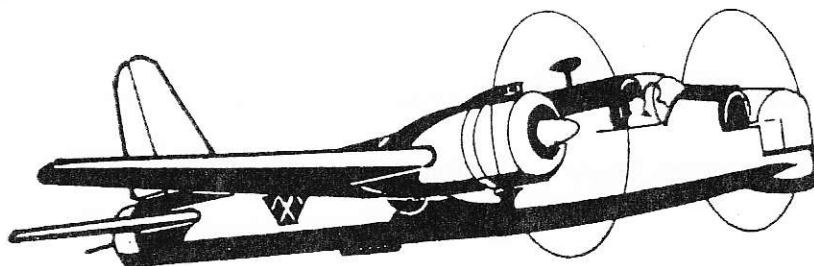


458

SQUADRON NEWS



RAAF

JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

C/- Jim Whitem
P.O.Box 239
Port Macquarie
NSW 2444, Australia

Year 56 No 225

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This issue is the first of the new arrangement of 3 issues per annum. Henceforth the newsletter will be published in March, July, and November.

Reunion Compact Disk

It is understood that production of the CD is nearly complete, and that it will be posted to all those who attended the reunion as soon as possible. In addition, a copy will be sent to each flight correspondent, so that all members can share in the pleasures we enjoyed. Members who cannot handle data CD's should ask their grandchildren for help.

FLIGHT REPORTS (in order of receipt, more or less.)

South Australian Flight by Pat Cribb

From Col Hutchinson, President.

At our AGM on 4 December, Trish Cosh reported that cars had been parked on the lawns of the RAAF Memorial's site at the Adelaide Airport. Actual damage had been done to some of the Memorial plaques. Trish had photographed the scene and reported to an Adelaide Airport Staff person, asking that action be taken to protect the memorial plaques and the site itself. The meeting asked the Flight President to write to the RAAF Memorials Committee about the transgression, which had been witnessed on 25 November 2005. The President, instead, wrote to the State RAAF Association on 6 December, outlining the strong feelings of the S.A. Flight, questioning the attitude of Adelaide Airport Ltd staff to the Memorials and again raising the question of site tenure.

It was assumed that the protection requested by Trish Cosh would have been effected. It was not. A chance visit by Trish on 8 December found that cars were still using the site. The Duty Airport Manager was immediately contacted and saw for himself what was occurring. Trish's State M.P faxed the Managing Director of A.A.L., who on 9 December, admitted that damage had occurred but denied knowledge prior to the fax.

A meeting took place between the RAAFA President and the AAL Manager for corporate affairs On 22. December. The latter wrote on that day informing of " remedial action by means of star pickets and bunting" and replacement of the damaged plaques. It also referred to " our mutual interest in " the sanctity of the site" and "Its protection on the way forward".

S.A Flight looks very critically at those latter sentiments, particularly as the letter contained no hint of regret or apology to anyone. We now question the security of the memorials site in the long term, and believe that firm evidence should be sought from airport management and owners.

We are indebted to John Ringwood for making a visit to Renmark to present to Bevan Schiller, on behalf of the Squadron, a copy of "we Find and Destroy", together with a Certificate of Appreciation for his great work in maintaining the 458 Memorial Garden in the Jane Eliza Estate in Renmark. Our late member, Ian Showell, donated the land for this memorial, and at the 1991 reunion in S.A. a plaque in memory of all who served in the Squadron was installed and dedicated. Recently there has been some concern over the future maintenance of the memorial and John was able to meet with the Renmark/Paringa Council to discuss further improvements. He also called on Fee Showell and was pleased to find her well. Thanks again, John.

We met on 4 December for our Annual General Meeting and Christmas lunch at the Kensington Hotel, with 32 present. Apologies from Pat Carey, Brian and Joan Woodhead, Monica Thom, Marjorie Oliver and family, Mattie Baker, Verna Riseley and daughter Sharon, and David Cosh.

