

## JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

### Year 64 No 248 November 2013



**Squadron President:**  
**Keith Cousins (Australia - NSW)**

**Squadron Vice-presidents:**  
**Canada: Tom Lindsay**  
**New Zealand: Kevin George**  
**U.K: Leon Armstrong**

**Squadron Treasurer:** John Gibbins 33 Bridge Street, Lane Cove NSW 2066  
**Squadron Secretary:** David Longhurst 129A Darling Street, Balmain NSW 2041  
**Newsletter Editor and Publisher:** Roland Orchard. 78 Edward Road,  
 Chirnside Park. Vic. 3116 Phone (03) 9727-0106 email: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)

**Flight Correspondents:**

NSW- Eric Munkman 722 Lantana Lodge, Lantana Av. Collaroy Plateau, NSW 2097  
 WA- Ted Jewell 61 Wyaree Rd. Mandurah, WA. 6210. Assisted by Nick Bertram.  
 SA- Rick Michell 5 Armson Ave. Magill. SA.5072  
 VIC-Roland Orchard 78 Edward Road, Chirnside Park VIC. 3116  
 QLD-Christine Thomson. 80 Church Lane, Emerald, QLD.4720  
 NZ- Kevin George 20 Kowhai Av. Kaikohe, N.Z. 0405  
 UK- Keith Wilkinson 23 Ferndale Pk, Tedmore, Stourbridge, W. Midlands. DY90RB  
 CANADA- Bryan Quinlan 1460 Haywood Ave., W. Vancouver, B.C. V7T 1V6.  
 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 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> March 2014. Please feel free to mail or email in your stories, articles or enquires to Roland. All are welcome.***

**VALE:-**

Joyce Irene Enright.....See SA Report.

**FLIGHT REPORTS:**

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

Good food, good wine, the esteemed company of President Keith Cousins, immediate Past President Eric Munkman, Pat Millar and Bev Bitmead and a perfect spring Sydney day made our annual luncheon at Ryde TAFE College's Catering School a memorable one. The remainder of the group comprised sons and daughters, their respective spouses who all enjoyed a magnificent meal, cooked, served and presented by local and international students in a dining room that looks out over a vast portion of Sydney and features the 2000 Olympic Stadium in the foreground. I recently chanced upon the website for the community of Holme on Spalding Moor, its home page indicates that its airfield was home to RAF 76 Squadron during WW11. The detail reveals:

- 458 Squadron arrived at Holme on Spalding Moor in September/October 1941 and left in January 1942 when they relocated to the Middle East.
- 101 Squadron moved onto the site in September 1942 before relocating to its final wartime base, RAF Ludford Magna, on 15 June 1943. 101 Squadron was the first operational Avro Lancaster squadron in No.1 Group. It flew more raids during the campaign against Germany than any other squadron and suffered the highest casualties of any RAF unit, losing 1176 killed in action.
- 76 Squadron moved to Holme on Spalding Moor in June 1943.

What really jumped out at me was an article headed 'Bomb Sight Bertha'. It tells the story of an attractive young lady, Dorothy Robson who, unusual for the time, was a physicist with a Bachelor of Science degree from Leeds University. She was working on bomb sight development and testing a prototype on Halifax bombers flying with 76 Squadron, when on a short test flight the aircraft crashed in poor flying conditions with the loss of the entire crew. "The Girl with the Laughing Eyes" had replaced the navigator Fred Hall who was left behind because the bomb sight was in the nose of the aircraft where he would normally have sat at the plotting table. There is insufficient space here to relate the entire story. If you are interested you can follow this link for the entire story on the Holme on Spalding Moor website.

