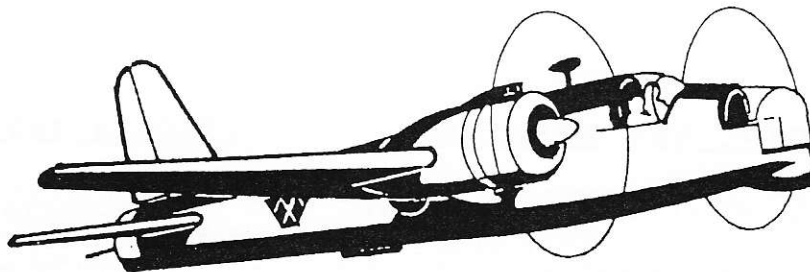


458

SQUADRON NEWS



RAAF

JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL, C/- Pete Pettit,
26 Dudley Ave.,
Roseville
NSW 2069 Australia.

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458 Squadron Council Office-bearers

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Would members please note that the old Squadron Post Office Box number 5289 has been cancelled. Newsletter material should please be sent to Pete Pettit at the above address.

Communications for the Squadron Secretary should be posted to Jim Whitem, PO Box 239, Port Macquarie, NSW 2444 and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to Frank Ward, 50 Castle Hill Rd, West Pennant Hills, NSW 2125

DEPT VET AFFAIRS

A letter has been received from the Repatriation Commission telling us that, where a veteran has to travel to obtain medical treatment, the amount to be paid him for meals, accommodation and kilometres has been increased as from 1 July 2004. Notice of the new rates will be published in *Vetaffairs*.

NEWSLETTER

A recent postal meeting of the Squadron Council unanimously decided to spend the remaining Squadron funds publishing and distributing the Squadron Newsletter so that all current members benefit and there will be no further charge on individual Flights. The funds will last as long as maybe after which we will have to make some other arrangements but there should be four or five years of issues in hand.

ALL STATES REUNION.

Your committee has finally decided to hold the next and last Squadron All States Reunion in Canberra from Sunday 30 October until Saturday 5 November 2005 at Rydges Lakeside Motel. No suitable accommodation in Canberra is cheap and it was decided on this auspicious occasion to go for the doctor and use the motel selected by 460 Squadron when they opened G for George for inspection. The motel has on site all facilities we could possibly need for reunion activities, all rooms are accessible by lift and have an excellent outlook over the Lake. It is quite close to Civic Centre and buses are at the door every ten minutes or so.

There are a great many things of interest to see and do around Canberra and your committee is having difficulty deciding exactly what to include in the programme. The committee is of course conscious of our age and the need for leisure time. They expect to have a tentative programme available for publication in the next Newsletter.

It is not possible to give a firm price for accommodation as it is so far ahead, and because it will depend how busy they are at the time and how many intend to go. At the moment the price for accommodation would be around \$160 per double room (ie for two people) bed and breakfast, and \$160 single supplement.

There will of course be further charges for outings, dinners and entertainment. Any figures at this stage must of course be tentative but the committee will keep them as low as possible.

CANADIAN FLIGHT REPORT.

The period of this report has included two extremes in the nature of the news, varying from a very enjoyable highlight with the visit to Vancouver of Grace Unitt and her sisters Chris and Marion in mid-June to the recent shockingly sad news of Norm Duke's unexpectedly sudden passing. Norm will be sorely missed both as a very good friend and for his dedicated and steadfast efforts in maintaining the 458 presence in the U.K. Personally and collectively on behalf of all Canadian Flight our thoughts are with Norm's family and we extend our heartfelt sympathies with the comforting knowledge that the close and loving bond which they all share will provide them with the support and strength needed to see them through this difficult time.

So we say farewell to yet another 458 member of "McKenzie's Air Force" with a sincere thank you for our long friendship.

On the happy side we derived great pleasure from the too short visit by Grace and her sisters and our only regret is the limited time that was available to show Grace around. Their reunion was certainly something special and we can only marvel at their spirit of adventure in undertaking the long car drive from Idaho and return, with an extra side trip via car ferry to Vancouver Island, which had its own adventure involving being towed off the ferry when the car failed to start. Grace must have had many interesting stories to unfold to George upon her return. (An aside to Grace and George: the "Yellow Tail" received top ratings at a subsequent family event. Much appreciated).