Our best wishes to everyone for a health happy New Year. See you all at the Kensington Hotel on Anzac Day

Victorian Flight by Rupert Pearce.

The RAAF Association Victorian Division has purchased 4 suites at 24/36 Camberwell Road, Camberwell. Two of the four suites are leased for the next 10 years and will meet 66% of the Divisions' operating costs. The Association will take possession on March 17th, one suite will be ready in time for after the March hospitality on Anzac Day, the fourth suite will be fitted out and later leased.

In the August Newsletter mention was made of Paul Burgess, pole-vaulter. Paul has been quoted in the "Age" that he "was not thinking of clearing less than 5.80 metres, and not thinking about anything other than a gold Medal". He had won 2 Silvers in the last 2 Games. He was the only man in the world to clear 6 metres in 2005. We wish him well.

The Flight will meet after the March on Anzac Day as usual at the Melbourne Bowling Club at 138 Union Street, Windsor. All welcome.

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday May 29th 2006 at the Bentleigh Club, Yawla Street, Bentleigh, at 12 noon.

John and Marjorie Bilney hosted a flight Barbecue on 27 November. It was a very pleasant day. Those who attended were: Harry and Nell Ashworth, Neil Dean and Joyce Reeves, Jack and Margaret Ellis, Rupert Pearce and Norma Pollard and June Schoppe. Apologies were received from Ian and Val Alison and Roy and Barbara Pearce.

No. 402 (city of Preston) Squadron, Australian Air Force cadets held its final parade for 2005 on, 11th. December 2005 at the Simpson Barracks. Neil Dean and Rupert Pearce attended. The Flight Prize, "We Find and Destroy" was presented to Leading Cadet Ricky Kirkham for being involved in a broad range of Squadron activities.

Mick Singe told me he had an appointment with a surgeon in April regarding a hip replacement. Without his Gold Card, he may have had a 3-year wait.

VALE.

We had sad news that Joan Munday was suffering from leukaemia and failing health. She was admitted to the Wonthaggi Hospital and passed away on 27th. December 2005. Her funeral service was held on 3rd. January 2006. We have written to her friend, Chris Albury and asked him to pass on our sincere sympathy to her family.

Editorial note. The Editor is indebted to Rupert's son Geoff for forwarding the Victorian flight news by email. It lightens the task considerably.

Queensland Flight by Evelyn Lewis

Hello to one and all as this is the first News issue for 2006 News is hard to come by. It has been a terribly hot summer – a scorcher, that left everyone flaked out.

Peter Bailie is still in respite- no change- and now has more worry as his wife Jean had a stroke at the end of January. Peter has arranged with the management to take Jean in for two weeks until she can be assessed. It is very hard for a blind person, and they have no family.

Eric Kelly is in Greenslopes Hospital after a fall; now for surgery for an ulcer. He is doing well. I passed on good wishes for a speedy recovery, and he may be home already.

I had heard from Alan Atherton before Christmas that Alf Peake was very ill with cancer. He passed away on 27 January. Alan represented the Squadron at Alf's funeral on 1 February. Alan also wrote a few words about Alf as we had very little news about him. He was a member of the 'blue draft' and on arrival in England had been posted with Alan to # 18 OTU at Bramcote outside Nuneaton in Warwickshire. They were posted to 458 just hours before it departed for the Middle East. Alf was a member of our highly successful swimming team and also played football.

I received a phone call from Ces Bull asking about the boys. Ces was an associate member some years ago. He had also phoned Earl Hetherington, who is well.

New South Wales Flight by Eric Munkman.

I sadly inform members that Noel Walters and Reg (Toosie) Taylor have both passed on since the last newsletter. Our sincere condolences are extended to their families.

I am holding the two last copies of "We Find and Destroy", the Squadron History. There will be no more. Cost \$ 30.00 plus postage (Approx \$8.00– apply to me).

