



## JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

Year 64 No 247 July 2013

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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 Roland Orchard 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.*

**ANYTHING THAT YOU WISH TO APPEAR IN THIS JOURNAL MUST BE  
MAILED OR EMAILED TO ROLAND ORCHARD (address above)**

***Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to the Editor Roland Orchard by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Please feel free to mail or email in your stories,  
articles or enquires to Roland. All are welcome.***

### **VALE:-**

**Jason “Junior” Hawke**..... Condolences to the Hawke family.  
**Royden Rabone**..... See Vic. Flight Report.  
**John Robert (Jack) Ramsay**....See Vic. Flight Report.  
**Christine Smith (widow of Bert Smith)**..See Vic. Flight Report  
**Nancy Filley (UK)**.....Condolences to Alan and the Filley family  
**Laurie Crowley**.....See NSW Flight Report.  
**Dorothy Pollock (widow of Bob Pollock)**. See Vic. Flight Report  
**Eric “Rinso” Purcill**..... See NSW Flight Report.

### **FLIGHT REPORTS:**

#### **New South Wales Flight report by David Longhurst.**

Unfortunately I have the sad honour of reporting the passing of a couple of 458's many colourful characters, Eric “Rinso” Purcill and Laurie Crowley.

Let me firstly draw your attention to a ‘typo’ in We Find & Destroy where, despite being listed in the Nominal Roll of 458 Squadron as Purcill E. in the chapter Tall Tales and True, of his decision to stick with Ground Crew refers to him as ‘Rinso’ Persil, the irony being that this spelling of his surname is in fact why he became known as “Rinso”. For our overseas and younger readers from at least 1930 until probably around the 1960's there was a washing powder produced under the brand name of Rinso with the alternate product being Persil, so in typical Australian fashion, just as redheaded men are often nicknamed “Bluey” Eric Purcill became “Rinso”, a name that stuck with him throughout his life and one which he obviously liked, as a phone call from him was always initiated with “It’s Rinso here”. Eric, as related in WF&D, at one stage applied for remuster to aircrew. However, after a Wellington with serious engine trouble crash landed with the death of both pilots, when advised by AVM Wrigley that his application was being processed, Rinso said, “Ah, well I’m not so sure about that now, sir, we had a couple of blokes fried here the other night!”

A unique nickname and a unique character.

I wrote a brief account of Laurie Crowley’s creation of Megapode Airways in the last newsletter, but there were many other chapters to his life, in fact at his funeral it was referred to as Laurie Crowley’s Incredible Life and there is no doubt about that! After his discharge from 458 Squadron at the end of WW11, Laurie became a pilot despite the fact that there were many already qualified pilots now looking for a job. His subsequent contribution to aviation in both New Guinea and the Solomon Islands is well known but there were many other chapters to his life. During his time in the Solomon Islands he bought the yacht Sirius from Lever Solomons which they had been using for a number of purposes including carrying copra. Its time in Laurie’s care was similarly diverse, including carrying pipe and as a landing base for one of his helicopters which lifted the pipes up to oil exploration sites in New Guinea and many other interesting adventures. Sirius (now registered as Sirius 35), despite a number sinkings and being dumped on a beach by a tsunami, is afloat and in excellent condition today. In fact Sirius was the first yacht to be sailed around the world by an Australian, Harold Nossiter and his two eldest sons, departing Sydney on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1935 and returning on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1937. If you would like to learn more about Sirius and its time in Laurie’s hands go to:

<http://sirius1935.wix.com/sirius1935#!full-history/cs95>

Of course there were many other chapters in Laurie’s life including his exploits in the 1954 Redex Around Australia Trial, where Laurie performed in depth surgery on the Gypsy Major power plant, using a hammer, chisel and shifting spanner and it was reported that a replacement cylinder and con-rod was air dropped from a passing air liner (?). The drop included two bottles of beer....one of which broke. It is understood that Percival Gull VH-UTP is still going strong! The last chapter in Laurie’s life was his farming days in Junee where he “retired” to grow wheat and wool with his sons.

I noted on a visit to the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester a couple of years ago that 458 Squadron was regularly commended for having the highest percentage of aircraft operational at any point in time, so it doesn’t seem too remarkable that at least a few of the machines these mighty ground crew cared for during their lives are still operating.

## West Australia Flight report by Ted Jewell & Nick Bertram.

**Ted Jewell 14/06/2013**



On reading my air force records I was surprised that I had so many postings and attachments. I joined the air force on 24-09-1940 and was discharged on 05-10-1945 after 5 years' service. These are my postings as are on my records - 4.S.T.T Adelaide 1940, I.E.S Ascot Vale, Melbourne 1940, 4.S.P.T.S Geraldton WA 1941 2.E.D Perth 1941, Posted to 458 Squadron R.A.A.F 25-08-1941, Bradfield Park, Sydney 1941 Embarked for England 1941, On Athlone Castle – Via New Zealand & Panama Canal 1941 Volunteered to be infiltrated into R.A.F Units under the infiltration scheme, Arrived in Scotland on 25-10-1941, Posted to 3.P.R.C Bournemouth, UK 1941 Posted to 107 Squadron R.A.F 1941 Norfolk, Posted to 57 Squadron R.A.F 1941 Cambridge Posted to 458 Squadron R.A.A.F 1942,

Embarked from England on the Mataroa Ship for M.E Via Freetown-Durban-Mombasa-Aden 1942 Arrived M.E Egypt – Port Tewfic 26-05-1941, Posted to Kilo26 R.A.F 1942, Posted to Fayid, Egypt 1942, Attached to R.A.F Unit 1942, Joined 458 Squadron at Amiriya R.A.A.F, Moved to Protville, Tunisia 1943 R.A.A.F, Bone Algiers, 458 Squadron 1943 R.A.A.F, Corsica 458 Squadron Attachment 1943, Blida 458 Squadron Attachment 1943, M.E Command Unit Postings, Sardinia, Alghero 458 Squadron R.A.A.F, Italy, Foggia – 458 Squadron 1944 R.A.A.F, Moved to Egypt 1944, Left Egypt for Australia Via India 1944, Arrived in Melbourne 1945, Posted 1.P.D Ranford Melbourne 1945, Posted 2.P.D Perth, Posted to 7 COM Air Transport Unit Guildford WA, 5.P.D Perth Discharged 05-10-1945.

Plus many, many more places in between.... **Ted Jewell**

Nick, Ted & Howard

We had a Casserole Day at Dot & Bob Bresland's place in City Beach on Sunday the 7th of July. Smaller numbers this time, in attendance was Bob & Bill Kelleher, Shirley, Dot & Bob Bresland, Joan Clues, Jess & I. The next WA Luncheon is scheduled in early December. When my mum and dad (Sally & Howard) were in Perth in June we took a drive down to Mandurah and took Ted out for lunch. We had a photo taken in front of Ted's Holden Statesmen with numberplates "TED 458" Cheers **Nick Bertram**



## Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard

**Vale John (Jack) Robert Ramsay (Tiche)** Sympathies to Jack's family. A favourite story Jack told me (Roland Orchard) was the time my Dad (Gordon) took one of his officers insignia from his shoulder epaulets and gave Jack an instant promotion to Pilot Officer so Jack could gain entry to an Officer's Club.

