



C/- Rob Wilkinson

## JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

c/- Rob Wilkinson  
36 Finch Ave.  
East Ryde  
NSW 2113

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*\*\* Have you notified Rob Wilkinson if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email?  
Are there others in your family who would like to receive a copy by e-mail ?  
Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.*

*\*\*\* At the head of this page is the official 458 Squadron Badge (see story on Page 2*

With sadness, we record the passing of the following members and family of 458.

<b>Arnold Ashton</b>	NSW	see NSW Flight report
<b>John Bilney</b>	VIC	see VIC Flight report
<b>Yvonne Crompton</b>	NSW	see NSW Flight report
<b>Neil Dean</b>	VIC	see NSW & VIC Flight reports
<b>Jack Ellis</b>	VIC	see VIC Flight report
<b>Walter Prater</b>	UK	see UK Flight report
<b>Hazel Ruthven</b>	QLD	see QLD Flight report

### **PRESENTATION OF OFFICIAL 458 SQUADRON BADGE TO COLIN FEREDAY**



On 19 June 2008, a few days before he retired, Air Marshal Geoff Shepherd, AO hosted a morning tea in the CAF Boardroom at Defence Headquarters to honour our own Colin Fereday OAM, and present him with a signed photograph and a heraldic descriptor of the official 458 squadron badge. Colin was accompanied by his guests GPCAPT Arthur Skimin ENGR (Ret'd) and Wendy Whitem-Trunz, daughter of Jim Whitem. We had an interesting

officially-escorted tour through Defence security, into the underground car park and then upstairs to the sixth floor boardroom. Colin was interviewed and photographs taken. Colin's ceremony was followed by a lovely morning tea. A news article will appear in the RAAF Association newsletter, and the badge has been forwarded to our 458 President, Keith Cousins. Colin is very grateful to WGCDR Bruce Hudson, who arranged the ceremony at the CAF office.

### **Saint Clement Danes Project**

The 458 Squadron badge is one of eight remaining wartime 400 series RAAF squadron badges yet to be installed as slate tiles in the floor of Saint Clement Danes. All other Commonwealth nations, whose Air Forces fought with the RAF during World War II, are represented by their squadron badges in slate in the floor of the church. On 31 March, Air Marshal Geoff Shepherd had formally approved the eight 400 series RAAF squadron badges, many of which had to be created from scratch. So, it was most appropriate for him to host the ceremony for Colin, who was the only available 400 squadron representative in the Canberra region. The CAF, in his citation, also recognised all the work Colin has done and continues to do at RAAF Memorial Grove. Wendy has given a tape recording of the CAF's speech to Colin.

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Saint Clement Danes Church, London, as the RAF Chapel, will be commemorated in October this year. The plan is to install the remaining eight badges in Saint Clement Danes Church on the 88<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the RAAF on 31 Mar 09. So if any 458 veterans or family wish to attend this ceremony, you would be most welcome.

WGCDR Bruce Hudson has been responsible for progressing the 400 series badges approvals, and also the St Clements Danes project.

Anzac Day in Sydney, 2008, dawned overcast, but in response to some gentle recruitment the turn out was up on last year. All 458ers were encouraged to take the “armchair ride with the 458 banner” if they didn’t think they were up to marching, rather than opting for the alternative incognito trip in a Landrover. As it turned out the group was a standout, with Keith Cousins leading the group. Despite a heavy shower after we stepped off it cleared to a very pleasant day. Eric Munkman was one of those ”mounted” in a wheelchair. He featured in a double page spread in the Daily Telegraph next day “high fiving” some enthusiastic young servicemen, with his daughter, Beryl Dodds. (see photo below).

Given our declining numbers, it was decided that we would join RAFES (RAF Escaping Society) for lunch at the Royal Exchange Club, a wonderful venue and a fitting combination, given the involvement of the recently deceased 458er Bill Fordyce, who was lucky to survive “The Great Escape”. I also finally extracted from Harry Baines, (an escaper of a slightly different kind) details of his survival of one of two ditchings into water. “We all got into the inflatable life boat and after 5 days floating around the Irish Sea were eventually picked up by a fishing trawler that just happened to pass by.” I guess this classical understatement is typical of men of his ilk. Harry wears a goldfish pin in recognition of his membership of this exclusive club.