Anzac Day. The Squadron will assemble in Elizabeth St at corner of King St at 1015. Lunch will be held in a room at eh Masonic Centre, Cnr Goulbourn & Castlereagh Sts. Enter through Goulbourn St entrance.

Editorial note. While we are in purchasing mode, please note that I hold 3 Wall Plaques, 7 pockets, and a number of windscreen sticker badges, for sale to members. JHW.

Western Australia Flight by Ted Jewell

Since New Year, the flight has been fairly quiet. In December, we had our usual Christmas Dinner at Miss Maud's, in Perth. There was a fairly good roll-up – about 25 members and friends. Members included Bill and Joan Clues, Henry and Vera Etherton, Ted Jewell and friend, Mick Singe, Jim and Lucy Palmer, and Margaret Gannaway. It was a great day, with a few beers, a great lunch, and many yarns thrown in.

I am not sure what we will be doing on Anzac Day this year, as last year we had no starters to line up with the banner. None were able to march

Members will be coming down to my house in Mandurah for another barbecue. We always have a wonderful day whether the weather is 40 degrees, or pouring with rain. I live 80 k from Perth so it is good to have them come down.

I have not heard from any member since Christmas so I have no news to write about. Those who have visited Mandurah over the years would be surprised at the amount of development here in the last few years, with canals, marinas, and housing. - it has gone crazy.

I was very interested in the report on Alghero in the report on the U.K flight reunion about the old Squadron campsite on the beach, and so on. I would have liked to be there- it brings back memories.

UK Flight by Keith Wilkinson

Hearty and well-deserved congratulations to Bill and Hilary. No - not the former US President and his First Lady, the Clintons. I mean Bill and Hilary Heeley from England - who're celebrating no less than 62 years of married life.

Bill, a former wireless operator/rear gunner with 458 Squadron, wed his wartime pen pal in 1944. Bill proposed to Hilary while walking home in the blackout after watching Errol Flynn and Olivia de Havilland in "*Captain Blood*" down at the local picture house. Lots of people told them their marriage wouldn't last. How wrong they were. Bill is now 85 and his sweetheart, 83. Despite their own happy sequel, their verdict on the pirate adventure movie remains unchanged - "It's awful!"

The UK Flight would also like to toast a splendid gentleman - Francesco Demontis. You may recall the last edition of the 458 newsletter and the account of the UK Flight reunion in Alghero on the picturesque Mediterranean island of Sardinia in 2005. Well, Francesco was the Italian officer who gave our grateful veterans a quick, unscheduled tour of the military airfield - the place where 458 Squadron and its Wellingtons were based in 1944.

On Christmas Day morning, he e-mailed me the following message, which I said I would pass on: "I wish you, your family and all the veterans of the 458 RAAF Squadron Association a merry Christmas and a very happy new year."

I replied: "The visit to Alghero will always be a brilliant memory to us all, and you remain our hero".

On the subject of reunions...in the UK, we are still hoping to have one this year. We want to hear the views of as many members as possible. Would you like to attend such an event? Can you get there? Let us know. Time waits for no man, and other such cliches.

Nothing is planned yet. A few of us battling stalwarts are due to gather for some "blue sky thinking" - or, what in the old days was quaintly referred to as a meeting down the pub to

discuss some ideas. At the time of writing, the hot favourite seems to be a return to Shakespeare's historic Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire.

Traditionally, 458-ers, like many ex-services people, have met up for nostalgic exchanges at the Falcon Hotel in Stratford. An olde worlde 16th century inn with oak beams and a log fire, it's been an ale house since 1640 (and, no, I don't mean twenty to five in the evening).

Here's a quote lifted from the hotel's own website: "The Falcon Hotel has hosted many Reunions over the years and the walls show the badges and insignia of many RAF, armed forces and naval regiments who have continued to meet here on an annual basis. Special reunion packages are available from our banqueting office. We are also the regular meeting place for the local Lions, Rotary, Round Table, the Aircrew Association and the Royal Navy Association."