**Vale Royden (Roy) Rabone.** Condolences to the Rabone family.

**Vale Christine Smith** widow of 458 Veteran Bert Smith. Christine served with the WAAF and was married in 1942; While Bert served overseas, Christine enlisted on the 7/08/1941 with the WAAF. Her service number was 2084792. She was discharged on 15/01/1944 where she continued nursing until joining Bert in Australia in 1946. They were together for 49 years until Bert passed away. Christine passed away peacefully on May 13. Christine's son Rod Glen-Smith emailed to inform us of her passing. Condolences to the Smith family.

**Vale Dorothy Pollock** widow of 458 Veteran Bob Pollock. Dorothy passed away peacefully on 4/9/2012 at the age of 94. Dorothy's son Bill emailed with the sad news and made mention that she had enjoyed the link with 458 Squadron over the years but finally passed due to a motor neuron condition. Bill said, "So as is the case with all these debilitating conditions, it was good to see mum finally 'at peace'!" Thanks for emailing Bill and sympathies to you and your family.



**ANZAC DAY 2013** – Terrific turn out once again at the Melbourne March. Those who marched were: Howard & Sally Bertram, Jane & Eric Foster, Christopher Orchard and daughter Jessica and son Jonathan, Roland Orchard and daughter Emily, Jeremy Orchard, Neil Flentje, Stephen & Anne Prideaux, Brian Paroissien & Ana Cozmescu, Nigel Paroissien and daughter Elise, Karen Ganley, Helen Cartledge, Sue & Peter Jackson.

Thanks also to the 6 Cadets (408 and 414 squadrons) who carried the picture of the Wellington and the Banner: Alison Hardie, Madelene Blaikie, Cal Rowley, Skye MacDade, Sarah Driscoll, Stella Davies. After the March the following attended our Victoria Flight



AGM and refreshments:- Howard & Sally Bertram, Jane & Eric Foster, Christopher Orchard and daughter Jessica and son Jonathan, Roland Orchard and daughter Emily, Jeremy Orchard, Neil Flentje, Stephen and Anne Prideaux and special thanks to Roy Pearce. Our thoughts go to Barbara who wasn't feeling the best on the day so stayed home.



Eric Jewell & Jeremy Orchard

**Eric Jewell visit. Friday 26<sup>th</sup> April.** Jeremy and I visited Eric Jewell and had a great chat for an hour or so, also meeting Eric's God son Peter Gray. Peter you do a great job in supporting Eric. Eric is a joy to talk to and has many memories of his life with 458. Cheers to you Eric and keep on keeping on as they say in the classics.



**Thank you to Vera Etherton** who wrote me a lovely letter which included a couple of photos. One of the 4' wingspan model of the Wellington her late husband Henry made and the second photo of a painting or sketch entitled 'November 1941. A 458 (RAAF) Squadron Wellington Taking off from Holme -On-Spalding-Moor (England) to Bomb Germany' Vera did not know the



origins of the Sketch. I wonder if anyone could enlighten us. Another most interesting letter I received was from Mrs Ann Chatburn, daughter of 458 Veteran Donald Stocks, both from Cumbria, UK. Don's story "How I got to 458 Squadron" is included as one of the feature stories in this edition. Thanks Don and Mrs Chatburn. I will reply in due course.

**See last page for expression of interest for a 'Day at the Shrine of Remembrance' Melbourne, Victoria. All are welcome.**

### **Queensland Flight Report:**

Still no one from QLD Flight?? I'm like a dog at a bone on this one. ☺ There has to be someone in QLD willing to put together a report?? Please contact Roland Orchard. [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) I have had news from Mike Netherway who has recently had a hip replacement. We wish him all the best for a speedy recovery. I've also had some terrific back and forth emails with Christine Thomson, daughter in law of John 'Jock' Thomson, one of Leon Armstrong's 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilots. The son of Leon's Navigator Ken Russell, John Russell has come into the mix as well. John's email featured in the #246 edition of the Newsletter.

### **South Australia Flight report by Rick Michell**

No report this month.

### **New Zealand Flight report by Kevin George**

No report from New Zealand received. Hope all is well with Kevin. All the best & Cheers mate.

### **Canada Flight report by Bryan Quinlan**

I RECEIVED A WELCOME AND UPBEAT CALL FROM TOM ROWAN ADVISING THAT HE IS ONCE MORE ACTIVE IN HIS CARD-PLAYING GROUP AND KEEPING UP WITH THE GARDEN WORK. EARLIER THIS SUMMER HE DID SOME TRAVELLING IN BC VISITING FAMILY MEMBERS BUT WAS NOT ABLE TO INCLUDE HIS HOPED FOR TRIP TO VANCOUVER. A CALL TO GLADYS MARKLAND REVEALED THE NEWS OF HER UPCOMING 90<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY ON 26 JULY AND PLANS FOR A BIG BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS ON THE BIG DAY. BERT WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO ATTEND DESPITE HIS POOR HEALTH PROBLEMS. CONGRATS TO GLADYS! TOM LINDSAY INDICATED THAT HE HAD NOTHING SPECIAL TO REPORT BUT IS NO DOUBT PLEASED THAT SOME MAJOR INTERIOR RENOVATIONS ARE COMPLETE AND PEACE AND QUIET RESTORED ONCE AGAIN. TOM CONTINUES WITH HIS WHEELED WALKER-AIDED WALKS AT THE MAJOR SHOPPING CENTRE IN WEST VANCOUVER. JACK REYNOLDS PREFERRED NOT TO INCLUDE A "HEALTH REPORT" BUT INDICATED THAT HE CONTINUES TO CARRY-ON HIS VOLUNTEER WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BC, OCCASIONALLY MAKING THE TRIP VIA HIS MOTORIZED WHEELCHAIR OR DRIVING HIS CAR. AS I HAVE NOT HEARD FROM SANDY MCGAW'S DAUGHTER TODATE I AM UNABLE TO PROVIDE ANY UPDATE ON OUR NEWEST FLIGHT MEMBER AND CAN ONLY HOPE THAT EVERYTHING IS GOING WELL FOR HIM. IF I DO RECEIVE NEWS I WILL FORWARD SAME HOPEFULLY BEFORE THE DEADLINE. OUR GRANDSON'S WEDDING WAS A GREAT SUCCESS IN EVERY RESPECT, EVEN THE SUN CAME OUT JUST BEFORE THE START AFTER A CLOUDY SHOWERY DAY. I WAS ASKED TO SAY GRACE AND GIVE THE BLESSING, A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR ME. JOAN'S FIRST CATARACT SURGERY WENT WELL, WITH THE SECOND ONE SCHEDULED IN SEPT. AFTER A WETTER SPRING THAN USUAL JULY BROUGHT AUSSIE TYPE HOT WEATHER WHICH HAS CONTINUED THROUGHOUT AUGUST WITHOUT A SPOT OF RAIN, SO NOW WE ARE COMPLAINING ABOUT OUR HEATWAVE! SO FAR I HAVE MANAGED TWO TRIPS TO THE DRIVING RANGE BUT, UNFORTUNATELY, CANNOT REPORT ANY IMPROVEMENT TO MY BALL STRIKING. VERY BEST WISHES TO YOU ALL.

### **United Kingdom Flight report by Keith Wilkinson**

It was a pleasant surprise to hear about a 458 squadron member who, as they say, disappeared from our radar for a while. So, it's a hearty "welcome back!" to Robert George Springall, also known as "Bob" or "Roy" Springall. Mr Springall is now aged 91 and lives in Berkshire, England.

