



JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

Year 61

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** Post communications for Squadron Secretary to David Longhurst (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to John Gibbins (address above)*

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

**** Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to the Editor by 30 March. Please feel free to send in your story.*

Best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2011 - to all members of the 458 Family...Ed.

VALE

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

Freda CREIGHTON

see SA flight report

Ted LOVE

see VIC flight report

Dusty MILLER

see NSW flight report

Ruth SENN

see SA flight report

A note from Ron Kirk, in Wales,

Hello Rob

Since I last contacted you, I have been pretty busy. With my wife Anita, and the Red Dragon Theatre Group, which we run, we did the Afternoon entertainment for the Forces and Veterans Day in Caernarfon, singing all the popular war-time songs. I still play all the music for the shows on my Yamaha keyboard, despite my failing sight and hearing.

Next, my dear wife had organised a big 90th birthday party for me, with over 60 friends and family, old and new, on the floating restaurant Caernarfon.

My wife and I were invited to Caernarfon Castle on the 27th April 2010 when the Queen was opening a new part of the museum. Both the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh spoke to me.



The Duke saw my veterans badge and asked me what I was doing during the war. I told him about 458 Squadron and how we torpedoed Rommel's supply ships in the Mediterranean. He was very interested, and asked me if I had any hits, I told him quite a few. Afterwards we had lunch in the Black Boy Hotel. A very pleasant day.



Next, my wife and I were invited to the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. I had to have a carer with me, as I had to be in a wheelchair, because of my disability. We stayed at the Forces Club, Marble Arch. Princess Anne, Prince Charles, Camilla, the Duke of Gloucester, also the Queen and the Duke chatted with me. The Duke of Gloucester was very interested in 458 Squadron, using Wellingtons to torpedo shipping. The next day we took in the sights of London before travelling back to Caernarfon.

And, I attended the Remembrance Sunday parade in Caernarfon on November 14th. I laid the poppy wreath for the Royal Air Force on the Cenotaph. Always at this time, I remember all the 458 boys that never came back, and the friends that I made on the Squadron.

This photo was taken on Veteran's Day.

When Your Number's Up by Don Bitmead - Reporter Jenny Higgs (nee Bitmead)

After two nights of excruciating pain & vomiting outside the tent in Bone, North Africa, I realized I would be a hindrance on the long trip to Malta. This was the 3rd 458 detachment to go to the island which carried out a series of anti-submarine sweeps. I notified F/O Russell McMillan of the distress I was in, who called the Medical Officer to examine me. He used the unusual practice of pricking my stomach with a pin to find the inflamed area. Next thing I knew I was being carted off to hospital in Algiers, to have my appendix removed.

F/Sgt Arthur Huntley was the volunteer who took my place. It was the 19th May 1944. Already a black day with F/Sgt Pond's undercarriage collapsing on take-off, leaving his aircraft sitting in the middle of the runway. Other aircraft were forced then to use a cross-wind runway. One unfortunately overshot the runway, hit a wall & was wrecked. F/O Armstrong then took off on the cross-wind runway with a full fuel load, when his starboard engine began to backfire & he could only get half power from it. The fuselage struck the lip of a quarry, just in front of the tail wheel, leaving behind the rear gun turret.

When this crash occurred, F/O McMillan's stand-by crew was scrambled, including my replacement F/Sgt Huntley. Upon returning at dusk after carrying out their patrol, Malta was blanketed in thick cloud. With nil visibility the aircraft crashed trying to land, off the end of the runway. The Wellington burst into flames, wreckage scattering. F/O Bullen, RAF, the navigator, was thrown clear, suffering a broken arm & leg, a chipped spine & burns. With these painful injuries he bravely returned to the burning aircraft & rescued WO Wal Clarke. After dragging Wal some way & setting him behind a rock, he was returning to rescue the rear gunner when S/Ldr J A F MacKay & F/Lt Taylor rushed up. Taylor went to the burning aircraft & removed the rear gunner who had died. F/O Bullen was awarded the George Medal for this brave act of heroism.

Russell McMillan, & the volunteer who took my place, Arthur Huntley, along with the rest of crew, were killed. The only survivors were Wal Clark & Reg Bullen. Wal Clark, having extensive burns, was sent to hospital in England. Wal & Reg kept in touch for many years when the war was over.