Although there's no great historical 458 link with The Bard's Stratford, it's a good convenient riverside gathering place as it's slap bang in the middle of Merry England, and there's plenty to do there, other than the copious consumption of fine original beer from hand pumps. Slurp! It's not merely a midsummer night's dream, but we still have to decide whether this is to be or not to be or whether it's much ado about nothing or just a comedy of errors (enough gratuitous references to Shakespeare's works- Ed).

Last but not least, best wishes to my 458 friend in Australia, Jack Powers, who some may remember from Foggia. He's ticking away happily again after being fitted with another "pulse generator" (pacemaker). Like they say, every medical cloud has a silver lining because Jack discreetly informs me: "I had three lovely female nurses fussing over me!"

Editorial note. I can vouch for the quality of the Falcon Hotel. During the closing decade of the last century, Dorothy and I were privileged to attend a UK Flight Reunion in that very establishment. Not only that, we were driven there by Norm Duke and his Joyce, some days after our never-to-be-forgotten inspection of 'R for Robert'. If my memory serves me right, not only did we quaff English beer, but also some kind persons had arranged for Australian wines to be served with dinner. Even more importantly, we used the occasion to present Norm with his life membership pin. JHW.

Canada Flight by Bryan Quinlan

Very sad to report that the last two months of 2005 saw the loss of three of our Canadian members, George MacLeod, 10 Nov., Len Doiron, 24 Nov and Jim Donaldson on 4 Dec. George served with 458 as a Navigator on Bourque's crew in Tunisia, Algeria, Italy and Corsica during 1943-44. One of his favorite stories involved the roasted sheep episode which some diligent Aussies "acquired" from local sources when 458 was at Bone.

Talking to Len's wife Florence by telephone and having her interpret Len's log book revealed that Len was a W/AG on Dick Sladen's crew at Malta, Algeria and Tunisia during 1943. I later contacted Dick and confirmed Len as part of his crew and the locations while operating with 458. Dick himself is in good spirits and says he is feeling fine, although saddened to hear of Len's passing.

Jim, of course, was appointed as the first VP of Canadian Flight and was a key figure in organizing our membership and the 458 reunions at the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan held in Winnipeg. Jim served on 458 as a W/AG during 1942-43 in Egypt, Malta, Algeria and Tunisia, originally with the Johnston crew and flew with several other skippers until becoming tour-expired with the Joe Elliott crew. George, Len and Jim will be sadly missed by all and our thoughts and condolences go to the families.

A story with a significant 458 connection from Sid Winchester was received too late for the last newsletter but is included here. After his tour on 458 and back on ops in the UK in 1944, Sid and ex-458er Hugh Conlin (RCAF) were on the same Halifax crew on Coastal Command and were shot down off the coast of Norway. Sid and four others of the crew were rescued and became POWs, however, Hugh and two others of the crew were not found. In 2003 Sid visited Norway and was able to locate the details of the end of their last flight in the Resistance Museum records which gave the lat. and long. of their rescue. On a subsequent cruise in 2005 which was to pass nearby the Halifax crash area Sid approached the ship's Captain to request notification when the ship was nearest to the known location so that he could pay tribute to Hugh and the other two crewmates by throwing down some flowers. The Captain indicated that this type of action was not officially allowed but a few days later called Sid to the bridge to advise him that he had obtained special approval from the owners to alter course to pass over the crash site and, in addition, to prepare a suitably weighted wreath for Sid's memorial act. As Sid writes, "At 00.56 hours on Aug 7, the ship's whistle sounded and I threw the wreath from the bridge. I was able to watch its path down until it landed in the water." Other witnesses were able to photograph the wreath as it descended to the sea. So, sixty-one years after the event, Sid was able to complete the circle through his determined and meaningful memorial action.