Other news in brief: Marg Reid is trying to cope with the difficult adjustment period and the myriad of associated matters which have to be undertaken. A call to Jim Donaldson indicated that he and Peg continue to face up to ongoing health challenges. Similarly Sid and Joyce Winchester have had some health problems but continue to maintain an upbeat attitude. All of B.C. is sweltering under the prolonged heat wave (not by Aussie standards) and everyone would welcome the return of some rainy, cooler weather. Best wishes to all, Bryan

CORNSTALK COMMENTS (Eric Munkman)

One of our most active Flight members was once again David Westgarth. His December 2003 performance (which somehow unfortunately missed the cut off for the April Newsletter) was as a special guest of 328 Squadron, City of Bathurst for their *End of Year Parade and Presentation of Awards* at which he represented Bathurst RSL sub-branch. Then in April 2004 he recalls his adventure in 1935 as a passenger in the historic Southern Cross aircraft piloted by Sir Charles Kingsford Smith and displays his copy of Smith's autograph. Finally so far this year, David is publicised in the May 8 issue of *The Weekend Advocate* relating the story

of his meeting with Sir Charles Kingsford Smith in a special Anzac Day Tribute in Bathurst.

Another delightful lunch at TAFE Catering College, Ryde was enjoyed by NSW Flight members and friends. These occasions provide a good opportunity for members to meet up with friends and are always excellent value for money so if anyone would like to join us, please phone Eric on 9972 0641 for details of the next meet.

The Munkmans and Bitmeads recently visited Wagga Wagga on a coach trip and while there asked the Crowleys to join them for dinner. A delightful evening followed. Laurie enquired about 'Rocky' Holtzman a radar technician who lived in Regina, Canada. If any member knows his whereabouts, would they please contact Laurie Crowley, Victoria Park, Temora Rd, Junee 2663, Australia.

Frank Ward and myself attended the Memorial Service for Joseph Andrew ("JAF") Fenwick who joined the Squadron at Gibraltar February 1945 and remained until its disbandment. JAF passed away 28 May in Blenheim, Ontario Canada whilst on holiday and his funeral service took place 2 June 2004 in the Blenheim Trinity Anglican Church.

Our sympathies are extended to Noel Walter who has lost his wife Nita to whom he had been married 64 years. Both have been excellent supporters of the Squadron attending luncheons, reunions and social gatherings for many years. The Squadron was represented by myself and Bob Smith and our wives and Bev Bitmead (Don was absent due to illness) and we extend our sympathies to the family. We have also lost Nancy Hills, widow of Ron and a very avid reader of the Newsletter. Bob the Bruce is still under treatment and sends his best wishes to all.

We all extend our condolences and best wishes to the family of Norm Duke who left the scene a few days ago.

Unfortunately we have lost the services of Pete Pettit as secretary and his job will be taken over by:
David Longhurst, 129A Darling Street, Balmain, 2041.
Ph.9810-4416 to whom our very grateful thanks.

CROWEATERS CATCH-UP. Pat Cribb.

It was a relaxed and happy occasion when we met on July 8 at the Kensington Hotel with 25 old mates to enjoy lunch and, once again, the superb wine from the Oliver family vineyard. After a long illness we were surprised and very pleased that Lyne Skinner could join us.

It is with much sadness that we report the sudden death on May 29 of John Excell of Murray Bridge. Over the years, with his clever hands, he made a model of a Wellington bomber and torpedoes for the enjoyment of his 458 mates.

He attended most 458 reunions Australia-wide with his wife Ruth, and was a former Vice-President of the Australian Council of the Squadron. He never retired from his bike shop in the main street of Murray Bridge, and had interests in the local speedway and big and small bore rifle clubs. Our sincere condolences to his family, son Kevin and daughter Margaret and her family.

We also mourn the death of Eric Baker on June 23. He served with 457 Squadron in some of the same war theatres as 458 and joined S.A. Flight many years ago. Eric was one of the first six S.A. RAAF enlistments in 1939. As Corporal Baker he was mentioned in despatches to King George VI for distinguished service while in Egypt. He served further in 456 Squadron as Sergeant, and returned to Australia, completing his airforce career at Mallala S.A. We offer our sincere condolences to Mattie and family.

Our best wishes to all 458 members, especially to those we know are battling ill health.

VICTORIA NEWSLETTER. *Rupert Pearce*

The flight's AGM was held at Waverley RSL 25 May. Present were Jim Anderson, John and Marjorie Bilney, Neil Dean, Roy and Barbara Pearce, Rupert Pearce and June Schoppe while apologies were received from Jack and Margaret Ellis, Ken Fleming, Don and Shirley Granger, Ken and Joann Hinton, Norma Pollard and Jack Ramsey.