We believe the armchair (wheel chair) ride provides the formulae that will allow members to be part of the 458 contingent and urge other Wings to consider adopting the same strategy. In fact we intend to promote this idea with the march organisers. There was some initial resistance when pride got in the way, but there were plenty of smiles afterwards and not one complaint!

**DANIEL’S QUILT**

by Deborah Ayers



*My father, Frederick Henry Ayres, served with the 458 Squadron. My second son, Daniel, is in cadets at school and has always been interested in the service history of the grandfather he never met. My mother-in-law is a quilter and for Xmas this year she hand quilted a wall hanging for Daniel, which features a photo of my father in his RAAF uniform and also incorporates some of the information about the squadron's movements which was published for the 50th anniversary, compiled by Jock McGowen & Tom Moore. The quilt is beautifully made and very interesting, so I have included a photo, as I thought it may be suitable for mentioning in your newsletter. We are*

*hoping to get into the Sydney Anzac March again this year so I will bring it with me and try to catch up with the Squadron representatives.*

## **FLIGHT REPORTS**

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### **Queensland Flight** by Evelyn Lewis

It was good to see the banner flying on Anzac Day, after two years. President Eric was a last minute welcome sight, leading the March thanks to his family and Peter Jones, son of the late Chester Jones, and a couple of Boy Scouts. Thanks Peter. Eric was conveyed by wheelchair, smiling and waving, and presented with a bunch of flowers. After the Air Force section finished, Peter joined his Scout group and marched again.

Speaking to Earl Hetherington recently, I thought it was his big birthday coming up, but it was his 96<sup>th</sup>! He recently suffered a bad fall, which set him back. Best wishes Earl. Also, Enid McKay had a nasty fall at a garden show.

I've been in touch with Charles Ruthven recently, only to learn that his wife Hazel had passed away in January. Our sympathy goes to Charles, who at the moment is staying at his own home.

I had a request, at the Reunion in March, from Wal Archbold, asking if I could ring Keith Austin to pass on good wishes. I did this, and hope you had a call back Wal.

Helen McLoughlin has been in touch, asking after one and all. She keeps well, very busy and does a lot of charity work. It was nice to hear from you Helen.

### **South Australia Flight** by Pat Cribb.

There were noticeably fewer returned airmen and families at the Memorial Service at Adelaide Airport on April 20, put off, no doubt, through age and having to stand for so long. It doesn't help now, either, being unable to hear the padre or speakers due to the revving up and takeoff of those big jets. How things change.

The Anzac Day March was led by President Col Hutchinson, with 8 marchers. A most enjoyable lunch followed at the Kensington Hotel with 25 present. Good to see old friends again. We had many apologies - Pat & Syd Bartram, Monica Thom, Joan Dickson, Verna Riseley, Isla Shepherd, Michelle Rowe, Barbara O'Riley, Jim Perry, John Ringwood and Margaret & Peter Harden.

Brian & Joan Woodhead have returned from Mosman NSW and now live at the Seachange Retirement Village at Goolwa. We hope you are both settled and comfortable.

Had a nice letter from Jim Perry, Port Augusta, now able to go to Anzac Day services again.

We also enjoyed a luncheon at the Kensington Hotel on July 3.

To those feeling unwell, having doctor's treatments or confined to home, our thoughts go out to you – and you know that you are not forgotten. All the best to everyone.

### **New Zealand flight** by Kevin George per phone call to Jim Whitem

News via phone that Ron Verity, Jack Pryde and Kevin George are all well. As predicted in the last Newsletter, Kevin has reluctantly not renewed his pilot's licence this year.



I had a welcome telephone call from Sid Winchester, urging more frequent contact and indicating the old Air Force spirit is still strong as he and Joyce face down challenging health problems. Other than that, nothing heard from other members so will continue on with another anecdotal story, this one by Ernie Ireland, a Radar Technician Air, who joined 458 in March 1944, serving at Bone, Sardinia, Foggia and La Valon. Ernie's story predates his 458 time and involves his introduction to life in the Middle East and almost his final farewell. In his own words:

*I arrived in the Middle East about mid-November 1942 and spent about three weeks at Heliopolis before being posted "up the blue". About 20 of us radar types, who "didn't have their knees brown yet", headed into their first action.*

*We unloaded from the gharry near Mersa Matruh on the coast road and with full pack and a sten, walked about 20 miles to a transit camp. There was little at the camp, a couple of roads in and out, no tents, just bare ground, but I distinctly remember noticing a low wire around the site about 12" off the ground.*