In conjunction with the progressive 458 wind-up plans being taken in Oz, our rapidly dwindling Canadian membership was canvassed as to their continued interest in the distribution of the newsletter. Seven of our nine members responded indicating that they enjoyed receiving the newsletter while recognizing the current situation and the probable inevitable end of newsletter mailings. It has been decided to maintain the present routine until further developments dictate otherwise.

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Since our last report and in addition to contacts mentioned above, I have heard from Ernie Ireland, Tom Rowan, Sid Winchester, Bert Markland and had several chats with Tom Lindsay (Tom lives two blocks away), and have been in touch with Snow's daughter Di, although the long-planned lunch get-together is still pending.

New Zealand Flight By Kevin George.

Editor's note. We have not had a lot of Kiwi news in the past year, so when this long letter from Kevin arrived, I sought his agreement to publish it as the N.Z. contribution. His reference to my "memoirs" (for the information of those who were not in Canberra,) refers to an extract of the wartime chapters of my autobiography, which was available there. JHW.

Dear Jim & Dorothy,

I have been intending to write to you at some length since returning home in November but for a variety of reasons the interim has been a busy time

I brought home a copy of your memoirs, Jim, and enjoyed them. My good friend Jack Pryde had intended to pick up a copy but failed to do so, so I posted him my copy with a request to return it. Dawn had pointed out that our two sons might enjoy reading it as she had found that much of it was similar to my experiences. Your memoirs have since been read by one of our sons, and his wife who commented favourably. In particular noting what a fine looking fellow you once were. No wonder Dorothy got hooked. In passing, I have to comment, as part of my official duties, on the very good job you are doing as our Squadron Secretary.

I have just received Keith Cousins' "souvenir" of our last reunion, and in due course I will thank Keith also for a job well done. . Meanwhile, please pass on my thanks to him

It was a very good reunion, well up to the long-established high standard. Please pass our grateful thanks to Eric Munkman, David Longhurst, John Gibbins, Tom Moore, Wendy, Mick Singe, and the others. Jack and I had a most enjoyable two weeks in Australia' it passed all too quickly. Before and after the reunion we were taken on a conducted tour around my numerous Australian cousins, down as far as Eden.

Jack commented that he had not realised that there were so many trees in Australia. By the way, he is a much-travelled man, much more so than I am, and I have spent over six years of my life out of N.Z.

Keith Cousins makes mention of the fact, after mentioning my name, "still flying."

Well, Yes ... It seems easier just to keep flying than to give it up. Our "Jodel D11 (?) (French design) is still the most popular home-built aircraft in N.Z. Ours was the first and first flew in February 1968. I have long maintained that it is one of the best light aircraft ever designed. It is strong- all wood except for the essential metal parts, simple and easy to build and to fly. Ours is coming up to 25000 hours, the most of any N.Z home-built aircraft. Three partners were flying it for most of its 38 years. At present I am the only one flying 2K-CKG, as I alone can pass the medical for a private pilot's licence. This is quite stringent, similar to the commercial one, except that it occurs annually instead of twice a year.

As you know, aeroplanes have to be flown to keep them serviceable, as they used to say in the Air Force. I aim to fly once a week but don't quite achieve that. The aeroplane seems to go better than ever, having had a few useful mods. For one thing, I fly it at much lower power, for which it is most grateful. I usually fly alone, with a light fuel load, and seldom exceed 80 m.p.h - what is the hurry? I do not use anything like full power on take-off. I save a lot of gas and oil; and the plugs seem to go on forever.

There is no doubt in my mind that aero engines are pushed much too hard. We don't do that with our motorcars, do we? Locally, we have what is unarguably the best grass drome in N.Z.- a mile of grass on the longest, two others, very level, and in most attractive surroundings.. I share it with a gliding club, a Fletcher top-dresser, and one or two others. Most of the time I have it to myself.]Both east and West coasts are about 20 miles distant; it is a most attractive landscape hereabouts., and unarguably the best flying environment in N.Z. a low incidence of high winds. As you know, we tend to become more careful with advancing years. I am no exception, so if I do damage myself it will be just bad luck

I am hopeful that the NSW flight will continue to have state reunions, that will give me the excuse to return again and again across the Tasman, which I have crossed 42 times; the first

being in 1927, aged four years. My father was Australian, by the way, and always remained a loyal Australian and a Wallabies supporter- something I seem to have inherited.

