



## JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

**Year 62**

**No 240**

**APRIL 2011**

Squadron President:	Australia	Keith Cousins (NSW)
Squadron Vice-presidents:	Canada	Tom Lindsay
	New Zealand	Kevin George
	U.K.	Leon Armstrong
Squadron Treasurer:	John Gibbins	6 Boronia Avenue, Turramurra NSW 2074
Squadron Secretary:	David Longhurst	129A Darling Street, Balmain NSW 2041
Newsletter Editor:	Rob Wilkinson	36 Finch Avenue, East Ryde NSW 2113 phone (02) 9878 4518 email: <a href="mailto:robwilk@bigpond.net.au">robwilk@bigpond.net.au</a>
Newsletter Publisher:	Eric Munkman	Phone (02) 9972 0641
Flight Correspondents:		
UK	Keith Wilkinson	23 Ferndale Pk, Tedmore, Stourbridge, W. Midlands. DY90RB
NSW	Eric Munkman	722 Lantana Lodge, Lantana Av. Collaroy Plateau, NSW 2097
WA	Ted Jewell	61 Wyaree Rd. Mandurah, WA. 6210
NZ	Kevin George	20 Kowhai Av. Kaikohe, N.Z. 0400
SA	Pat Cribb	2/20 Rochester St., Leabrook, SA 5068
VIC	Roland Orchard	78 Edward Road, Chirnside Park VIC. 3116
Canada	Bryan Quinlan	1460 Haywood Ave., W. Vancouver, B.C. Canada.

*\* 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 31 July. Please feel free to send in your story.*

## VALE

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

<b>Ian Alison</b>	<b>see VIC flight report</b>
<b>Patricia Burgess</b>	<b>see below</b>
<b>John Dunn</b>	<b>see tribute below and also NSW flight report</b>
<b>Beryl Giles</b>	<b>see VIC flight report</b>
<b>Campbell Stacey</b>	<b>see W.A. flight report</b>

## NEWSLETTER PRODUCTION by Rob Wilkinson

Given that we no longer ask for Membership subscriptions, the bank balance is slowly dwindling, with the main expense being printing and mailing of the 458 Journal. If you would like to contribute to keeping the Journal running off the presses, you're very welcome to send your contribution to "458 Squadron" care of our Treasurer, John Gibbins (see address details on the front page).

## WANTED – EDITOR – 458 JOURNAL by Rob Wilkinson

Calling for applications from all you young ones in your 50's and 60's!!  
Interesting job, three times a year, putting together the Flight reports and stories submitted by the wonderful 458 family. As I work full time, and have a number of other voluntary commitments, I would like to have a break from editing the 458 Journal, after nearly 5 years in the job. Let me know if you're interested.

## FROM JUNEE TO TERREY HILLS – OCTOBER REUNION by Laurie Crowley

Betty and I were due to go to the Terrey Hills Reunion. Lillian (Stammer) rings and says she is going on a cruise, so can't get us safely thru Sydney. She advises me to get off train at Strathfield and get a taxi to Terrey Hills - only \$60. Don't go to Central - the Scugnozzi will have your passports, wallets in no time flat - they can spot a bushwacker a mile off. Got on train at Cootamundra - Shufti Bint No. 1 grabs our bags and carries them 4 carriages along platform to our car. Get to CENTRAL - Shufti Bint No.2 puts us in lift and sees us onto Platform No.16 for Gordon. Get off at Gordon - tried to ring a taxi - it is late at night by now. One man standing on footpath eyeing us off - nobody else around. Shufti Walid No. 3 approaches. "Having trouble getting taxi". I'll take you to Terrey Hills. Get to Terrey Hills, and hard to find a parking spot, so he carries our bags 100 yards to Reception. Desk attendant hands man a key and says "take the Crowleys bags to Room 24 and see if they want anything". He does. Flop down in chair and think "the Berlin Wall would have been a piece of cake for us".