He used to attend squadron reunions after the war, but in more recent years lost touch. That was until his son, Tony, contacted us after seeing details on the internet – and now he's back on our newsletter mailing list. Mr Springall has many fond memories of his time with 458 and counts himself lucky that he served with the squadron. As an 18-year-old in 1940, he joined up, wanting to do his bit for the country. But he was turned down by the Army – according to his son, on the grounds of being "too thin". Instead he joined the RAF. A number of men he worked with did get accepted by the Army's Royal Artillery. They ended up being captured by the Japanese during the disastrous fall of Singapore in 1942 and had to endure appalling conditions among tens of thousands of prisoners of war, many of whom did not survive the ordeal. Mr Springall was a Leading Aircraftsman (LAC) with 458, specialising in the maintenance of Wellington aircraft instruments. It was an appropriate role for him as in Civvy Street he'd served as an apprentice in a reserved occupation in South East London with the scientific instrument makers, Elliott Brothers. He served in North Africa, Foggia and Gibraltar and was demobbed in 1946. Son Tony says his father has some amusing stories – one of which came to mind when they were visiting the Goodwood Festival of Speed and saw a Mustang aircraft on display with drop tanks. "The guys from 458 used to convert those tanks into canoes!" he recalled. He also remembered being in Foggia, Italy, which can have some very bitter winters. Many of the Aussies from 458, used to a hot climate, had never seen snow in their lives and were jumping up and down in it in total wonderment. Mr Springall was born in Deptford in London. His father ran a grocer's shop called The Maypole Dairy. The family escaped the worst of the Blitz, but a landmine fell close to their house and blew off part of the roof. After the war, he gained an interest in printing as a hobby, and has a printing block of the 458 squadron crest with its distinctive torpedo. A widower, he has two children, two grandchildren and four great grandchildren. I am planning to have a chat with Mr Springall soon to hear a few more of his fascinating memories. If you knew him in the squadron and would like to get in touch, you can reach him through his son via email on:

[anthony.springall@ntlworld.com](mailto:anthony.springall@ntlworld.com)

Meanwhile, thoughts are again turning to the possibilities of a 458 UK flight reunion. Last year, only five of us could make it (including two former Wellington pilots, Leon Armstrong and Jack Christianson). Inevitably, the numbers in the UK flight are falling and, for those who are left, mostly in their 90s, transport is often a difficulty, as people are spread around the country. The 2012 reunion was in London at the RAF Club – a fitting venue, as the 458 crest had just been hung on the wall there after much campaigning by Leon, a long term member of the prestigious club. It would be great to meet there again, but that's still to be decided, and if anyone has any thoughts about venues, pleased do drop us a line.

## **ARTICLES OF INTEREST.**

### **THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS to 458 Squadron Association .**

**John Lawson from Coffs Harbour, NSW.**

**Julie Celli from Paradise Point, QLD.**

**Fred Kleckham from Beachmere, QLD.**

**Neil Flentje from Bendigo, Vic. (2<sup>nd</sup> Donation)**

**Peggy Hull from Port Melbourne, Vic. (2<sup>nd</sup> Donation)**

**Howard & Sally Bertram from Horsham, Vic. (2<sup>nd</sup> Donation)**

**Charles Baker from Kings Langley, NSW.**

**Grace Baker from Galston, NSW**

**Ashley Carr from Melbourne, Vic.**

**Cecilia Temple, Stratford, Vic.**

**Coldstream Primary School, Vic. (Principal Peter Donaldson)**

These donations help with the ongoing 458 Website hosting & project and 458 Newsletter printing & postage costs.



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### EMAILS via <http://458raafsquadron.org/home.html> WEBSITE

Anyone wishing to contact the sender of these emails or have answers to questions posed, please don't hesitate to contact the Editor [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) or write to Roland Orchard 78 Edward Rd, Chirnside Park, Victoria. 3116. Australia. Apologies for not being able to print all of the emails we receive. Printing and postal costs are getting extremely prohibitive.



**From: Gillian & Roslyn** To: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) Sent: Sunday, April 07, 2013

**Subject: W/O J S Hawke** . Good Afternoon, I know this news is coming to you very late, our father Jason "Junior" Hawke passed away on August 9, 2012, Dad was 88 years old when he passed away a couple of months before his 89th birthday. Dad was born & bred in Orange, when he retired in 1982, he and Mum moved to the Gold Coast and became "Queenslanders" in 2004 they moved down to Erina into a retirement village to be closer to the family. He joined the RAAF in 1942 and after training joined up with the 458 squadron until the war ended. Our Dad regularly read the Squadron newsletter and enjoyed reading it. **Gillian Hawke, Marilyn Evans, Stephen Hawke**

*ed. Condolences to the family from all at 458 Squadron Association.*



**From: Ian Clark** To: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) Sent: Wednesday, April 24, 2013

**Subject: WEBSITE FORM: Online Enquiry** Name Ian Clark Email [kielark@acr.net.au](mailto:kielark@acr.net.au)



Enquiry My Father-in-Law David Drennan was a merchant seaman in WW2- he was a ships engineer. His ship later landed tanks and vehicles for the invasion of Southern France. He recalls being hospitalized in Bone, Algeria, possibly 1943, or 1944. After his discharge he was taken under the wing of personnel from a RAAF squadron based in Bone. He went on a mission in one of the Squadron's Wellingtons. He recalls they were engaged in anti-submarine work and he did a patrol with them over the Mediterranean. He held the controls and they demonstrated an attack for him, he remembers a Leigh light being part of the equipment. He cannot remember names of the crew he stayed with or flew with. I'm assuming 458 SQN RAAF are the unit he met up with. Is there any memory of a sailor/civvie/Aussie going on a jolly or staying with squadron members in Bone at that time? He is 94 and staying with us in Cooma NSW. By the way, Trumpeter make a 1/72 scale model kit of a Vickers Wellington XIV allocated to 458 SQN RAAF, I have just bought one. Was this mark operated out of Bone, and what were the squadron codes at the time? I would like to receive your newsletter, Wellingtons are one of my sentimental favourites out of the war. David still has his service log books, so I will be able to get hold of a definite date range for his time in Bone perhaps when we go up to Sydney next weekend. If it helps trigger memories, David was an engineer and fascinated by the improvised devices his hosts had made and being a sticky beak would have asked a lot of questions and fiddled with them. He recalls staying in a tent (I think). He also has a prominent birthmark on the right side of his face covering from eye to mouth- it's a bit of a shock when you meet him for the first time. He also recalled being hidden from the SQN bosses, so his non-mention in mission logs is understandable. **Ian Clark**



**From: Bryan Quinlan** To: "458 RAAF Squadron" Sent: Wednesday, April 10, 2013 Subject: Re: 458

Squadron March 2013 Newsletter. Hi Roland, A couple of comments on the recent Newsletters - you are doing a fabulous job. I will call attention to our very few members of the need for operating funds and hope there is a worthwhile response. Re the Beaufighters in the Med, 458 worked closely with the Beaus at Protville, Tunisia, we did the night ops and they did the same job in daylight. When Mickey Reid and I were tour-ex and instructing at No.5 ME TS (Torp-dropping School), Shallufa, Egypt, there were Beaus stationed there and we both had flights in the Beaus and Mickey even soloed in one. S/L Muller-Rowland DFC & Bar (I believe), a very dedicated RAF type, brother of Stuart M-R (a twin I think) also much decorated and eventually killed in the UK, gave us instructions. Might be some interesting info' on the M-Rs on the internet. Re the entry in the latest issue giving me credit for the website in my reply to that e-mail I made it clear that all the credit belonged to you Aussie members and supporters with no assistance from myself or the Canadian Flight. I believe I sent you a copy of my answer. **Very best wishes to all, Bryan**