As you can imagine I was most distressed when the Anglican Padre, Bob Davies, informed me of this tragedy. My number wasn't up.

Another Circumnavigation - 458 aspects

by Jim Whitem

In our last newsletter we published a photograph of Jim Whitem drinking some beer with Leon Armstrong and Keith Wilkinson in Coventry last northern summer. Here is his brief story of the encounter.

Well, last southern summer I was drinking some beer with members of the ACT branch of the RAAFA at their pre-Christmas lunch, when I saw a bit of paper advertising a two week tour of Bomber Command WW2 bases in the U.K. which took place in July. It specifically included a reference to Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, which I had never visited. In fact I had never been in Yorkshire in my life!

Planning commenced, and with Elaine, a sailing friend for twenty years, to look after me, we took off from Brisbane at the end of June to fly around the world, west-about. We flew with Star Alliance (Singapore Airlines, Air Canada, United, and Air New Zealand), right around the world, and dropped no engine parts, nor even hydraulic fluid onto any island, nor into any ocean. We visited Singapore, England, Canada, and Maui before returning to Brisbane via Auckland.



In England, we commenced by attending a very good party at the House of Lords, then took off in a very comfortable bus which took us from London to Salisbury via Runnymede (RAF Memorial,) Brooklands Vickers Museum, where I alone was permitted to re-enter R for Robert, the Loch Ness Wimpy.



We visited several WW2 airfields in that area, then to Wolverhampton, and haunts of 467 Squadron in the area, and the War Graves cemetery at Leighterton, then to York via the RAF Cosford Museum and RAF Brighton (462 Squadron) Next day we turned south and held a short memorial service under the squadron tree at Holme-on-Spalding-Moor, where there are considerable 458 mementos.

Thence we drove to Scampton of Dam Busters fame, and across the river into Lincolnshire. There, we visited the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, RAF Cranwell, and several more airfields. A highlight was the Shuttleworth Collection at Biggleswade – every old aircraft in this collection flies. Other highlights included Orford, Lavenham, Letchworth and a memorable day at the Duxford Air Show where we saw many Spitfires, Hurricanes, and Lancasters in the air. Finally we were back in the south, with visits to Cambridge University (Including Pembroke, my old college), and the RAF Museum at Hendon. Back in London, we lunched at the RAF Club, and attended the RAF Church St Clement Danes, just behind Australia House.



After the tour finished, Elaine and I took a train to Coventry, in the geographical centre of England, where the Whittam family came from, and met many Whittams I had never met before. While we were there, I spent several happy hours with Leon Armstrong, 458 pilot, and Keith Wilkinson, our UK Flight correspondent, whose father served on the squadron.



We flew to Toronto, Ontario, visited Niagara Falls, and had reunions with Dorothy's family and many Canadian Whittams; then to Vancouver where we did many things, including having lunch with Bryan and Joan Quinlan.

They send their best wishes to the Australian squadron members, with special regards to George and Grace Unitt, David and Judy Westgarth, and Colin Fereday.

Bryan Quinlan & Jim Whittam

After a week in Maui to recover, we flew back to Brisbane, where Elaine said, in jest.
"I never want to see another old aeroplane, nor another Whittam!"

The 2010 Terrey Hills Reunion

by Wendy Whittem-Trunz

Thank you to Rob and the NSW flight committee for yet another wonderful reunion, our 41st Reunion and 5th “final” Reunion, which was held October 25-29 at Checkers Resort and Conference Centre, Terrey Hills, a northern suburb of Sydney. 12 veterans, 12 partners and widows, and 8 sons and daughters (youngsters) attended. Normally, Bill Kelliher and son Bob travel the furthest to attend, but this time Wendy (Jim Whittem’s daughter) flew in from her USA holiday just in time for breakfast and the Tuesday excursion. Colin Fereday flew his son, Peter, from Brisbane to drive him 3.5 hours to/from the formal dinner. As usual, the Sydney “youngster boys” efficiently managed train and airport pickups for our interstate travelers.



