 5422 1870 asks about LAC. Batten (Flash) who was killed in January 1943 when one of the aircraft flying from Shallufa to Malta came down in the sea. He asks if any Squadron members have knowledge of any relatives of Flash.