**WEBSITE FORM: Online Enquiry** My father William Carr was a 458 crew member during ww2, I have maybe 100 photos and I work with some of the world's best scanning and printing equipment. **Ashley Carr**

*ed-Thanks Ashley. The photos would be great to archive on our 458 Squadron website. All offers gratefully accepted.*



**From: K & P Manton** To: editor@458raafsquadron.org Sent: Monday, January 07, 2013

**Subject: 458 Squadron News. Hi to all at 458.** I am a son of W/O Harold Manton, known at the time as "farmer" ( now deceased) Our family appreciate reading the NEWS. I am curious about

two stories my Dad briefly mentioned to me years ago and wonder if any members can add to the tales. One was about a time he and a crew were sent out into the desert to dismantle an airframe only to find the enemy were very close by. They were oblivious to this until a New Zealand contingent went rushing past asking what the hell these Aussies were hanging about for in the face of capture. The second was on Malta when an enemy pilot landed in the mayhem, threw back the canopy of his fighter and appealed "No shoot- I surrender" I would be very interested if anyone can add to this. Thank you and well done with the website. **Ken Manton, Busselton, WA.**

*Any memories? Write to the Editor – Roland Orchard 78 Edward Rd. Chirnside Park. Vic. 3116 or email [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)*



**From: Andy Medland** Sent: Tuesday, April 09 **Subject: 458 Squadron Malta 27-28th April 1943.** Dear Roland I am writing to see whether your 458 Squadron newsletter can assist me in my ongoing quest for information surrounding my late Uncle 1316142 Sgt (2nd Pilot) Thomas Eric MUSTO RAFVR time

on operational duties in Malta with 458 Squadron during April 1943. As you can see from the attached I have previously communicated with the late Norman DUKE, Pete Pettit and Keith Cousins. Unfortunately nothing further was gleaned during the intervening years, however I recently discovered the below link which raised fresh hopes that there may be other interested parties who could assist me in my quest. I have included my entry below the link. I have yet to discover why this link was created in 2010 focusing on my uncles last flight. If you are able to help it would be appreciated.

<http://www.rafcommands.com/forum/showthread.php?8248-458-Squadron-27-28-4-1943>

"I have just discovered this old thread which covers the death of my Uncle 1316142 Sgt (2nd Pilot) Thomas Eric MUSTO RAFVR. Regrettably he was killed before either of his nephews or niece were born, my mother, his sister, unfortunately has passed but his other sister my Aunt Betty is still with us. His tragic loss was never discussed at length as it was very much an open wound which had not healed with the passage of time. After the death of my mother, and with the consent of my Aunt, i took it upon myself to research his service record and discovered that his campaign medals remained unclaimed, they have now been obtained and given to her and in turn she has entrusted them to my son for future generations to nurture. During my research i visited the National Archives and copied all that i could discover from the 458 Squadron Records covering this period and can see some of the entries included in this thread. I also spoke and corresponded with the late Norman Duke of 458 in an effort to learn what i could of my Uncle Tom, coincidentally Norman Duke arrived in Malta the day he was killed and unfortunately had no personal knowledge of him. Uncle Tom had been operational for only two weeks prior to his death having just completed his training in Africa. My efforts thus far have not born fruit and i think at this late hour it is highly unlikely to produce an individual with any personal knowledge of him or his time in the RAF. Uncle Tom was a very good letter writer and has chronicled his time from volunteering, initial training, Bulawayo and North Africa and these letters have been preserved by my aunt and given to me and are presently being transcribed by wife.

The purpose of my post is to try and establish what other records i could research to build on the picture i already have of his last weeks in Malta and his last mission in particular. They were flying a lightly armoured "Special Wellington" on this last mission, what is it and what was there role, why did it take so long to scramble a response to their sighting and would they have kept a visual on this target to await its arrival an almost suicidal act? " Thank you in anticipation **Andy Medland**



Hi There, I found you on the 458 Squadron website and hoping you can help us out. We weren't sure where to start looking but I googled and there you were.

We have just made some lovely copies of an old photo album that my husband was given which belonged to his father, John (Jock) Wallace Thomson to give to family members as a keepsake. Jock served in the RAAF during WWII with the 458 Torpedo Bomber Squadron. I have attached a few photos of the album to show you. Its quite good and lots of candid shots of the boys in England, Scotland, Giza, Gibraltar, Cairo, Jerusalem, Jericho, Sardinia, Rome and other places in Europe during service years. Really worth preserving. Is it possible to source some kind of service record and tour of duty details for Jock that we can put together for the family also. Do you have any archives where we could find these details? I had a quick look on the war memorial website but to no avail. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated. We are also wondering what Jock's awards were for. I have attached a photo of his medals for your perusal. 2 are replicas and 3 originals (he had never claimed these) but luckily they were given to us when we requested a replacement for the other 2 that were stolen years ago. We had them mounted professionally and Adam (my husband) and Jocks grandsons have worn them with pride as they have taken turns to march on Anzac Days each year. We obviously don't want this priceless history lost because we don't have the information at hand so could you please do your best to assist us further. I look forward to hearing from you soon. Warm regards. **Christine Thomson.**

*ed. 1<sup>st</sup> of many emails. Welcome aboard Christine.*



**From: George Dunmore** Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2013 10:47 PM

**Subject:** Hello Roland. Let me start with an apology for the delay in answering your last Email. It does seem that the less time that I have left the more of a procrastinator I become. Thank you for the inclusion of the "altimeter" incident in the last News Letter - it was great.

I am afraid that most of what happened in those far off years is a blur. Even reading through my log books doesn't help a great deal. However occasionally something surfaces. One such incident which came to mind occurred in February 1943. I was flying as Bruce McKenzie's second pilot and Peter Eastcott was our navigator. I don't know whether this is of any use to you but here goes.

"I had arrived at Shallufa in December 1942. Bruce McKenzie was then A Flight Commander with 38 Squadron - he was a Captain at that time. (He was promoted to Major in March 1943 when 38 Squadron was with 458.) A high level operation was scheduled to mine the port of Candia

in Crete--parachute mines were to be used. It was a night operation. We took off, climbed to 500ft. and leveled out. B.M. was more comfortable below 500 ft. than above it. A course was set for Crete and I was handed the controls. When we sighted Crete, still at 500 ft. Captain McKenzie had one of his flashes of impetuosity. He decided on a low-level attack. Bruce took over the flying and we descended to a height of 100 ft. From the heavy flak ahead aimed at high flying aircraft Candia we were able to locate our target. We skirted the coast until we reached Candia then Capt. M dropped to 50 ft. flew into the harbour and deposited his two mines. a quick turn and we were headed back out to sea. It was not until we were well on our exit route that the A.A realised there had been a low-level intruder and opened with gusto. However the gunfire was exploding at 4 - 500 ft. well above our heads. I think we were in more danger from the mines being dropped from above than the ack-ack. When we were well out in open sea, we climbed to 1000ft. and set course for home. Once again I was handed the stick. The trip took just over 4 hours and I don't think that at any time did we fly much above 1000 ft. I would love to have heard the report that was given to the Debriefing Officer."

This was one episode in the "flying with McKenzie" saga. Perhaps "the crazy Captain" was a precursor to "the mad major".