Our twelve attending Veterans in front of the RSL Memorial (L-R) – Back: John Ringwood, Jim Whittem, Bill Kelliher, Bill Johnson, Tom Ridgway, Eric Munkman, Ralph Bailey; Front: Colin Fereday (inset), Laurie Crowley, Keith Cousins, Don Bitmead, Harry Baines.

Checkers Resort was a very pleasant place to stay, the food was excellent and the spring weather perfect. No-one used the pool, spa or tennis court, but I believe everyone stopped by the white cockatoo, outside reception, to have a conversation with him. Choruses of kookaburras woke us each morning, and some rooms were interesting, in that was impossible not to flood the entire bathroom floor from the newly renovated, walk-in showers.

Rob had organised a very pleasant, but not too tiring, program that started with welcome drinks and dinner after Monday’s check-in. ‘Meet-Your-Mates’ is always a relaxing, happy and chatty affair.

On Tuesday morning, we all took a coach ride to historic North Head (entrance of Sydney Harbour). The old Sydney Quarantine station operated there until 1984, when the ‘management’ of the site passed to the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney_Heads_-_cite_note-npwsnhqs-2. Defence facilities installed on the headland 1934 were wound down in 1945; and the Artillery School, now converted to an artillery museum containing a most interesting collection of memorabilia, was opened especially for our group. We all enjoyed the Memorial Walk through coastal bush full of spring flowers, and especially the spectacular views over Sydney Harbour from the lookout. Keith just had to prime the cannon with his umbrella.



Eric Munkman (R) & Laurie Crowley on seat



Keith Cousins



Harry & Nita Baines, Pat Millar, Betty Crowley
Hettie Murray (L-R)

Hungry yet again, we enjoyed lunch at the nearby RSL bowling club. Then, we returned to Checkers for rest and recuperation before dinner. Rob tells me that we well over-spent the drinks tab that night!

Our Remembrance Service was held on the Wednesday at the RSL Anzac Village memorial, Narrabeen, where the veterans' official reunion photo was also taken. Eric Munkman and Ralph Bailey live at the Village, so they ensured we were made especially welcome both at the service and later at the clubhouse luncheon.



Eric, Bill, John, Jim & Laurie (R-L)



Ralph, Jim & Rob



Gwen, Bob, Bill, Rob, Pru (L-R)

That evening, everyone very much enjoyed our traditional, formal dinner, with guest speaker Squadron Leader Martin Copland. We enjoyed a sing-along of old time numbers, and our 458 memorabilia display and historic slideshow were the basis of our later trivia quiz. Some of our youngster boys even played up a little!



Wendy, Jim, Ted Jacob, Laurie & Leslie Jacob



SL Martin Copland & partner, Peter & Rob



Hettie and pals at pre-dinner drinks



Dot Smith & Pat Millar



Enjoying the formal dinner.



Ron playing up. Poor Rob - Not so formal!

Thursday saw us back on our bus, this time to Palm Beach and our Bobbin Head cruise boat. Some members were even brave enough to ascend the stairs to the top deck! We crossed Pittwater, Lion Island and Broken Bay for a brief stop at Patonga, where our crew picked up our huge, tasty, butcher's paper-wrapped fish and chips lunch. Continuing on, we cruised up the beautiful lower Hawkesbury, through the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, finally stopping at Bobbin Head for a walk and refreshments before returning home.



Waiting for the cruise at Palm Beach Warf



Harry, John & Bill (R-L)



Ron helping with lunch

Our dinner that last evening was informal. Tables were decorated with a Halloween theme, and we enjoyed a relaxed evening which included a trivia quiz, a candid slideshow of reunion photos (later copied onto CDs for everyone to take home). We took a group photo of all the women, and of course the boys couldn't help themselves from jumping in too. Lillian Stammer and Laurie Crowley (pictured) won the trivia contest, earning Halloween gloves and tie respectively. Pru Lawson presented Rob and Ron Munkman with Halloween goblets for a job well done - once again!



Enjoying Trivia Night

Several heard Harry demanding of Rob that we hold another reunion as soon as possible!

We youngsters wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and a Happy, Healthy & Safe New Year!

Thank you from Queensland – once again thank you NSW for organising the Reunion.