## PATRICIA BURGESS

I received word last December, from Ken Hill, that Patricia Burgess, of Hamilton South, the widow of R. J. Burgess # 21255, had passed away on 24 October, 2010.  
Our condolences to the family....*Ed*

During several visits to the UK, Bill has had the opportunity of visiting the National Archives in Kew, and accessing the Operation Record Book for 458. Here's an excerpt headed

**“GIBRALTAR June 1945”:**

June started very quietly, no news of the future of the Squadron forthcoming. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June, however, a signal was received informing us that all RAAF personnel were to be returned to Australia via United Kingdom. On the 4<sup>th</sup> June, the Squadron became non-operational and on the same day, a signal was received to the effect that No. 458 Squadron was to be disbanded with effect from 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1945.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June, 1945, a detachment from the Squadron took part in the Ceremony of the Keys. This is the first time that Australian personnel have participated in this traditional parade, and by the efficient manner in which they bore themselves, they showed that they were well worthy of the privilege extended to them.

The Ceremony of the Keys originated during the Great Siege of 1779-1783, when it was necessary to take measures to prevent the capture of the Rock by night attack. Sir George Eliot, the Governor during those critical days, decreed that all aliens should leave the Fortress thirty minutes after the Evening Time Gun sounded. Following this curfew, the Main Gates were locked, and remained so till morning. It is upon this simple basis that the present impressive military display has been built.

The salute at the march past was taken by His Excellency, the Governor, Sir Ralph Eastwood, DSO, MC and the Air Officer Commanding, Gibraltar, Air Vice Marshal A.C. Stevens, was present. All personnel who took part deserve great credit for the smartness of their turnout and the precision of their drill, which were well in keeping with the best tradition of the Royal Australian Air Force. Appended is a copy of a signal received by the Squadron from the A.O.C. Air Headquarters, Gibraltar:

*“Personal for Wing Commander Mackay. Please convey to the Officers and Airmen my congratulations on their fine bearing and smart turn-out on today's historic keys ceremony. The drill was exemplary and the turn-out seldom equalled. As far as I know, this is the first occasion on which Australian personnel have performed this historic ceremony and it is certainly the first occasion on which the Royal Australian Air Force have done so. I am proud to say I have seldom seen a smarter parade, and I send you my heartiest congratulations and thanks”*

On 9<sup>th</sup> June, the following speech was made by Air Vice Marshal A.C. Stevens C.B., R.A.F., Air Officer Commanding, Royal Air Force Gibraltar, on the occasion of the disbandment of this Squadron:

“Gentlemen..I have come here today to perform an act which for once gives me no pleasure whatsoever. I come to take the final salute from you officers and men who form one of the Squadrons I have had the pleasure to have under my command.

The act of disbandment of a Squadron is one which gives rise to mixed feelings, not only in the minds of the officers and men of the Squadron concerned, but also in the mind of the officer who has to take the final salute. There must be a feeling of sadness that a Squadron like yours, which has acquitted itself in such splendid fashion since its formation under the stress of war at Holme-on-Spalding Moor in October 1941 has to disperse. There is also a sense of high achievement. Your Squadron was formed during the most critical period of the European War and it would not be possible to disband it at this moment if the objects, for which you and the

United Nations have fought, had not been achieved. Since your formation in 1941, you have a record of which you may all be justly proud, as the Squadron has operated, not only in the United Kingdom, but in the Middle East, Palestine, North Africa, Malta, Sardinia, Italy, Southern France, Corsica, Sicily and finally Gibraltar. I have not been able to give you many targets since you came here in January 1945, but you at least have the satisfaction of knowing that in conjunction with your comrades in the Royal Air Force, South African Air Force and the United States Naval Air Service, and in close cooperation with our friends in the Royal Navy, we, between us, have prevented any submarines entering the Mediterranean since your arrival. To you has fallen the more difficult task of locating, identifying and bombing, at night, a target no bigger than a chimney stack, which sticks out of your nissen huts. Your task was rendered even more difficult by the presence of numerous Spanish fishing vessels, which locked on your radar like a U-Boat. That there were no unfortunate international incidents is a tribute to your skill, when working under difficult conditions.