**From: David Colman** To: CA@458raafsquadron.org Cc: secretary@458raafsquadron.org  
UK@458raafsquadron.org **Subject: 458 Squadron Roll of Honour**

Dear Mr. Quinlan, Please find attached a word document detailing the deaths of the crew for Wellington LB 195. Unfortunately, RCAF R102787 Sgt T F Scandiffio, (Navigator) has been omitted from the squadron's Roll of Honour despite the remainder of the crew being honoured.

You will note that his middle initial should be P for Peter despite the incorrect entry in the Op Rec Form 540. The "P" has been confused for an "F" I am sure that this is an unfortunate oversight and will be rectified. You may find the attached pictures of "Tom" interesting along with this web link:

<http://www.canadianletters.ca/collectionsSoldier.php?collectionid=279&warid=4>

Many Thanks for your consideration. Kind Regards, **Dave Colman.**

**From: 458 RAAF Squadron** To: David Colman Sent: Tuesday, June 04, 2013 8:31 AM

**Subject:** Re: 458 Squadron Roll of Honour Hi Dave My name is Roland Orchard. My father served with 458 Squadron. I will action your request and have his name placed on the Honour Roll on the website. I have forwarded your email to Bryan Quinlan (President Canada Flight) As a matter of interest are you related to Sgt Scandiffio? You have some great pics and info about him. Cheers. Kind Regards **Roland**

**From: David Colman** To: 458 RAAF Squadron **Subject:** Re: 458 Squadron Roll of Honour Hi Roland, Thank you for your prompt response. I initially started to research his brother, Francis. This came about as I obtained his original Irvin jacket from a lady who was clearing out her father's attic after he sadly passed away. Her father served in the RAF in WW2, trained in Canada. How he obtained Franks (Francis) jacket is still a mystery, but I have narrowed it down, with two possibilities that I would like to believe. If you visit

<http://www.canadianletters.ca/collectionsSoldier.php?collectionid=279&warid=4>

and read their letters you will understand their parents and families tragedy of these brothers.

The places in England that they talk of are also very local to me making it even more personal.

What makes this even worse is that sacrifice of Tom and Frank has been poorly recorded hence I am trying to rectify. I believe that I have discovered Franks P47 (HD 163) wreck in India and I am trying to set up an expedition to record the findings, but I have had thoughts that, for me, Libya is en route to India! (Wellington LB 195). I am also trying to contact the family with regards to my findings and intentions. I believe that it was Frank and Toms nephew that posted the letters on the Canadian Letters website and I notice that in your newsletter

[http://458raafsquadron.org/fileadmin/filemount/newsletters/2001\\_208\\_november.pdf](http://458raafsquadron.org/fileadmin/filemount/newsletters/2001_208_november.pdf)

attempts have been made to research Toms service (by family?) but not so thoroughly as to notice the mistakes made on his name!!! These two men are obviously still proudly treasured, loved and remembered by them. I have completed lots of research on these men and could tell/show you so much more but I am not a typist, I survive by "pecking" at the keyboard. If you have any service information related to Tom I would be grateful if you could share it with me. Attached is photo of Toms brother, Frank. Thanks for your time and effort. I think I will go now and "pull a few scabs off some tinnies" - Cheers Fella!!! **Kind Regards - Dave.**





From: **Alan Filley** To: [UK@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:UK@458raafsquadron.org) Sent: Friday, April 26, 2013 4:38 AM

Subject: Mrs. N Filley, newsletter. Keith, I've noticed that you send a 458 Squadron newsletter to my mother Mrs. Nancy Filley. I'm writing to inform you that my mother passed away on the 20th of April, so perhaps you could cancel her newsletter. However I would like to sign up for a newsletter if that is possible. My dad had a wealth of stories from his time with the squadron, so I would like to keep in touch with you. I remember that when I bought a book on the Wellington, he looked through it of course, and was convinced that he was in one of the pictures. He is pictured standing on the fuselage near the tail plane of a Wimpy that had overshot the runway in, I think Benghazi. Last night I spent an hour or so reading his pilot's log, and although it does not convey the actual horror of it all, it made fascinating reading. Kind Regards **Alan Filley**

***Note from Editor** – If I didn't publish your email or in fact reply to any emails, please bear with me. There are many to read, sift through, edit and try and publish. Again, the printing and postal costs restrict us to a certain number of pages. Please don't hesitate to contact me for any reason what so ever be it positive or not so positive. [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)*

**The following reminds us of the grim reality our 458 Veterans had to face on daily operations with the Squadron. This letter only came to light a couple of years ago and kindly sent by Cecilia Temple, Cec Percy's daughter.**

**"The flight." By Flt Sgt Cecil Francis Arty Percy**



Friday 13th 1943 @1300 hrs. Take off from Bone to do a sweep of "Med" looking for subs, (Full load of DCs). After 5hrs search, no result-climb from 50ft to 3500ft and headed for Corsica. I was in the astro dome, searching for sub, noticed ice forming on wings, notified pilot, plane put in steep dive- 300mph anticipating ice breaking off wings with vibration on pull out, plane partially pulled up-too late. I was determined to stay conscious, lay back on floor and anchored. Pressure of water on crash shot pilot up through top escape hatch. Uninjured, I don't know how I escaped, emergency dinghy was out, the pilot pulled me in, 2 hrs. later a seaplane landed alongside. 3 attempts to take off in rough seas, 4th time rose to approx. 500ft, stalled and dived into sea, what happened then I do not know? Became conscious in Jeep, ploughing through deep snow on way to hospital in Corsica. A total of 14 men in both planes- 2 lived. **Cec Percy.**

**The Squadron Operational Records reveal this incident on page 387. The following is the link to these Records at the Australian National Archive on the 458 Squadron Website. <http://458raafsquadron.org/about-us/wwii-mission.html> Click on the link at the bottom of the 458 website page.**

Although difficult to read due to the ravages of time, you soon get the gist of this tragic event.

Thanks to Jeffery Ayres for the following photos after a thoroughly enjoyable visit to Wings Over Illawarra Airshow, NSW, with his Mum Glenda.



The highlight for Jeffery and Glenda was the Lockheed Hudson bomber.

## FEATURE STORIES



Ron Kirk Protville 1943

### THE LAGOS SAGA BY RON KIRK

THIS IS WHAT REALLY HAPPENED. 458 SQUADRON WAS AT HOLME ON SPALDING MOOR IN BOMBER COMMAND, IN FEBRUARY 1942 THE SQUADRON WAS POSRED TO EGYPT AND WE WERE TO MAKE 2 JOURNEYS TO FLY THE WELLINGTONS TO OUR NEW BASE. ON FEBRUARY 2<sup>nd</sup> 3 OF US TOOK OFF FROM HOLME ON

SPALDING MOOR TO STANTON HARCOURT. THE PILOT OF ONE

WAS THE COMMANDING OFFICER WCMDR MULHOLLAND, THE OTHER ONE MY

FRIEND LEN THICK WAS THE W.O.P. THEN OUR PILOT P.O MACKELLAR. ON THE 15<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY WE TOOK OFF FOR MALTA ROUTED DIRECT OVER FRANCE IN WELINGTON DV502. THIS ROUTE PROVED TO BE A VERY BAD CHOICE. WE WERE SHOT AT OVER ENGLAND AND OUR IFF EQUIPMENT WAS HIT LEAVING US WITHOUT IDENTIFICATION BUT P.O MACKELLAR DECIDED TO CARRY ON WITHOUT IT. WE WERE ORDERD TO MAINTAIN RADIO SILENCE AND LISTEN THROUGH FOR ANY INSTRUCTIONS. AS WE APPROACHED MALTA MACKELLAR TOLD ME TO BREAK RADIO SILENCE AND TELL MALTA WHAT HAD HAPPENED BECAUSE WE WERE TOLD THAT ANY UNIDENTIFIED AIRCRAFT WOULD BE SHOT DOWN, WE WERE TOLD TO FLY OVER THE GRAND HARBOUR WHICH WAS HEAVILY FORTIFIED ON A CERTAIN HEADING AND HEIGHT, OTHERWISE WE WOULD BE SHOT AT. WE CARRIED OUT THE INSTRUCTIONS WITH BATED BREATH AND GAVE A SIGH OF RELIEF WHEN ME WE MADE IT. WE LANDED AT LUQUA HAVING TAKEN 9 HOURS 30 MINUTES FLYING TIME.