It was wonderful to see and catch up with a lot of friends from years gone by. Being my first year at a reunion without Ned was a big decision to make for me but I am so glad I did. It has brought back so many happy memories from previous reunions together. It was good to catch up on everyone's news and to see we are all still young at heart. If Harry Baines gets his way, and we have just one more reunion, I would like to bring some photos, memorabilia to put on display. I will get my family working on it now.

I also enjoyed taking my daughter Carmel with me this year and to also see a number of young Sons and Daughters attending. (Well 59, mid 60's is now young to me) ***Kath Kelly***

As my first ever 458 reunion I had a wonderful time and was made to feel very welcome. It was as I imagined, from all the stories told to me by Dad & Mum (Ned & Kath Kelly) from the many previous ones they attended. It was just like a big family get together with lots of laughs. I enjoyed especially the evening pre-dinner time when we were able to sit and chat or move around to meet and speak to everyone. Thank you all for sharing your time with me.

How I saw the reunion. The men of 458 are still a unit. They still care about each other and enjoy each other's company. I do believe you ladies of the 458ers share a special bond. I also could see that everyone would love to party on for a long time yet. ***Carmel Holmes***

Firstly on behalf of the 'Young 458'ers' I would like to say a big thank you for all the work and effort you put into the Terrey Hills reunion. Without you it just would not happen! As I reflect back on the four or five days we spent together, we 'youngies' were extremely fortunate to be able to spend time with these 12 incredible men and their equally incredible wives. They all have such wonderful tales to tell (pity most of them won't commit them to paper) and their yarns are always told with a twinkle in their eye! They are all gems, and to pick up another 'gem' at our memorial service was quite special.

Special moments – who would think Harry Baines would be reunited with his missing button, and likewise Keith Cousins with his hearing aid! There were many special memories that I brought home, but the fact that these men travel from all over Australia to be together, is testament in itself to what special people they must be. A request for yet another final reunion shows how much these get-togethers are appreciated.

I wish you & all the 458'ers a wonderful Xmas and equally wonderful 2011. Pru Lawson

Thank you from David and Judy Westgarth

Dear Rob and all 458 folk,

We were so pleased to receive the very nice card from all who attended the reunion. We were sorry not to be with you all, but various appointments made it impossible. Would you please convey our thanks and best wishes to everyone by printing this message in the next Newsletter.

No doubt you all had a wonderful few days together and we really did miss the companionship of you all and we hope for another reunion next year. ***Take care and Happy Xmas.***

Thankyous, for similar "wish you were here" greeting cards, were also received from Elsie & Jack Hamilton, Wal & Dora Archbold, Grace & George Unitt.....Ed.

FLIGHT REPORTS

Canada Flight

by Bryan Quinlan

Very little to report for our small group of six except, thankfully, I can say we are all still around. I was in touch with Dick Sladen's daughter Jay who advises the he is comfortably settled in his extended care centre and enjoys visits from his friends in the area and weekly visits with Jay who is more distantly located. Dick (pictured left) attended the recent Remembrance Day.



Tom Rowan appears to be the most active of our bunch, as at 91, stills travels to a neighbouring town to curl twice a week, even driving through a recent blizzard to reach the curling centre. Far Northern Saskatchewan weather and temperatures can be very extreme.

Bert Markland's wife Gladys indicates that Bert is comfortably settled in his care centre and enjoys conversing with his visitors and occasional visits at home.

Tom Lindsay, who lives close to us with his daughter and who takes him to the nearby large shopping centre where Tom can get a little exercise using his walker, although he is presently bothered with gout. He says he has run-out of wartime stories.

Jack Reynolds, also in Vancouver, says the status is quo for him, but admits that his activities at a neighbourhood centre are now restricted, however, his wife Dorothy remains heavily involved

Yours truly is awaiting word on the first of two knee replacement ops and, as of August this year, am undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. Once I am recovered from the new knee installations I can concentrate on lowering my golf handicap, hopefully in 2011.

Our Canadian Flight wish all of our Aussie mates a very Merry Christmas and the best of health possible in 2011!