The end of any modern war inevitably means a reduction in our Armed Forces. The selection of No. 458 Squadron as one of the many Squadrons which are being disbanded throughout the Royal Air Force and Dominion Air Forces is a question quite outside my control, and would be decided by consultation between the Air Ministry and the Australian Government. That your Squadron has been selected is no reflection on your efficiency, but is entirely a matter of policy.

Though the Squadron is disbanded today, its number and its record lives on, and if it is necessary to call it into being once again, future generations will proudly carry on the fine example you have set. I have closely watched the operations and training of your Squadron since you came under my command in January this year, and I have been most impressed by the keenness, discipline and determination which has characterised your every act. This applies equally to the field of sport and welfare as it does to actual flying operations. But, credit must go, not only to the crews, but also to the men who work on the ground, who do not have the excitement of actual operations, but to whose careful maintenance and devotion to duty, the success of all flying operations depend.

It has been a great pleasure to me to have you under my command, and I take this opportunity of thanking you for your loyal and efficient service whilst under my command, and wishing you every possible success whatever task lies before you, and finally a safe return to your own homes. Good bye and Good Luck”

*On the following page of the ORB was an Administration Report, detailing Postings and Promotions. Of particular interest to me was reference to my late father under “Promotions”:  
F/O (A/F/L) A 408431 W.C. Wilkinson promoted to Flight Lieutenant effective 1/4/45.....Ed*

## **Bill Kelliher recalls JOHN STUART MACGREGOR DUNN 6/12/1922 – 14/2/2011**

**John Dunn** joined 458 Squadron as a member of Bill Kelliher's crew at Bone, Algeria, in February 1944. The crew remained together (except for navigator Cliff Hayward, who was invalided out during the tour) until January 1945. Bill writes:

I first met John at Haverfordwest O.T.U. in Wales, in early December 1943. My earlier experience had been on Beauforts (euphemistically called fighter bombers). I had flown one out to Egypt, complete with a mixed crew of English and Canadian, only to have my career there cut short by a spell of some three months in hospital. I was eventually shipped back to UK and to Haverfordwest to convert to Wellingtons, where I arrived alone, and somewhat depressed by the appalling weather that only Wales can provide. I did my conversion, and a week or two later a draft of air gunners and navigators arrived at the field. Most of them had met up previously with others, and tended to form alliances to crew up. I, however, knew none, and wondered how I could be expected to get a crew together at short notice. I spied an Aussie WAG, alone in the mess one evening, and thought he looked a likely candidate, so asked him if he had crewed up yet. He eyed me with some suspicion, as by now I had been promoted to Warrant Officer, and he noted the WO's crest on my sleeve and WO's were a rare breed, usually associated with discipline. He seemed a good, steady type, so I managed to put him at ease and asked him to join my crew, and whether he knew two more WAG types. This he did, and they turned out to be Horrie Campbell and Bill Longford. Later on, I recruited Cliff Hayward (an ex builder, 33 years old, who turned out to be a top class navigator). Bill Turier then arrived, fresh from swanning around the skies as a trainee fighter pilot, and became our second pilot.

So, this disparate group set about the task of welding themselves together into a smooth operating team, which they did with surprising ease, so much so that by Feb 3 of 1944, we were entrusted with the latest marque of Wellington, equipped with all the up-to-date bits and pieces of radio and radar (top secret) for finding and disposing of U-Boats, and flew off to the Middle East via Rabat Sale' in Morocco. And, that is how we ended up on 458 Squadron; because, on being asked where we were headed for, that is where I said we were supposed to be going. It turned out to be Bone in Algeria, with the runway set out in a swamp. The major operations of 458 were, at this time, mainly convoy escort and submarine hunting, with an occasional air sea rescue search, and John did a great job taking turns on radar and radio, and the lonely vigils in the rear gun turret. Many a time did we owe our safety to John, for his timely warning of night fighter approach and skilful advice for evasive manoeuvres.