<http://holmeonspaldingmoor.co.uk/bomb-sight-bertha/>

I take this opportunity to on behalf of NSW Flight to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**South Australia Flight report by Rick Michell**

It is with deep regret we have to advise the passing of Joyce Irene Enright on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 at the Kingston Hospital. We pass on our sympathy to John and Lisa Enright. Joyce's husband was Patrick Raymond (Pat) Enright. Our next get together for 458 Squadron SA Flight will be our Christmas Lunch at the Kensi, Kensington Sth, on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2013 at 1230pm. All are welcome. Di and I had a memorable trip to France last July. We visited the Somme area and the World War 1 Australian War Graves at Villers-Bretonneux. We also visited the Normandy Coast where the D-Day Landings occurred. We wish all members of 458 Squadron a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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

As our usual Newsletter writer, Nick Bertram, will be getting married, he asked me to write a few lines for this Newsletter. Nick and Jess will be away on their honeymoon at that time. I thought I had seen the last of doing the Newsletter as I have been doing it since 1973, so it's a long time. I rang Jim Palmer this morning at the nursing home where he is at Kojonup in WA. He said that his sight is not very good these days but like all of us feeling the old age catching up. I was reading the report from Ashley Carr. I went with Bill Carr on leave to Rome for seven days. I have a few photos taken in Rome where we used to eat. Junior Davies is also in the photos. When we were at Bone the mates and I used to drink at a little Cafe in the main street near the docks area. We met two Australian seamen from one of the boats that called there from time to time. Their names were Jeff and Ozzy. *(ed-see July 2013 Newsletter –email from Ian Clark about his merchant seaman father-in-law David Drennan. This must have occurred on numerous occasions)* They wanted to fly in one of our planes so as I was the fitter on Terry Woodcocks plane, he said they could come with him on a test flight. I said for him to give them a few thrills, they said they would rather stay as seamen. We are having our Christmas dinner on the 8<sup>th</sup> December at Bob & Dot Bresland's home in Wembley. Bob was a Pilot flying Lancasters. Each year we are getting less & less at our functions. Bill Kelliher and I are the only Squadron members, also several widows. Bill's son brings him along as he doesn't drive anymore. Best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas. **Ted Jewell.**

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

A telephone call to Tom Rowan revealed that he had encountered some family problems during the summer as his sister died in July and his son-in-law had entered a Care facility, both requiring his attention on estate matters. Tom advised that his younger brother now in his 80s is quite an athlete as this year he had entered a world track & field meet and came away with 4 gold and 2 silver medals and still holds 15 Saskatchewan records, 7 of them Canadian records. Tom will be 95 this December but is still active with his card buddies playing a game called "NIL" which has a distant relationship to Bridge. A game I have never heard of. Tom also continues to tend to the flowers planted by his wife in her memory and uses them to place on her gravesite. Tom did some travelling in southern Saskatchewan but did not have time to visit Vancouver as hoped. Tom Lindsay has nothing to report but faithfully continues his walker-assisted exercise in the local shopping mall. Jack Reynolds advised he had nothing to report. At 95 he is the oldest Canadian member of our remaining 5. Yours truly is the youngest at 91. Gladys Markland also had nothing to report on Bert Markland whose condition in the Care Centre is unchanged. She said that the big family celebration of her 90th birthday was a big success and which Bert was able to attend, as mentioned in the July report. Joan and I are relatively in good health and well taken care of by our family members who live close-by. I managed a couple of golf games (shorter courses) and some practice trips to the driving range. (Have to get in shape for Roland's visit next year but it will depend on how good he is as to whether I have family members as my stand-ins!) Recently Joan and I with daughter Peggy and husband John attended a Junior (16-20) hockey game to watch our youngest grandson Michael serve as a linesman as he has been hired by the Western Hockey League (WHL) as a linesman ref which is quite an accomplishment as the next step up from Junior is the pro leagues. He is till attending university so can only ref a few games. Next year he intends to go as an exchange program student to Denmark. We all wish our Aussie mates the very best and hope that your disastrous forest fires have been controlled and extinguished. **Reported by Bryan Quinlan (458 Mar-Sept 1943)**