Victoria Flight

by Roland Orchard

VALE: Edward (Ted) J. LOVE Passed away peacefully 26th August, 2010. From the entire RAAF 458 Squadron family, we honour and respect you for your dedicated service to this country in its time of need. Well done mate. RIP. (*Obituary by Jeremy Orchard*) Condolences go to Ted's son Bruce and families, which include 16 Grandchildren and 2 Great Grandchildren. Ted was 91 years of age.

August 17 saw Jeremy, Chris and I make our way to Sydney to meet some of The Squadron Council. It was a great pleasure to meet Eric Munkman, his son Ron, Rob Wilkinson and David Longhurst at the North Ryde RSL for lunch. Many thanks to David Longhurst. It was truly a whirlwind visit but thanks to David, as our tour guide, a memorable one, as we took in the sights of Sydney and surrounding areas. Thanks chaps. Our very best goes out to Keith Cousins. Sorry we also missed Jack Baker. Jack, your wife was enjoying a trip overseas and unfortunately we couldn't contact you so we could visit. The boys and I would dearly love to catch up in the New Year, if it is ok with you. (Jack and our father, Gordon, were on the same crew.)

A few Victoria Flight members went to Tocumwal for the R.A.A.F. RE-UNION TO COMMEMORATE THE B-24 LIBERATOR

Those who attended were, Harry & Nell Ashworth, Anne & Paul Stack (Harry & Nell's daughter & son-in-law), Fred Ayres, Jeremy Orchard, Chris Orchard & son, Jonathan. 458'ers crewed and worked on Wellingtons, some crewed and worked on B-24 Liberators and some also served at the RAAF station at Tocumwal.



Plaque below the B-24



1/4 scale model B-24



458'ers enjoy the formal dinner

On the 14th October 1960 the RAAF held their final march-out parade and lowering of the RAAF ensign marking the official closing of RAAF station Tocumwal. Fifty years later the RAAF Band and RAAF official detachment replicated this event by marching through the restored original entrance gates to the new 1/4 scale model Liberator for the raising of the Ensign and the dedication of the B-24. The commemoration paid tribute to the young men and women who served their country while stationed at the base during WWII. The day was a great success with many Veterans in attendance.

 <h2 style="text-align: center;">Tocumwal Historic Aerodrome Museum</h2> <p style="text-align: center;">P.O. Box 47, Tocumwal, N.S.W. 2714.</p>	
<p>President: Bob Brown Tel: 03 5874 2795</p>	<p>Vice President: David Grant Tel: 03 5864 6587</p>

Last but not least from all of us to all of you, we wish you a very happy, healthy and safe Christmas and New Year!

NSW flight by Eric Munkman

We have lost another member, **Ron Miller (Dusty)**, who lived in Griffith and hosted a reunion in 1997, and also with his wife Enid attended many others reunions and Anzac marches. He was a pilot, and took part in many bombing missions in the Mediterranean area. To Enid and family, we extend our deepest sympathy.

We had a very successful reunion here in Sydney. Of course, the numbers were once again less, but those who attended voted it a success and we owe most of this to Rob Wilkinson, before and during the event, and our son Ronald was a great help as his helper. Peter Bitmead always ready to help when required, and Wendy Whitem-Trunz (Jim Whitem's Daughter), who, apart from other assistance, took a pictorial record of all events. Pru Lawson(Daughter of John Ringwood) was an excellent hostess, together with Wendy. We thank our helpers and admit we could not have done without them.

Apologies were received from George and Grace Unitt, Wal and Dora Archbold, Jack and Elsie Hamilton, David and Judy Westgarth owing to sickness and personal duties. There was a total roll call of 32, the 458's were Keith Cousins, Eric Munkman, Don Bitmead, Harry Baines, Laurie Crowley, Bill Johnson, Jim Whitem, Tom Ridgway, Bill Kelliher (W. Aust), John Ringwood (S.Aust), Col Fereday (Canberra) and Ralph Bailey. The widows who joined us were Dot Smith (Bob), Pat Millar (Bob), Kath Kelly (Eric), Hettie Murray (Cyril) Joan Woodhead (Brian), Edna Menser (Barry).