We moved up to Alghero, in Sardinia, to give support to the invasion of Southern France, and some time later, when that area was under control, the Squadron was relocated to Foggia Main in Italy. By now, the enemy was running out of submarines, so the emphasis changed to attacks on shipping and harbours. Our activities in this area were hotly contested by the opposition, and due to the diligence and expertise of John, and his fellow crew, we were able to get through our tour of duty relatively unscathed.

We were declared "Operationally Tired" that is "Tour Expired" on 27 January 1945. The Squadron deserted us then, and went off to Gibraltar, and we were left feeling somewhat abandoned, until after some complaining to the powers, we were shipped off to Transit Camp in Cairo. I was later transferred to Training Command at Hadera in Palestine, and, some time later, was delighted to be joined by John and Horrie.

So ended my wartime association with John Dunn, as peace broke out shortly after, but ties established under stress of active service remained strong in the ensuing years, only to be severed by his recent death.

Our condolences go to John's wife Moya, and two daughters.

## FLIGHT REPORTS

### Canada flight by Bryan Quinlan

With most of member's news these days naturally involving health problems, this report will be highlighted by some light humour in Tom Lindsay's article appearing below, harking back to the Squadron's time in Italy in the final year of WWII. First, though, some news of our other members derived from telephone contact. No response from Jack Reynolds, so can only conclude he had nothing to report; and, a brief e-mail from Dick Sladen's daughter Jay indicated nothing to report other than Dick recently celebrating his 93rd birthday. Congrats Dick!

In a telephone call to Tom Rowan he advised that his favourite past-time, curling was just winding-up for this season and that he was looking forward to a summer visit from a friend who, as a pilot with his own plane, used to fly groups to northern Saskatchewan and guide them on a tour of the many lakes in that area. Tom also noted that the provincial government had once had a program to name some of these lakes as memorials to WWII veterans killed in action, and that he had had input into suggesting some of these names. Tom is also compiling his own history and participation in the development of the local community, as he is probably its longest resident.

Now for Tom Lindsay's humorous tale as told in his own words, as follows:

“With the war's end approaching, it was a surprise to most of 458 to learn that we were leaving right away from Foggia to Rosegnano, Italy, about 100 miles north of Rome. My buddy, the late Ernie Ireland suggested that we could easily visit Naples and Rome on the way north. It seemed like a good idea to me, as we thought it should be easy to get a lift because of the large number of trucks heading North right past Rome. That proved to be the case and we had an excellent day in Naples and then continued to head for Rome, again with little difficulty, securing a lift in the back of a truck heading right past Rome. We arrived on the out-skirts of Rome around noon, and enjoyed a great view of the city and then continued to explore the city. Ernie suddenly stopped and asked me “Tom, did you know that this is the dead centre of Rome?” This surprised me, as Ernie had only a short visit to Rome once before, so I asked him how he knew that. Deadpanned Ernie, “Well, look at all these gravestones around here, I would say for sure that this is the *dead centre*, wouldn't you?” As we were passing through a very large cemetery with headstones on both sides of the road, I had to admit he was right! Ernie always had a great sense of humour that I enjoyed and this was not the first time he had fooled me, and it wouldn't be the last.

Another big surprise awaited us upon reaching our destination when most of us were billeted in an empty Italian prison, with three to a cell, sleeping on a concrete floor. So we were “jailed” in Italy, but only for a short time as 458 was transferred to Gibraltar and ended the war there. Some of our members may have shared the same experience”.