NOW THINGS BEGIN TO GO WRONG. THEY TOOK OUR AIRCRAFT OFF US AND TOLD US WE WOULD HAVE TO STAY THERE. WE STRONGLY PROTESTED BUT TO NO AVAIL. THEN MORE BAD NEWS. THE OTHER 2 CREWS HAD BEEN SHOT DOWN. WE WERE REALLY UPSET ABOUT THAT. WE WERE SENT TO THE YMCA UNTIL THEY COULD FIND SOME ACCOMODATION FOR US. WE WERE STANDING ON THE FLAT ROOF AND THERE WAS AN AIR RAID THAT EVENING AND OUR WELLINGTON WAS BLOWN TO PIECES. WHAT A WASTE OF AN AIRCRAFT, THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE LET US CONTINUE TO EGYPT. SO NOW WE ARE STRANDED ON MALTA THEY HOUSED US IN WHAT WAS CALLED THE POOR HOUSE, NOT FAR FROM THE END OF THE RUNWAY. THERE WERE FREQUENT AIR RAIDS AND AFTER EACH ONE IT WAS ALL HANDS ON DECK TO FILL THE CRATERS, EVERYONE HAD TO HELP WITH THIS. THEY THOUGHT OF SENDING US HOME BY SUBMARINE I DIDN'T FANCY THAT, BUT IT NEVER HAPPENED. ON THE NIGHT OF 13<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1943 A WELLINGTON CAME FROM EGYPT TO PICK SOME IMPORTANT CIVILIANS UP AND WE WERE PUT ON THAT WELLINGTON TAKING OFF AT 0200hrs IN THE MIDDLE OF AN AIR RAID, NOT VERY PLEASANT. WE LANDED AT 108 M.U. CAIRO 7hrs 35min LATER. WE WERE SENT TO A TRANSIT CAMP AND ON THE 16<sup>th</sup> WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO LAGOS TO GET A SHIP BACK TO ENGLAND. WE WERE TAKEN BY PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS FROM CAIRO TO WADI SEDNA, THEN TO EL FASHIR, THEN TO EL GENEINA, THEN TO MAIDUGARI, THEN TO KANO WHERE WE STAYED FOR THE NIGHT. WHILST THERE WE WENT TO THE WALLED TOWN, WE HAD TO TAKE OUR REVOLVERS AS THEY WERE NOT THAT FRIENDLY ALSO NO CAMERAS. THE NEXT DAY WE WENT FROM KANO TO APAPA (LAGOS) WE WERE BILLITED



Ron Kirk, Glen Hoosier, unknown at Lagos Lagoon



AT THE GRAND HOTEL (IT WASN'T THAT GRAND BUT IT WAS COMFORTABLE AND THE FOOD WAS GOOD) THERE WERE FOUR OF US IN ONE LARGE BED ROOM. IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE WE DISCOVERED THE WEST SHORE BEACH WHICH WAS SECLUDED AND THE SEA NICE AND WARM .WE SPENT MANY PLEASANT HOURS

THERE. ONE OF THE MEN WROTE A VERY BAWDY SONG CALLED LAGOS LAGOON, I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE STILL HAS THE WORDS. I REMEMBER SOME BUT THEY CAN'T BE SENT BY EMAIL. I WAS RESTING ON THE BED ONE MORNING READING THE BOOK OF MATTHEW IN THE BIBLE MY MOTHER GAVE ME WHEN I JOINED THE R.A.F. THE PART WHERE IT SAYS YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE GATES OF HEAVEN UNLESS YOU ARE BAPTISED. I TOLD THE MEN IN OUR ROOM AND LOVELACE A CANADIAN SAID LETS GO AND FIND THE BISHOP OF LAGOS, WE DID AND I TOLD HIM THAT I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A REGULAR CHURCH GOER AND WAS EDUCATED IN CHURCH SCHOOLS, I HAVE NO IDEA WHY I WAS NOT BAPTISED. HE WAS VERY SYMPATHETIC AND ASKED ME IF I OBJECTED TO A BLACK PRIEST BAPTISING ME. I SAID OF COURSE NOT, AND WAS DULY BAPTISED THE FOLLOWING MORNING. THE BISHOP INVITED ME AND MY TWO GODFATHERS, LOVELACE AND JAMES AN ENGLISH MAN TO DINNER AT HIS RESIDENCE THAT EVENING 22<sup>nd</sup> OF MARCH 1942. I HAVE A BASIC ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT IN FRONT OF ME WHICH MY GOD FATHERS GAVE ME THAT DAY



## THE LAGOS SAGA BY RON KIRK continued..

NOW A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER WE WERE PUT ON A FRENCH MERCHANT SHIP WHICH HAD BEEN DAMAGE AND HAD A NASTY LIST TO STARBOARD. THE WATER WAS CONTAMINATED AND MOST OF US WENT SICK WITH NASTY BOILS. WE ONLY GOT AS FAR AS FREETOWN AND WE WERE TAKEN OFF THE MERCHANT SHIP AND PUT ON A SMALL AIRCRAFT CARRIER WE ALL THOUGHT WE WOULD BE OK THIS TIME, BUT AFTER 2 DAYS AT SEA WE HAD TO RETURN TO FREETOWN WITH ENGINE TROUBLE . ONCE MORE WE ARE TRANSFERRED TO AN ARMED MERCHANT CRUISER AND HEADED FOR ENGLAND IN A 4 KNOT CONVOY. WHAT A PAINFULLY SLOW JOURNEY AND WE LOST SEVERAL SHIPS ON THE WAY. WE FINALLY LANDED AT GREENOCK IN SCOTLAND AND WENT BY TRAIN TO MORETON –IN-MARSH TO PICK UP ANOTHER WELLINGTON AT 1446 FLIGHT FERRY COMMAND. WE ALL HAD TO HAVE A MEDICAL ON ARRIVAL, TO MY HORROR I WAS DIAGNOSED WITH SEVERE RUPTUR AND WAS GROUNDED AND SENT TO AN R.A.F. HOSPITAL FOR AN OPERATION. I WAS THERE FOR 4 WEEKS AND THEN 3 WEEKS SICK LEAVE, AFTER WHICH I WAS AGAIN FIT TO FLY AND REPORTED BACK TO MORETON-IN -MARSH AND I WAS DEVASTATED TO FIND THAT BY NOW THE WHOLE OF 458 SQUADRIN HAD GONE TO SHALLUFA EGYPT.SO, WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS ANOTHER LONG STORY OF HOW I HITCH HIKE TO SHALLUFA, WHICH WAS NOT WITHOUT MISHAPS, BUT I WAS DETERMINED TO GET TO 458 SQUADRON.A WORD OF EXPLANATION. THE NAMES I USED AT MY BAPTISM WERE RONALD , THE NAME ON MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE, JAMES AFTER MY GOD FATHER JAMES LOVELACE AND ROBERT AFTER MY FATHER. BUT I STILL ONLY USE MY NAME RONALD.