## **Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard**

October 4<sup>th</sup> saw the opening of the Bomber Command Exhibit at The Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Our correspondence with one of the assistant curators, Joe Hextall ensured 458 Squadron had three separate, albeit small, mentions in the exhibit. The exhibit is a wonderful tribute to those who served with Bomber Command during WWII. The Shrine is undergoing a major redevelopment which will incorporate new Galleries of Remembrance. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> October Jeremy and I flew to Sydney to attend the Squadron Council Meeting at the Nth Ryde RSL. Prior to the meeting we were privileged to visit Elaine Irwin and Barry Brooke in Double Bay and John MacKellar and Ralph Bailey in Narrabeen. My hopeless navigation skills between Double Bay and Narrabeen meant us being about 2 hours late for the Meeting. After the deserved ribbing from the Council Members Jeremy and I presented the key achievements of the 458 Website to date. Thanks to Rob Wilkinson's projector we were able to hold a theatre style presentation. Many thanks to the Squadron President and Council Members for their patience and usual warm welcome. Many thanks for Elaine, Barry and John and Ralph for being so hospitable in their respective homes. It was a great pleasure to meet you.

**Barry Brooke**



**John MacKellar**



**Ralph Bailey**



A short foot note to our NSW visit. While looking through Barry's photo album I came across a familiar face. The original of a long lost copy of Dad (Gordon Orchard) at the controls of the Wellington he flew from the UK to Malta in April, 1942. The photographer, Barry, was Dad's Navigator.

**Happy and healthy wishes to all as we approach Christmas and 2014..... Roland**

## **Queensland Flight Report by Christine Thomson**



**Christine & Adam Thomson**

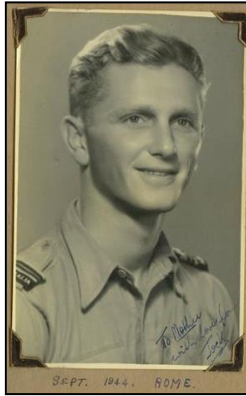
QUEENSLANDER!!! Yes...What a great honour it is to be able to reopen the Queensland Flight hangar doors. I guess first things first are to say a big 'GIDDAY' to you all and THANK YOU for allowing us to be part of the 458

family. My husband Adam and I reside in Emerald, Queensland and have 4 beautiful children, Chase 25, Kelsi 24, Laine 23, and Jesse 17. We are very excited to have stumbled across you on a Google search and appreciate the connection we have made with Roland Orchard who has been a tremendous help with connecting the pieces of our history with 458 RAAF Squadron.





P/O John 'Jock' Thomson



It all began when a young John Wallace Thomson aka 'Jock' enlisted with RAAF back in 1943. He was a 2<sup>nd</sup> flying officer in Europe during WWII and records show for a period of time, to Leon Armstrong... Hi Leon ☺ If you are reading this report... I hope you are well and going strong Mate! This year my husband Adam salvaged a terrific photo album that belonged to Jock with captions and an array of candid pics of the 458 boys in various places such as Italy, Sardinia, Algeria, Sicily, Malta, Egypt, Tunisia and the UK. The album is a treasure trove of memories and moments in history. We hope that the photos will be available to you all to view on the

458 website at some stage. Perhaps you will see some familiar faces and assist in connecting us closer with each other. Jock completed his tour of duty and survived the war, returned to Brisbane and married his childhood sweetheart Patricia Love. They travelled extensively; Jock becoming a successful engineer and they raised 5 children. Eventually they settled in Sydney, where Jock started a partnership called Taylor, Thomson, Whitting, but unfortunately lost his life in a yachting accident on a trip back from Lord Howe Island with some mates in January 1974. My husband, Adam was only 12 years old and speaks fondly of his father remembering quite a few of Jock's war stories. I hope to regale some of these stories Jock shared with a curious young Adam in future editions... so stay tuned.