Election of officers resulted in the following retaining their places - Neil Dean, President; Jack Ellis, Senior Vice-president; John Bilney, Junior Vice-president and Rupert Pearce Treasurer/Secretary. The following social activities were planned - lunches at the Bentleigh Club, 23 August and Frankston RSL, 25 October and BBQs at the Bilney's home 5 December and at the Ellis' home 6 March 2005.

The Fred and Meg McKay Peace Garden

Meg McKay passed away on 27th October 2003. Twenty-six members of the McKay clan gathered at St Philip's College, Alice Springs, on the 20th April to inter her ashes alongside her husband Fred in the Peace Garden. The Meg McKay (AM) Senior Study Room was dedicated in the new extended College Library and the museum in the Fred McKay Education Centre at the College is designated as a Peace Keeping Place for the Spirit of the Outback.

Personal Items

Margaret Ellis recently had a car accident. She is OK but the car was damaged and is waiting repair. Cath Martin tells me she reads the Newsletter to Yank (in care) who really enjoys the news and stories. Ron Yates had a fall on 24th April and broke his hip. He has not yet recovered. The Grangers and the Hintons still have their health troubles. Tom and Rita Primrose are not very active these

days. Tom is 91 and Rita is 95 - are they the oldest married couple in 458? Our thoughts are with them and others who are not well. Some of our members have escaped to Queensland to beat the cold Melbourne winter. We hope they have lots of sunshine.

We have just received news that early in the week of 25 July, "Yank" Martin moved on. Yank was one of the early recruits to the Squadron with Mick Singe and was a very popular member of the Victorian Flight for many years, fronting most Squadron activities always with a story to tell - our condolences to his family.

(The Victoria flight secretary has received a letter from a Mr Andrew Ford of 16 Parkside St, Malvern, Victoria, 3144 asking for the names of anyone known to members who may have a story to tell about an emergency 'bale-out' in WWII or Korea. Our own Bill Fordyce has been notified but Mr Ford, who is preparing a book on the subject would be pleased to hear from any other interested parties. (Ed))

Q FLIGHT NEWS. Evelyn Lewis

Kitty Baxter is not long back from a great trip cruising on the Marco Polo to Europe, the Greek Islands, Falklands, England and Scotland with many ports of call. Would have been even more exciting except for the last few days when she came home very sick with a flu virus - otherwise fantastic.

I was down in Wollongong early June, contacted Bill and Gwen Johnson now in a retirement village there. They have moved from their property at Deniliquin, are quite settled and enjoying a lifestyle rather more relaxed than farming. I also made contact with Cyril Bevan also at Wollongong. Lucie is not well at all taking each day quietly while Cyril is good and does a lot of work for the RSL. I always keep in touch with them as they are friends of my sister. Harry Dorge made contact while he was in Brisbane with his family, he has sold his house and is now living in a retirement village there. He is coping very well and he says the one thing he shouted himself was an airconditioned car.

Sel and Joan Foote have been in hospital, Sel not in best of health. They are now in a retirement unit adjoining Canossa Hospital where there is on-going care should they need it. Joyce McKay at Caloundra is keeping OK, always likes to hear from members. Cyril and Hettie Murray are happily settled in Buderim in a retirement unit. Hettie has not been well with a bad skin complaint but Cyril has joined a group to do with acting etc. Hope to see them at

our luncheon which has been arranged for 25 August at the Sheraton Hotel, a lovely place with excellent food. So far 18 members have agreed to attend.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Barbara Kelly for standing in to carry the Banner on Anzac Day - terrible mixup when no cadets turned up to carry banners. The only reason Barbara was there was that she took her father in. Things did not go smoothly with RAAF units at all and many complaints were received by the Anzac Day committee, I dare say the happenings will be discussed at their meeting 10 August.

I'll continue to contact members at different times to see how they are faring as so many are not in good health and can only sit and take it quietly.

Regards to all

KIWI COMMENTS Kevin George

Little news from NZ Flight except to express our sorrow at the loss of Norm Duke. I seem to remember flying as an odd bod with Norm navigating (not with the Colonel this time) on my first op which in fact took about 11 and a half hours. Norm was a good bloke and we NZers send our condolences and best wishes to his family.

Only other item of note is that the Civil Aviation Authority people in this country seem anxious to keep me in the air inspite of the error I mentioned in the last Newsletter. I am now the holder of the oldest PPL (Private Pilot Licence) in New Zealand! Incidentally we thoroughly agree with the idea of spending Squadron funds on the Newsletter which gives everyone a bit of the action.