*As I said we were all really "green", perhaps "dumb" describes it better. The next morning I took a walk around and saw what appeared to be a burned out carrier or light tank some distance off. So I stepped over the low wire and walked out to have a "shoofti". While there I had an urgent call of nature, the G.I. trots or whatever. Anyway, in the squat position my eye-level perspective became sharper with reference to objects on the ground. I quickly noticed that everywhere I looked I could see nothing but what appeared to be inverted dinner plates. Even at my low-level of battlefield conditions, the plates, low wire fence and signs reading "Achtung Minen" came suddenly into focus, along with the realization of my predicament.*

*My yells of alarm quickly brought attention to my self-inflicted plight and some Tommies came to my rescue and a safe route back over the wire. Today, I still smile when I recall the importance of one's eye-level relative to objects at ground level. Nature called before I wandered into no-man's land, and after the experience that call was greatly intensified!*

Since January this year, I have been fully occupied chairing a joint project committee to construct a monument to educate the public and future generations about the Jericho Beach Flying Boat station, the first Canadian Air Force presence in BC, built in 1920. Some of our Aussie mates may have transited through Jericho during the war and if so, the station's impressive history will be of interest.

Needless to mention, we are now in the fund-raising mode and, of course, any and all donations will be very welcome. If anyone wishes to have additional info on the project they can e-mail me at [baq24@shaw.ca](mailto:baq24@shaw.ca)

**Victoria Flight**

by Harry Ashworth

During the last few weeks, we have lost our Chairman John Bilney, and our Secretary Neil Dean. Prior to that, Jack Ellis, one of our regular supporters passed on. I'm aware of two other Members of Vic Flight, Ian Alison and Jack Ramsay, but would like to hear from others. I heard that Eric Jewell is still about, but we haven't sighted him for over 60 years ! John Bilney's wife, Marjorie, is holding Flight meeting records and bank account details.

I've been on annual holidays to Yamba in NSW, with my wife Nellie, and upon return will help sort out the Flight records and funds. We may decide to send them to NSW to assist with funding the Squadron news.

On behalf of VIC Flight, thanks to everyone for the wonderful memories and friendships. Until such time as we find others to assist, VIC Flight may have to switch out the lights and close the hangar doors. *We look forward to hearing from others, so this doesn't happen. Ed.*

A packed memorial service has been held for Air Vice-Marshal Reggie Bullen, of 458 Squadron, whose death, at the age of 87, was reported in the last Squadron News. It was held in the 14th century chapel at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where Reggie was senior bursar. Among those attending were dignitaries from the RAF, and his family: wife Christiane, his children Michael and Danielle, and grandson Freddie. There have been many tributes to Reggie, including one from a friend and neighbour - the former British Prime Minister Sir John Major. Reggie received the George Medal for saving the life of his wireless operator after the Wellington he was navigating crashed and blew up at Malta, killing four members of the crew.

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Sadly, there is another Squadron air crew loss to report - the death of 83-year-old Walter Prater, who was a wireless operator/air gunner. Bill - as he preferred to be known - was a familiar figure in the past at squadron reunions in England. He was a very popular member of his local community at East Gomeldon near Salisbury in Wiltshire. Several people there have paid tribute to him. Neighbour Muriel Godbold said he was "a lovely, lovely man". He spent many years in the RAF, carrying on his service after the war. But he later took up lorry driving as a career. His passion was for walking in the countryside and bird watching. His daughter Jill said: "He could identify every warble or tweet. He stopped his lorry once to record a nightingale." Bill played in the town band - the euphonium and French horn. He also volunteered to ferry the elderly around in his car from his local day centre. A memorial service was held at St Michael and All Angels Church.

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As the Squadron News goes to press, discussions are still continuing about the possibilities for a UK reunion. Once again, we are looking at that old faithful - Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, maybe in October. It's likely that Jack Christianson will be getting in touch with members soon with further details/proposals, but please do contact us if you are interested in taking part. In the past we have used the Falcon Hotel. Stratford is handy to many because of its location in the centre of the country, although members are scattered far and wide.

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Our thoughts go out at the moment to Ron and Rosa Moy. Rosa, who is 88, has been seriously ill for several weeks. "We nearly lost her twice," Ron tells me. "But she is a fighter and she is so brave." Those of us who went to squadron reunions in Sardinia and Grange-over-Sands can testify to that. Rosa cheerfully attended, despite her health problems. We really wish her well. She's a smashing lady.