Our first outing, we boarded a bus to North Head Museum, then walked the Commemorative Walk which consisted of inscribed bricks of servicemen and lo and behold there was the name of Eric Munkman. No. 33572, 458 Squadron R.A.A.F. We then viewed the Sydney Harbour, WHAT A WONDERFUL SIGHT, it brought back memories of when I sailed overseas on the "Awatea" 8th August 1941. I stood on the deck and watched the Heads go out of sight and wondered "if and when would I see it again" After lunch at a local Club we returned to base.

Wednesday we had our commemorative service held at the War Vets. Village, Narrabeen, which I was able to organise with the help of some of our wonderful staff who supplied the transport, service, and lunch. I must applaud those responsible for a wonderful day.

That evening, our official dinner was held at Checkers Resort where we were staying and a very enjoyable night was had by all including the friends and relatives who joined us. Our Guest Speaker was Squadron Leader Martin Copland who spoke on the R.A.A.F. as it was in our time, and how it has changed to-day.

Thursday we had a trip on the Hawkesbury River. Unfortunately, the weather was unkind and the special views we did not really see, having to spend the trip indoors.

Friday morning lots of goodbyes and some wanting another reunion in the future.

Dorothy and I wish all members, widows and friends our very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

South Australia Flight by Pat Cribb

It is not a very happy report this time, with the deaths of two of our widows – **Freda Creighton** and **Ruth Senn**. We will miss their company, as they always joined us at our lunches. We send our condolences to their families.

Our Christmas lunch was held on December 5. A few years back, we would expect 40 guests, but this year just 12 people came along. We send out best wishes to those who couldn't make it – Kevin Tait, Mattie Baker, Michelle and Tony Rowe – and hope that the New Year brings news of better health.

So pleased that Di Michell is over her hospital spell. We have a lot for which we can thank Rick Michell, our Treasurer, who also send out such great function notices for all our gatherings.

I had a hip replacement in February, and now feel better and more mobile than I have for many years, and so much stronger. So there is the good news. No pain at all now, and at 84 I consider I am so fortunate.

Greetings from S.A. Flight to you all, for a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

West Australia Flight by Ted Jewell

I had a call from Jim Palmer last week. Jim is living in a nursing home at Kojanup, in the south west of the state. Some time ago, he had a stroke, and can not move around the best, doesn't drive any more as his eyes are not the best. Jim is one of the last four members I know of, in the State.

We met for our usual lunch on 17 October at Bob and Dot's home in Wembly. Bob is an associate member and was a pilot flying in Lancasters in England with Bomber Command. We had a great day, even though there were only 12 present. We had Joan Clues and daughters Jennifer and Vicky, Vera Etherton, Margaret Gannaway, Bill and Bob Kelliher, myself and friend Veronica, and other friends. We all hope we can carry on for some time yet.

We had Xmas lunch on 28 November, which was a bit early, but had to fit in with other functions. Every one brought a plate of goodies, plus drinks.

In the last Newsletter I read about what some of the members got up to in the Squadron, cars, bikes and whatever. I remember Ernie (Skeeta) Stavely and myself going to one of the big dumps at Protville and bringing back to camp a lovely sports car, but left it behind when we moved on. I am sure most will remember the vineyards on the way from camp, what I remember we could fill a jerry can for about five shillings.

Xmas is just around the corner. I wish all 458 members and families a wonderful Xmas.

Well, it's still going. But only just. The 458 UK Flight annual reunion is hanging on by the skin of its teeth.

Five of us met to keep alive the tradition. Sadly, the number of people available to attend is falling every year. Many of the original stalwarts are no longer with us. Others are too fragile to make the journey – as 458-ers and their families are scattered across England and Wales.

We held the 2010 Annual Reunion right in the middle of the country. Two reunions have been held up north in recent years, but this year we returned to the place where it's been held several times before – the Falcon Hotel in historic Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire.

Out of the five participants, only two actually served on the squadron – Jack Christianson and Leon Armstrong, both 458 pilots. Jack was my late father's pilot, and I was there with my wife, Anne. And Jack was accompanied by his wife Audrey. The couple have been together since the war.

Despite the dwindling numbers, we were all keen to make sure the occasion carried on – so we could toast the squadron and our absent friends. Besides that, it's always great to meet up and we don't really need an excuse.