Ron's Bible inscribed by James Lovelace at his Baptism 22/3/42

### RONALD KIRK HITCH HIKING TO SHALLUFA

WHEN I FOUND THAT ALL OF 458 HAD GONE TO SHALLUFA I WENT TO 1446 FLIGHT FERRY COMMAND AND ASKED A S.LDR LESLIE IF HE COULD GET ME INTO A CREW GOING TO EGYPT . HE WAS ON 458 SQUADRON AT ONE TIME AND WAS MOST SYMPATHETIC, AND PUT ME IN A CREW AS THEIR WIRELESS OPEATOR. WE TOOK OFF ON 17<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 1943 IN WELLINGTON HD951 SGT DUKE WAS THE PILOT AND WE LANDED AT PORTREATH. THE FOLLOWING MORNING WE TOOK OFF HEADING FOR GIBRALTAR AT 6AM AMD ARRIVED 8 HOURS 30 MINUTES LATTER. AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ROUTE THIS TIME. THE NEXT DAY WE RELAXED ON THE BEACH, WE HAD NO ENGLISH MONEY SO WE POOLED ANY STAMPS OR POSTAL ORDERS WE HAD AND CASHED THEM IN AT THE POST OFFICE, WE NOW HAD ENOUGH MONEY TO GET A CUP OF TEA AND SANDWHICH THE NEXT MORNING WE TOOK OFF AT 5am AND HEADED FOR JESWANG, GAMBIA. I WAS FEELING GREAT THINKING I WOULD BE WITH THE SQUADRON IN A FEW DAYS, BUT HOW WRONG IT TURNED OUT. WHEN WE WERE GETTING NEAR TO JESWANG THERE WAS A VIOLENT STORM, VISIBILITY ALMOST NIL AND RADIO COMMUNICATION CUT OUT BY HEAVY STATTIC. WE WERE RUNNING LOW IN FUEL AND CONTEMPLATED DOING A BELLY LANDING SOMEWHERE, WE KNEW WE WERE FLYING OVER FLAT TERRAIN SO CAME DOWN AS LOW AS POSSIBLE AND LOCATED A BEACH. I MADE ONE MORE DESPERATE RADIO BROADCAST REQUESTNG FLARES FOR US TO LOCATE THE AIRFIELD, WE WERE FORTUNATE BECAUSE THEY DID SEND UP FLARES WHICH ENABLD US TO FIND IT BUT WE COULN'T SEE THE RUNWAY CLEARLY AND LANDED ACROSS THE RUNWAY ENDING UP ON OUR NOSE AND DAMAGED THE WELLINGTON.WE WERE THANKFULL TO BE ON THE GROUND BUT WERE DISMAYED WHEN THEY SAID THEY DIDN'T HAVE ANY PARTS TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE. WE WERE NOW STRANDED AT JESWANG. JESWANG WAS A VERY SMALL STATION, MORE LIKE A STAGING POST. THERE WS NO TOWN NEARBY BUT THERE WAS A BEACH AND QUITE NEAR THE SEA WAS NICE AND WARM SO WE SPENT MOST OF OUR TIME THERE JUST TO PASS THE TIME. WE WERE PESTERED BY A YOUNG BLACK BOY WHO SAID, YOU JIGGY JIG MY SISTER, VERY CLEAN, VERY CHEAP, HE CERTAINLY HAD NO CUSTOMERS FROM US, WE TOLD HIM TO JIGGYJIG OFF. HE SOON GAVE US PEACE. OUR PII.OT AND NAVIGATOR WENT DOWN WITH MALARIA THEN ON THE 21<sup>st</sup> OF SEPTEMBER A WELLINGTON LANDE D ON IT'S WAY TO EGYPT, THE WIRELESS OPERATOR WENT SICK AND COULDN'T CONTINUE. I TOOK HIS PLACE, ON THE 9<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER WE TOOK OFF FOR WATERLOO, SIERRA LEONE AND LANDED 4hrs 15 min LATER.AT 08.05 THE 24<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER WE TOOK OFF FOR IKEJA (LAGOS) AND LANDED 8HRS 15 .MIUTES LATER. THE PILOT WENT SICK AND WE WEE STUCK AGAIN BT IT WASN'T TOO BAD, WE WERE ABLE TO HIRE BIKES TO GET FROM THE AIRFIELD TO THE TOWN,SO THE TIME DIDN'T DRAG AS MUCH. ON THE 4<sup>th</sup> OF OCTOBER A WELLINGTON HE106 ARRIVED FROM CAIRO TO PICK US UP THE PILOT WAS SGT CLARK. THE FOLLOWING MORNING WE TOOK OFF AT 08.30 FOR MAIDUGURI IN NIGERIA TAKING 6 hours 30 min. THERE WAS A PROBLEM WITH THE AICRAFT AND WE WERE STUCK THERE FOR 10 DAYS , IT WAS REALLY FRUSTRATING. ON THE 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER WE TOOK OFF AT 5.50am HEADING FOR EL FASHIR IN THE SUDAN, WE LANDED 6hour 40min LATER. WE STAYED THE NIGHT AND TOOK OFF FOR WADI SEIDNER IN THE SUDAN ON THE 17<sup>th</sup> AND LANDED 5hours LATER. WE STAYED UNTIL THE 20<sup>th</sup>

### RONALD KIRK HITCH HIKING TO SHALLUFA..continued

THEN TOOK OFF FOR L.G.224 CAIRO AT 6.30am LANDING THERE 8hrs LATER AND THEN HEADED FOR THE TRANSIT CAMP. I THOUGHT THIS IS GREAT I WAS ONLY ABOUT 70 MILES FROM SHALLUFA. BUT HOW WRONG I WAS YET AGAIN. THE OFFICER IN CHARGE INFORMED ME THAT I WOULD HAVE TO GO TO A CAMP NEAR TELAVIV, ISRAEL ,TO BE TRAINED ON THE NEW WIRELESS EQUIPMENT T1154 AND R1155, I SHOWED HIM MY LOG BOOK TO SHOW HIM THAT I HAD BEEN ON OPERATIONS USING THAT EQUIPMENT. IT WAS NOUSE HE WAS ADAMANT THAT I HAD TO GO TO TELAVIV, SO I WAS PUT ON A TRAIN HEADING FOR ISRAEL .

AFTER A TIRESOME JOURNEY WITH THE NATIVES COMING ON THE TRAIN TO TRY AND SELL US SOME OF THEIR GOODS WE EVENTUALLY ARRIVED AT OUR DESTINATION. WHEN I REACHED THE CAMP I PUT A REQUEST IN TO HAVE AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMANDING OFFICER. HE WAS A VERY PLEASANT CHAP AND LISTENED TO MY PROBLEM, HE AGREED THAT IT WAS WASTE OF TIME ME BEING THERE AND SUGGESTED THAT I COULD HITCH A LIFT ON THE ARMY LORRIES THAT FREQUENTLY WENT TO CAIRO, AND THAT HE. WOULD TURN A BLIND EYE TO WHAT I WAS DOING. I DIDN'T NEED TELLING TWICE AND WAS SOON ON MY WAY TO SHALLUFA.