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I've had a letter from Ronald Kirk in Caernarfon. He asks: "Do you happen to know where I can purchase a 458 Squadron blazer badge. I have tried for years and have failed to get one. 458 was my favourite squadron. I served under W/C Mulholland, W/C Johnston and Lt Col McKenzie - the best commanding officers you could ever have. Also, Lt Col McKenzie recommended me for my commission, so you see I have a lot to remember the squadron for. By the way, I am 88 this July and will be on the Veterans Parade in Caernarfon."

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One 458-er who's done a lot for veterans is Leon Armstrong. Since 1950, he has been organising reunions of the British Pensacola Veterans (for those like him who trained in flying in the United States). Having formed the association as its chairman, he says he's now taking a lesser role, at the age of 88, as acting treasurer. Despite this, Leon continues his globe-trotting, and hobnobbing with royalty. Our Leon some years ago collected the MBE off the Queen. Now he's been back in Buckingham Palace to meet her daughter, Princess Anne, at a garden party for the Not Forgotten Association, which helps disabled ex-servicemen and women.

Leon gets invited to some pretty good parties! He's also just been on a Danube cruise and he's about to set off on the Saga Ruby on a cruise round the British Isles.

He's not lost his passion for travel, nor his sense of humour either. When I told him I had just taken up the sport of triathlon at the age of 52, he said: "Have you seen a psychiatrist? Mind you, I think anyone who goes to a psychiatrist needs their head examined!"

**N.S.W. Flight** by Eric Munkman

G'day to all 458'ers.

I will pass on the sad news first, and it is with regret that I report the passing of Arnold Ashton (Transport Driver). Wal & Dora Archbold represented the Squadron at the funeral, and our deepest sympathy is extended to Daphne and family. Also, Yvonne Crompton, the widow of Owen "Darkie" Crompton died recently. Our condolences are extended to their children Greg & Patricia.

And, we were recently saddened to hear of the passing of Neil Dean. Neil joined Victoria Flight after the passing of his brother "Dizzy", as an associate. He was elected to the Committee and became of great assistance to the Flight. Our deepest sympathy goes to Neil's family, and to his partner Joyce.

Another luncheon was held at TAFE Ryde on 11 June. The company and food were great, unfortunately the attendance was down. If you're interested in attending, please contact me (Eric 99720641) to be placed on the list.

A new sign has been erected at the Hughie Edwards V.C. Memorial Park, Federal Highway, ACT, just north of Canberra. Col Fereday is featured on the sign, in recognition of his considerable contribution to the development of the site.

A ceremony is being planned for early in the New Year to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the dedication of St. Clement Danes Church to the R.A.F. Slate badges of 8 Australian RAAF Squadrons, including 458 Sqdn. will be installed at this ceremony. Further information will appear in the November newsletter. At a morning tea function, Col was presented with an Air Force tie by Air Marshal Shepherd, in recognition of his work.

The NSW Flight AGM was conducted in June, and the following office bearers were elected: Eric Munkman (Pres.), Keith Cousins (Senior VP), Bob Smith (Junior VP), David Longhurst (Secretary), John Gibbins (Treasurer). Committee members Rob Wilkinson, Bev and Peter Bitmead, Dorothy Munkman, Rob Phillis. A resignation was received from Don Bitmead, owing to ill health. Don was on the original Committee, and we thank him for his dedicated service.

**Western Australia Flight** by Ted Jewell

I sadly report that no-one in WA Flight was fit to march on Anzac Day, but Jennifer Clues laid a wreath at the War Memorial in Kings Park for 458 Squadron.

The Sunday BBQ at my home in Mandurah was a great success, with 14 people there, including Nobby & Esme Nobbs, Ted Jewell and Ronnie, Bill Kelliher and son Bob, Joan Clues, Vera Etherton, Margaret Gannaway and some associate members. We all had a great day, and I put on a good feed of Mandurah crabs. We are still having our reunions during the year at different homes, so as to keep in contact at all times.

Jack Cobb phoned, inviting me to go to his and Ethel's 70<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary, but Ronnie & I were unable to attend, as we had planned a holiday on the Gold Coast. We spent several weeks there, and had a great time, in perfect weather. Congratulations to Jack and Ethel, who featured in a local newspaper article. I also had a call from Jim Palmer, some time back. He and Lucy now in a nursing home, taking life easy and are both well. All the best.