Many military service reunions are held at the Falcon – some of them are packed occasions. Some are not. Perhaps we now have the distinction of being the smallest *band of brothers*? Small, or not, the plan is for there to be a UK reunion again next year, and the year after, and...

On the way to Stratford, Anne and I took Leon – who's 90 years old – to have a look round the world famous codebreakers HQ – Bletchley Park, or *Station X* in Buckinghamshire. Leon, like most 458 pilots, had spent much of his time with the squadron looking for u-boats. At Bletchley Park too they were keeping an eye on the German submariners by reading their coded messages.

It's an amazing place today – with the public able to visit the once top secret huts. It's a sobering thought: without the boffins who toiled here, we might have lost the war, or at the very least it might have dragged on for a few more years with countless more casualties.

Ciphers and codes were cracked here and we were able to see what the Germans were writing on their Enigma machines: highly classified intelligence codenamed *Ultra*.

My wife used to work in Bletchley Park in the 1970s and every morning I dropped her off there in our car. Back then, neither of us had any idea about the enormous significance of this place in the war years. It's only in more recent times that the full story has emerged into the public domain.

For two or three hours we walked with Leon around the many displays. He may be 90 with a dodgy leg, but it's no secret: there is no stopping this 458 vice-president.

WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE !!

Mystery Wellington Control Panel

by Wendy Whitem-Trunz

In October, John Gibbins visited the Military Museum at the Milne Bay Barracks, Toowoomba, Queensland's. Although a small compact military museum, its exhibition



spanned from WW2 to the conflicts in Timor. One section is dedicated to the RAAF where there is on display a complete Control Panel of a Wellington Bomber, a photograph of a Wellington in flight, and the 458 Squadron's listing of where they served in WW2. (Similar to the place mats presented at the Port Macquarie re-union in 2001).

John is sending some more up-to-date information to the Museum on behalf of the 458 Squadron.

On being queried, Jim Whitem responded, "I know of nobody still in Queensland who might have had a hand in the Wimpy display in Toowoomba. My best guess would be Charlie ('Spider') Warren who was 'chieffy' in B flight in my day. However he never mentioned it to me on the few occasions we met after the war."

Laurie Crowley's similar comment was, "I'm having trouble putting Milne Bay (PNG) and Toowoomba together in the same paragraph. The only name I know connected with Toowoomba and 458 is Frank Wilkes and the only name I know who understands Milne Bay is John Wild from Milne Bay. John is not 458 and Frank is dead. I don't know how a Wimpy panel could get to Toowoomba."

If you can solve this mystery, please contact Wendy Whitem-Trunz or Rob Wilkinson and we will share the story in the next newsletter.

P.T.O.

MORE FROM VICTORIA FLIGHT

A BRAND NEW 458 WEBSITE IS BEING PLANNED!

A grant has been requested from the Victorian Veterans' Council in September to build our very own Website! (The outcome is to be advised in early December)

Firstly, we need you to have your say in the selection of the website domain name. Please send in your feedback (email, letters, phone calls to your Flight Correspondent) by early February, for the following proposals:

www.458squadron.org.au (note: "dot au" just shows that the website resides in Australia)

OR www.458raafsquadron.org

OR www.458???? YOUR SUGGESTIONS please

Some examples of currently operating RAAF squadron websites are:

www.454-459squadrons.org.au, www.3squadron.org.au/, www.450squadron.org.au/,
www.462squadron.com/index.htm, www.467463raafsquadrons.com

After Flight correspondents pass all feedback to The Squadron Council, it will make a decision based upon your input. THANK YOU!

Secondly, we are requesting that each Flight nominate a website representative that will look after things like posting upcoming commemorative & other activities, photos, etc. to each Flight's own web pages of the Website (designated for these purposes). This individual can be a Veteran or family member, etc. All training of how to add info, photos, etc. to the website and further details will come later. For now, we are assembling the project team to plan the WEBSITE. THANK YOU. Could each Flight Correspondent send their nominee to Rob Wilkinson, the Newsletter editor, robwilk@bigpond.net.au (who will forward the information to the Project Team) by early February.

Many thanks.....*Roland Orchard*

P.T.O.