As for me, my news includes a 6 month's delay for my first knee replacement op. due to our Provincial government cuts for knee operations. Walking is difficult and painful. Regardless, we will shortly be heading for a week in Palm Springs, S. California with our son and daughter, just like early family holidays, except now they will be looking after us! Also, we are considering down-sizing, and find it to be a very difficult decision. Promising results with the cancer treatments and the interval between treatments has been extended.

I was hoping that your serious problems with floods, fires, etc., were over, but just yesterday I heard that Sydney was experiencing very heavy rains and flooding. What with earthquakes in N.Z and Japan, and your problems, it seems to be never-ending in the Pacific area. We all send our sincere best wishes and a return to even keel with nature and hope that you all came through unscathed.

Bryan also advises that a friend sent him the January 2011 issue of the UK "Flypast" magazine, which contained an article on the **Hendon Wellington restoration** project. The writer of the article was keen to hear from some of the ground crew, who could add to the story.

Bryan has been in touch with the Manager of the Museum and Conservation Centre, Tim Wallis, so if anyone is interested in providing or obtaining further information, please contact Bryan Quinlan on e-mail address [baq24@shaw.ca](mailto:baq24@shaw.ca)

Also, you can get more information at the following web-sites:

[www.aircraftconservation.org](http://www.aircraftconservation.org)

[www.rafmuseum.org](http://www.rafmuseum.org)

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

We had a very nice Christmas lunch at the Kensington Hotel on December 5, 2010, with 15 attending.

We have some disappointing information about the memorials at the Adelaide Airport. Beginning on September 4, 1958, a plaque was installed and a tree planted, in memory of those who served with 458 Squadron. This was at the instigation of our Squadron member, Ron Badger OAM. An area was set aside next to the site of the heritage-listed Vickers-Vimy bi-plane, flown by Ross and Keith Smith (later knighted) from England to Melbourne (19/11/1919 to 25/2/1920).

A RAAF Committee was formed, and, over the years, 36 plaques have been installed and many trees planted, with a memorial service held each year on the Sunday prior to Anzac Day – always well attended.

The years have rolled on, with considerable expansion of the Adelaide Airport, which now requires the plane and memorials to be removed by 2014 to allow for the building of a multi-storey car park. Of course, we are all devastated over this move, but the RAAF Association assures us a satisfactory relocation site will be found.

This year, we will attend the memorial service on Sunday April 17, at 11.00am.

We hope to have about five men marching on Anzac Day. In 2010, our Squadron was obliged to join as a group with other squadrons, which did not go down well. Thankfully, this year, it has been changed back to marching as a unit with our own banner, as all former years. Lunch will follow, as usual, at the Kensington Hotel, Regent Street, Kensington.

Best wishes to all.

### **Queensland Flight      by Carmel Holmes**

Not much news to hand. However, celebrations are taking place for Hettie Murray, who has a new grandson, and for Kath Kelly, who has a new great grandson. Congratulations to all.

**NSW flight by Eric Munkman**

Unfortunately once again my news is not good. Firstly, **John Dunn** passed away last month. John was a member of Bill Kelleher's crew. The Bitmeads attended his funeral. We extend our sympathy to his wife Moya and the family.

Keith Cousins, our Flight Squadron President has had a stay in the North Shore Private Hospital. Keith had an operation on his spine, and the result was quite successful. After leaving hospital, he had rehabilitation time in Lady Davidson but is now home resting.

Wal Archbold's daughter, Anthea, rang to say he was in North Shore, so I gave him a ring. Wal has had a pretty tough time for quite a few years. He is now in Wyong Nursing Home, waiting for a room. Dora will be going in too, but they will have separate rooms.

Good wishes to both Keith and Wal for better health.

Recently heard from Eric Purcill from Orange, who these days does not enjoy the best of health, but is still the same old cheery bloke. He wishes to be remembered to all his mates. All the best "Rinso".

My news is never pleasant these days. Maybe it might be a change if any reader could inform us of general news we might be able to pass onto our squadron members and friends.....let us know.