Our younger son is planning to sail to NSW and Tasmania- including a circum-navigation of the latter, He will probably have on board his wife and one other sailor. They have recently returned from several months in the Pacific Islands. He is not retired – just a mid-life break. The yacht is named Tuatara after a N.Z. lizard going back to dinosaur times, and is about 50 feet in length.

Perhaps you are too busy or needed to return again to New Zealand but if you do so you will be a welcome guest at 20 Kowhai Av. I extended that invitation to several people at the reunion and met with positive responses, but it will surprise if any come. Will close with kindest regards to you both – Dawn and Kevin.

EDITORIAL MATTERS. As this newsletter is almost long enough, I will confine myself to brief mention of other matters that have come my way since the reunion in Canberra.

Firstly, I have letters from Jim and Lucy Palmer, and from Ron and Edna Miller, expressing their disappointment in their missing the reunion for health (or disease) reasons. We hope that you are all fully recovered.

I have also had letters from Pat Cribb and Evelyn Lewis, and a long telephone call from Colin Fereday, expressing their joy and pleasure at having been presented with life membership. To these I add similar sentiments of my own.

Sydney Anzac Day March 2006.

I have just had a phone call from David Longhurst saying that he will arrange for provision of wheelchairs for those members who wish to march but think that maybe they will not manage the distance. Beauteous young ladies will pilot the wheelchairs. He also muttered something about Eric Munkman in this context, which I did not fully understand. Call David on (Sydney) 9810 4416, to book a chair and pilot.

*Colin Fereday advises that one Alan Storr has researched and published a series of books containing details of the final operation (as far as they are known) involving death in action of RAAF members of the Article 15 Squadrons. Ours is entitled "Second World War fatalities, 458 Squadron, etc", and can be obtained from Alan Storr. Colin advises that he has a copy, that it comprises 53 pages, lists all those lost, and contains details not included in the Squadron History. **SEE OVER FOR DETAILS OF HOW TO ORDER BOOK.***

Finally, I have had a long letter from Leon Armstrong thanking me for inclusion of the Malta reunion in the last newsletter, canvassing the possibility of more UK flight reunions, and making various noises about the problems of ageing! Thank you, Leon – I won't print it all this time due to space considerations.

JHW.

RAAF SECOND WORLD WAR FATALITIES.

BOOKS COMPLETED : RAAF SQUADRONS : 460, 463, 466, 467 and 455

RAAF SQUADRONS : 464, 462 and 458.

THE ABOVE SQUADRONS ARE THE EIGHT RAAF SQUADRONS THAT SERVED IN RAF BOMBER COMMAND (EITHER IN WHOLE OR PART) IN WW2.

EACH BOOK IS IN DATE OF DEATH ORDER, AND RECORD THE MISSION DETAILS, THE NAMES, RANKS AND MUSTERING OF CREWS, AND THE KNOWN CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FAILURE OF THE AIRCRAFT TO RETURN.

ALSO INCLUDED IS AN ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF THE NAMES AND DATE OF DEATH OF THOSE RAAF MEMBERS OF THE SQUADRONS WHO WERE WW2 FATALITIES.

PRINTING COST PER BOOK : \$29.-* (includes GST and postage)
* Cost valid to end June 2006.

FOR ORDERS PLEASE SEND THE FOLLOWING DETAILS TO

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- INCLUDE CHEQUE FOR COST OF PRINTING
- MAKE CHEQUE PAYABLE TO "KWIK KOPY PRINTING CENTRE"

17th November 2005