Best wishes to all

SANDGROPPERS SAY. Ted Jewell

Anzac Day this year was a fairly quiet day for WA Flight. President Bill Clues placed a wreath at the War Memorial in Kings Park as usual. Then at the march in the city later in the morning we only had three members front up to march behind the banner, Bill Clues, Mick Singe and Ted Jewell with sons and grandchildren to make up the numbers. After the march, we had lunch at Miss Maud's in town where we had about 20 members and everyone enjoyed themselves. Members present were Bill and Joan Clues, Henry and Vera Etherton and son Dudley, Mick Singe, Bill and Flip Kelliher, Ted Jewell, Margaret Gannaway and Olga Jones - our ranks are not very great these days.

We had a great lunch at the home of associate members Phil and Shirley Hicks. All the ladies brought dishes for the meal and we all had a very enjoyable day but things have certainly changed - I noticed noone having a beer, only tea

and coffee! We have another luncheon arranged for later in the year at another home.

I had a phone call from Jack Cobb recently. He has now turned 90 years but is not able to get around much these days. Went to see Val Cormack last week as she lives in Mandurah and is receiving treatment for breast cancer. She has not been very well. Mick Singe was having trouble walking when I last saw him, one of his knees playing up. Bill Clues is still pretty active, hopes to go to Canberra next year.

Henry Etherton is also having trouble with his legs, now arthritis, and he is unable to march any more. I rang Jimmy Palmer yesterday but Lucy said he was down the shearing shed somewhere but at the time was on crutches due to an infected foot. Bill Kelliher is getting along fairly well but is now a carer for his wife Flip who has dementia. We have Margaret Gannaway come to all our functions and always brings Henry and Vera in her car. We also see Olga Jones when she is able to come to our functions.

I am still getting along fairly well, still pretty fit and hope to be in Canberra next year.

Best wishes to all 458 members.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

PREPARED BY THE VERY REV. FRED McKAY, CMG, OBE
FOR THE 458 SQUADRON RESERVE

ETERNAL GOD, WE DEDICATE THIS RESERVE, THE GIFT OF THE SHOWELL FAMILY, AS A LIVING MEMORIAL TO MEMBERS OF 458 SQUADRON, RAAF, WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM IN WORLD WAR II, AND WE DEDICATE THE 50th ANNIVERSARY PLAQUE AND MONUMENT ACCORDINGLY, TO THE WORK OF THE SQUADRON AND ITS MEMBERS.

AMEN

Norman Duke.

It is with the greatest regret that we record the death of Norman Duke, president of 458 Squadron Council since the Orange reunion, who passed away on Sunday 25 July in England. He is to be cremated Friday 6th August at Godalming, south west of London and the Squadron will be represented by Stewart Kent whose father was a WopAg on 458 Squadron.

Norman was among the last of 'McKenzie's Air Force' in fact was the colonel's navigator and a Squadron identity about whom a number of tales have appeared in the Squadron history and elsewhere. Perhaps the best one - and certainly the shortest - relates to his receiving the following order from his skipper and commanding officer - 'Duke, cock the cannon, Duke!'. It is not clear whether the cocked cannon in the nose of Henrietta, the Colonel's aircraft, was in fact fired on that occasion.

The author of this note of appreciation of the life and times of Norm Duke did not meet him in wartime, but as a participant in the Aircrew Reunion in 1992 in Winnipeg. Norm was a leading light of the UK Flight of the postwar Squadron Association both as its president and the organizer of its reunions. In 1997 he was the recipient of the award of the Association's Life Membership which was presented at a UK Flight reunion held at Stratford upon Avon and attended by several Australian members including the author.

In retirement Norm busied himself as a member of a large and competent team of former airmen and engineers, working at Brooklands, where Barnes Wallis and colleagues had designed and built the Wimpy. These people restored R for Robert, the Lock Ness Wellington - a task that took some twelve years and 100,000 man-hours to achieve.

Of course none of the team regarded the restoration as a chore - rather a pleasant and rewarding duty. 458 itself made a small contribution to the restoration in cash and memorabilia, and the author of this note was entertained by Norm and the team at the Brooklands Museum, where he actually sat in the pilot's seat for half an hour or so trying to remember his cockpit drill.

Norm Duke will be sorely missed by his wife Joyce, their devoted family Sally, Tina, Jane, Lis, and Lindsay at home, and by his Squadron mates all over the world.

Jim Whitem.