**The NSW Anzac Day 2011 arrangements for 458 Squadron Association are:**

**Anzac March**

- Meet in Elizabeth Street (just south of King Street) between 10:30 and 11.00am.
- Squadrons will move off at 11:00am, but the same delays as previous can be expected as the RAAF contingent will be held in King and Pitt Streets until all Army units have marched into Martin Place.

(It is expected that the RAAF contingent will commence moving into Martin Place at about 11:30am)

**Reunion Lunch 12:15pm**

- The Castlereagh Boutique Hotel  
(Also known as the NSW Masonic Centre)  
First Floor, 169 Castlereagh Street Sydney  
(just north of the corner of Park and Castlereagh Streets)  
\*\* Please phone or e-mail David Longhurst to confirm attendance  
ph: (02) 9810-4416 mobile: 0415-211743  
e-mail: [davidlonghurst@connexus.net.au](mailto:davidlonghurst@connexus.net.au)

**Wheelchairs on the day**

Anyone requiring a wheelchair should contact Rob Wilkinson on:  
ph: (02) 9888-3625 mobile: 0418-969241  
e-mail: [robwilk@bigpond.net.au](mailto:robwilk@bigpond.net.au)



**West Australia Flight by Ted Jewell**

I read in the “West Australian” paper in February that a **Campbell Stacey** had died, and the death notice indicated he was a 458 Squadron Member. I never knew him, but after speaking to Kingston (Nobby) Nobbs, I learnt he was a fitter in Gibraltar, and came from Waroona in the south-west of W.A.

As usual, I am having a BBQ at my home in Mandurah, on 10 April, for all that can make it down from Perth. I hope the weather will be a little kinder to us, and not like it has been for several months. I can’t remember when we last had a few drops of rain, and we are having a bad time for mosquitos, which attack as soon as you go outside. I have been instructed to have a feed of crabs, for the BBQ. I buy them from the local fisherman, fresh on the day.

I am still feeling fit and look after a fairly large garden – maybe that keeps me going. I will be 90 years in a few months, and have had a lot of trouble with skin cancers over the years, otherwise my health is pretty good.

Jim Palmer is still in Kojonup; Nobby Nobbs still lives in Mandurah. There isn’t a lot of news, because I am so far away. All the best.

**Victoria Flight by Roland Orchard**

**VALE: Ian ALISON** (Beer). With sadness I report the passing of **Ian Alison** on 20/2/2011. He is survived by his wife Valerie, sons Christopher, Jeffrey and daughter Katherine and 6 grandchildren.



**Left:**-Ian, as most would remember him.  
**Right:**-If you look closely you can see Ian at his work station circa 1944/45.



**Harry Ashworth** represented 458 Squadron at the funeral which was held on the 1/3/2011. Jeremy and I also attended, and the Alison family proudly agreed to have the Squadron Banner displayed at the Service. RIP Ian.

**VALE: Mrs. Beryl Giles** (widow of Ian Giles): passed away peacefully on 2/12/2010, 95 years of age. Received a letter from her daughter Susan Ryan (nee Giles).

We have had a reasonably busy start to the year visiting Veterans around Victoria. We spent a fantastic day in Bendigo visiting **Bill and Betty Flentje**, firstly having lunch at the Bendigo Club then having a most hospitable afternoon with Betty putting on a magnificent spread of cakes and coffee at their home. Bill and Betty’s sons Rod and Neil were there and Rod’s son Zac. Others in attendance were, Jane & Eric Foster, Fred Ayres, Peter & Pauline Hedcock, Jeremy and Chris Orchard.



Mr. Bill Flentje

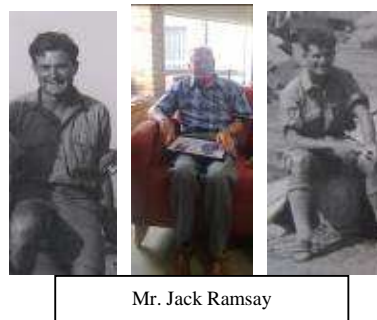
Mr.and Mrs Bill & Betty Flentje.