WHEN I ARRIVED I WENT STRAIGHT TO W. CMDR JOHNSON'S TENT WHO WAS NOW COMMANDING OFFICER. HE WAS SHOCKED TO SEE ME AND I HAD TO TELL HIM OF MY EFFORTS TO GET TO SHALLUFA. HE GAVE ME A GREAT WELCOME AND TOLD ME I COULD BE HIS OFFICIAL W.O.P AND THAT I COULD TAKE THE PLACE OF ANY W.O.P THAT WENT SICK. THIS ENDED UP WITH ME FLYING WITH NEARLY ALL THE PILOTS ON THE SQUADRON. I WAS REALLY DELIGHTED THAT I WAS BACK ON THE SQUADRON. IT REALLY WAS WORTH THE EFFORT.

### How I got to 458 Squadron

By Donald Stocks.



After training on radio, radar and gunnery, we crewed up at Cranwell. We then completed our training at Cranwell and Withebusch (near Milford Haven in Wales). We were then told that we were to ferry aircraft to North Africa, so we collected a Mark XIII Wellington from Kemble and flew it to Rabat in Morocco. From there we took it to Serif in Algeria and were then sent by road to a transit camp at Fort de L'Eau near Algiers to wait for a return flight to UK. After about a month of waiting we were told that 458 Squadron at Bone was short of crew, so on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1943 we flew there in a Dakota of the American service.

After arriving at Bone we began flying on convoy escorts, completing 12 before Christmas. On Christmas Eve we took off at about 9am to escort a convoy near Cape Boquerón in Tunisia. We three WOP/AGS took turns to do 1 hour on radar, 1 hour on radio and 1 hour in the rear turret, which was where I was when the naval escort fired at us and were hit in the starboard wing outside of the engine. A large hole was made in the wing by the shells. The plane was jumping about and the engine was running roughly so we sent an SOS to base and set off back to Bone. The standby crew took off to replace us. Our skipper Treadwell told us to get behind the main spar for landing and we took out the astrodome to make a good escape route if necessary. When we touched down the plane ran off the runway and across rough scrubland. We hit a Bofos gun emplacement at about 80 mph resulting in the plane being embedded in the gun site and damaged



the gun. We got out through the astrodome hatch and ran away from the plane. Nobody was hurt but Christmas day was ruined for us. The sentry on duty at the gun emplacement that day was fortunate to be at the other side when we hit it. The crew were F/Lt Treadwell (pilot) Bert Johnson (2<sup>nd</sup> pilot) Ron Moy (navigator) and WOP/AGs Bert Turner, Brian Hun and myself. Needless to say we were all shaken by the crash landing.

The Squadron was involved in detachments. We went to Blida to help 36 Squadron search for enemy U boats off the Spanish coast and we also went three times on detachments to Malta. Other places we were sent to were Grottaglie near Taranto and Ghisonaccia in Corsica. While in Corsica we carried bombs instead of depth charges, these being used to attack enemy shipping. We scored hits on several ships and always had alternate targets if no ships were sighted. We bombed bridges in Northern Italy and anything that moved in the German occupied part of Northern Italy. We demolished a German barracks at Port Clementino.







Later we moved to a new base, Alghero in Sardinia where we had a camp on the seashore. When we were not flying we had a great time swimming and sailing. Bert Turner and have a local fisherman 200 lire for the use of his boat which he kept near our camp. We had the use of it during the day to do a bit of sailing in the bay and he went out fishing at night. We continued our flying duties searching for German ships at night.

In July 1944 our skipper F/Lt Treadwell was given a promotion to Squadron Leader on 36 Squadron. We were very sorry to leave 458 Squadron at Alghero but had no choice in the matter. We continued to attack German shipping from our new base at Tarquinia in Italy until 26<sup>th</sup> September 1944 when the Squadron was ordered to fly back across France to Chivenor in Devon. We realised that we were lucky because our tour expired and other crew on 458 were being sent to Palestine O.T.U as instructors. We operated from Chivenor until the end of 1944 and then we were 'tour expired' and sent to O.T.U.s as instructors. I always regretted leaving 458 Squadron where I had made many friends but getting back to England was wonderful.

In 2005 I went back to Alghero to a reunion of UK 458 Squadron. A splendid hotel called the Hotel Dei Pini had been built on the site of our wartime camp and 5 of the veterans and some of our family members enjoyed staying there for several nights. We visited the airfield which in present times had an Italian Squadron based there and were made very welcome by the Commanding Officer Captain Del Monte, who was extremely interested in the wartime history of the base. We stayed in the north of Sardinia for the rest of the week and really enjoyed reminiscing about old times.

I hope some of your Veterans will remember Treadwell's crew – myself (Don Stocks), Bert Turner, Ron Moy, Bob Johnson and Brian Hunn and I send everyone best wishes.

**Don Stocks**

**P.S. Does anyone have a photo of the plane in the gun emplacement incident on Christmas Day, 1943? If so I would really appreciate a copy.**



### **Orch's Orate**

*by the son of the original 'Orch' "old horse"*

First and foremost I must thank everyone for their support in the inaugural year of our website. To all who have made donations and in some cases 2nd donations, we appreciate your generosity and thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Every dollar helps to keep the proverbial engines running. Potent Web Team Lukas and Lindsay also deserve our special thanks for their tireless work in supporting our needs and wants in producing what I'm sure everyone agrees is a top notch website. I would ask all members to remember Potent Web if ever the need arises to employ expert webmasters. Whether it be a personal or a business website, Lukas and Lindsay are experts in their trade. <http://potent.com.au/home.html> Those who don't have computers I would urge you to contact family or friends to show you our handy work.

I would like to remind everyone to re-visit the Servicemen's Stories page of the 458 website and think about their own or loved one's story. After all, the fundamental purpose of the website is our 458 Veteran stories. <http://458raafsquadron.org/honour-roll/servicemens-stories.html>



Our big project for this year has been digitizing the official 458 Squadron Albums. With kind permission from our President and the Australian War Memorial the albums are being carefully digitized and will soon be available to view on line by all. Examples from Book 2.



**Eric Munkman. Legend 458 publisher. Thanks for your years of tireless and often thankless work. I'm about to discover the challenges that you and Ron faced and overcame for many Editions. Three cheers to you mate. Roland.**

# 458 Squadron Activity in Melbourne (Expression of Interest)

Shrine of Remembrance Birdwood Avenue

Melbourne, Victoria.

Bomber Command Exhibition

Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



**11am** – Meet for a late morning tea / Early Lunch at the Royal Botanic Gardens Observatory Café, Birdwood Ave, (east side of The Shrine.)

Cost at Café Prices. –see website for menu and prices

<http://www.observatorycafe.com.au/>

**12.30pm** – The Shrine of Remembrance Exhibition Centre for a Bomber Command Panel Discussion lead by Air Vice–Marshal Chris Spence AO (Rtd.) and Wing Commander Peter Isaacson AM, DFC,AFC,DFM. After the Panel Discussion have a guided or self–guided tour around the Exhibit and The Shrine.

Shrine of Remembrance Cost is Free, however Gold coin donation is welcome.

## Please Note–

Bookings are essential as there are limited seats at the Bomber Command Panel Discussion.

For bookings please fill out form below and mail ASAP to

Roland Orchard

78 Edward Rd.

Chirnside Park, 3116. Victoria.

or email [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)



Dear Roland

I \*will / \*will not be attending the 458 Squadron Activity at the Royal Botanic Gardens Observatory Café and the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2013.

Name..... Signature.....

No. of people to attend.....

\*Please cross out whichever is applicable to you.

**Travellers from interstate or overseas who wish to attend do so at their own expense.**