Jeremy, Chris, Fred, Peter and I visited **Eric Jewell** at his residence in Murrumbeena. I know I speak on behalf of the visiting party, it was an absolute delight to meet you Eric, and to listen to your fascinating stories of past and indeed, present. Eric is 'fighting fit' all things considered and wishes to convey his best wishes to one and all. Thanks for allowing us to have a chat and hopefully we can catch up again soon.



The team also visited **Jack Ramsay** and had an equally enjoyable chat with him. In Jack's own words he stated "I feel very well, thanks, as long as you don't call me 'old horse'!" We all had a laugh over that one. Thanks to you, Jack, for sharing stories and catching up on the 'latest and greatest'. Jack would also like to convey his best wishes to everyone.



A warm Welcome to new member Mr. Colin Henry. He is a neighbour of Mrs. Marj Bilney. Colin is a veteran of RAF 172 Squadron and RAAF 22 Squadron on Malta and has marched alongside Stan Mitchell and other 458ers on Anzac Day in past years.

### ANZAC Day 2011

Melbourne March is forming up at the same time & location as last year. That is, south side of Flinders Street, east of Swanston Street. (Look for the 458 Banner) We are to be formed up by 10.50am and March time is promptly at 11.00am. Victorian RSL has changed the format of the march slightly. All protocols are basically the same but they insist on all descendants to march at the rear of the Group. i.e. Banners and Veterans to march in 'order of march' as set by the RSL and descendants of all Veterans to march as one group bringing up the rear. There-fore 458ers to march at the rear of the parade of banners.

The following is an excerpt from the RSL ANZAC Day Commemoration Council March Protocol which can be found on [www.rslvic.com.au](http://www.rslvic.com.au) web site.

- All marchers should conform to forming up and marching 6 abreast.
- WW2 veterans are encouraged to use transport provided and form up behind their respective division, or equivalent, grouped banners, and remain in the vehicle until the March is completed
- NOK (next of kin) should march as a group behind the veterans and be old enough to march the full distance (1.8km) without assistance.
- NOK representation should be restricted to 1 per veteran.
- Carrying of pictures of relatives is not supported.
- NOK are to wear medals on the right breast (left breast is reserved for the original recipient of the medals).
- Media services have been advised not to conduct interviews "on the move" during the March.
- Veterans are requested not to join or leave the March other than at the Assembly and Dispersal points.

I would like to appeal to our Victorian Veterans to try and make it to the March this year. All of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation members would be proud to look after you for the day and help you in whatever way we can. That would include transport to and from the City and to Melbourne Bowling Club for refreshments after the March, if you wish.

Website project Update:

We received notification from the Victorian Veterans Council that our grant application to fund the project was unsuccessful. The reason given was that there are too many unit histories and not enough funding to do them all. Undeterred, we are submitting another grant application with the Dept. Of Veterans Affairs. The submission is due early May.

Your valuable input is requested for the name of our new website and for nominations of flight website representatives (per the December 2010 newsletter). Please forward all ideas and feedback to the Squadron Council's Newsletter editor, Rob Wilkinson.

On a personal note, my wife Janet and I are venturing overseas this year firstly to Vancouver August 13<sup>th</sup> to August 28<sup>th</sup> and then on to London August 29<sup>th</sup> to September 29<sup>th</sup>. My email address is [rjorch@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rjorch@bigpond.net.au) I would dearly love to meet any members whilst visiting Canada and the UK. Please feel free to email me and we could possibly meet and have a coffee (or beer) some time. (My father Gordon Orchard served with 458 Squadron from May 1943 to July 1944). Kind regards to all.

**UK Flight by Keith Wilkinson**

Our UK vice-president Leon Armstrong is doing fine – after a nasty tumble which landed him in hospital. The former 458 pilot, who is 91, was out buying the Daily Telegraph at his local store, as he does every morning, when he tripped and fell into a display cabinet.

Leon isn't one for making a fuss about such things and takes it all in good heart, as ever. This is how he described things to me: "I am not as robust as I used to be. I had gone through the door of the shop and turned round to help this old gentleman, who was coming in. As I turned back, I tripped on the mat, or the step, and I fell into this showcase containing food.

"An ambulance turned up and I was taken to hospital with the sirens screaming. My life wasn't in danger, but when I got there, they stuck needles in me, shone lights, did x-rays. They told me nothing was broken, but I came out in a big lump, all bruised."

Leon was sent home and told to do some exercises. He says it was a bit painful, but he's become used to that.

He says: "I've had a pain in my back for 40 years, a pain in my knee. Pains all over the bloody place! But, apart from that, I am in good shape!"

As a less-robust bloke in my fifties, I can only guess what it's like for you veterans. I seem to remember a conversation between two 458-ers at a reunion, which went something like: "It's getting dicey for us in our 80's – but not as dicey as when we were 18."

For some, the daily routine is the key to good health. Leon still enjoys his visits to the RAF Club in London, and still enjoys one daily pint "when the sun comes up over the yard arm", sometimes down the Pair Tree. He points out that on the day of his fall, he had not yet had his tipple.

Reg Fletcher, a clerk with 458 Squadron (from Holme to Egypt), was looking forward to his 88th birthday when I last spoke to him – with visits from his five children, seven grandchildren

and four great grandchildren.

Reg is registered blind but likes to walk half a mile into town every day to go shopping. And while out, he pops into the YMCA for a swift one.

He says: "I have a brandy every single day. That's what's keeping me alive!"

May Croft – widow of 458-er Jim Croft – is also partially sighted, but still going strong at 91. For years, she has watched the Red Arrows' flying displays from her front garden in the north of England, as she lives near a former RAF night fighter airfield, which is still used for airforce training.

But she tells me she is worried about the scale of defence cuts being made in Britain, particularly to the RAF, because of the unprecedented financial crisis the country finds itself in.

"I do hope they don't close it down," she says. "I think the defence cuts are terrible. I often think about what Jim did at 18. He joined the RAF. But young men will now think: there's no point joining the RAF, they're closing things down. This might put them off. But I think of Jim when I hear them flying over my home."

Jim died aged 77 nearly 12 years ago, his body still carrying pieces of shrapnel from the war.

The Crofts used to regularly attend UK Flight reunions – and May was one of the happy group who took part in the memorable Sardinia reunion when we toured the airfield at Alghero and went to the place where the squadron camped on the beach.

Many of those reunions have, of course, been at the Falcon Hotel in Stratford upon Avon, Warwickshire, which will always be associated with this squadron. The Falcon have recently written to Jack Christianson asking for feedback, as they are planning to do an article on their website about the many veteran organisations that have used the hotel over the years. Jack is to look after this and has told them that the Stratford venue has proved "extremely popular", particularly because of its handy central location.

For those of you in the UK Flight who would like to pass on any comments to the hotel, please let me know and I will contact Jack, and he will update his report. But I think the fact that we have used it so often speaks for itself.

If we use the Falcon again, however, it's likely to be a very small group. The UK membership is greatly in decline, which is sad, but inevitable, unless surviving relatives play a more prominent future role, as they appear to do Down Under.

Bryan Quinlan – who also describes his Canadian Flight as "now very small" – has been in touch with me about the RAF Hendon-based Wellington, which is currently undergoing complete restoration at the RAF Museum, Cosford. I mentioned this in a recent newsletter article.

He has asked me to spread the word in the UK that the museum encourages visits from ex-Wimpy aircrew people. They have assigned Nathan Pugh there to compile a record of those who visit or express an interest in the aircraft project.