The saying 'it's in his blood' is true of our youngest son, Jesse, who this year has begun the journey towards following in his grandfather's footsteps to join the RAAF in the capacity of an officer pilot. If he receives an offer for any of the other services he said he would be happy, however, his first preference is with RAAF flying fast jets. No... it's not the same as the Wellington, equivalent being the Orion of course, but he certainly has a fire in his belly to be an officer pilot that Australia can be proud of. Jesse started flying when he was



Jesse Thomson

15 and achieved his recreational pilots licence a few days short of his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, legally too young to get behind the wheel of a car. The local CQ News ran a story on him and he has continued his journey from there until today. When Jesse marched in the ANZAC Day parade this year wearing his grandfather's medals, a passion rose up in him to serve his country and put his aviation experience to good use.

Being a year 12 student meant he had to act quickly if he was to be considered for 2014 intake. He began racing against the clock, got through his YOU Day, Assessment Day, and aptitude tests with flying colours (no pun intended), interviewed by senior ranking officers, psychologists and then recommended for the next step of the process – flight screening. He was fully examined from head to toe by the medical team, who seemed to send request after request for updated reports from specialists and finally on the 11<sup>th</sup> hour he was cleared to go ahead and deemed medically fit for service with his file arriving at Tamworth in the nick of time. An invitation came through only a few weeks ago from PSA and he will be attending PSF Tamworth from 16<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> November. All this has been going on at the same time as QCS, school leadership commitments, year 12 formal, footy grand finals, athletics, exams and assignments... I guess the 'works well under pressure' box can be ticked at

least! As you can see, the enlisting process is a lot different these days and there are a lot of hoops to jump through; unlike the 1940's when things, I'm sure were a little less complicated. As you read this report Jesse may have made it through, but of course places are few and the competition is fierce. Please keep him in your thoughts and prayers as he gets closer to achieving his dreams.

Thanks for reading and I look forward to connecting with you all... Christine

Ed. On behalf of all 458 Squadron Veterans and members, I would like to thank Christine for taking on the role of QLD Flight correspondent and look forward hearing about Adam's memories of 'Jock' & Jesse's magnificent adventure. ©

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

Ron Kirk – Armistice Day 2013



Some good news from the UK – 458 veteran Ron Kirk has received his Bomber Command clasp. It's due to be officially presented to him at an armed forces parade in Wrexham in 2014. Mr Kirk, who's 93 years old, was with 458 squadron at Holme on Spalding Moor in England when it was part of Bomber Command. The clasp has become available in Britain to those who are eligible after many

years of campaigning for greater recognition for Bomber Command veterans and their important role in the Second World War. Holme was Mr Kirk's first station after finishing training. His first raid was on Boulogne in France to attack German shipping. He was a wireless operator/air gunner with 458, having volunteered in 1939 – when he informed the people at the Maidstone recruitment centre that he'd like to join the RAF because operating wirelasses had been his hobby since childhood. This year – possibly for the first time – there has been no 458 reunion in the UK. This is partly because of the difficulties of getting people together – advancing years, infirmity and the fact that veterans and partners are scattered across the country.

Former pilot Jack Christianson, who lives in the south of England – and at the age of 91, one of the younger veterans! – says he is determined there will be a reunion in 2014 and he's hoping it will be, like last year, at the RAF Club in London. Jack, who still plays nine holes of golf once a week, is sporting a black eye at the moment, having had a minor operation on his eyelid. All is well. He told me: "The bruising is starting to disappear". Former 458 pilot Leon Armstrong – the UK president – is also keen to attend a reunion. He'll be 94 years old on Boxing Day, and organised the meeting last year at the RAF Club, as he's been a member there for many a year. His good news is that he's become a great grandfather for the 16<sup>th</sup> time. In fact his granddaughter has just had twin boys, and one of them has been named Leon, after him. Leon senior is still enjoying a daily pint at his local pub – "but only after the sun rises above the yard arm". The son of 458-er Jim Croft has been in touch seeking information about his father's time with 458. Jim's widow, May Croft, is now 94 and says she often thinks about the squadron, and members in Australia, and loves having the newsletter read to her. She has two grandchildren and tells me she has just become a great grandmother for the first time.

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

Ed – I'll go with 'No News is Good News, Kevin?' all the very best from everyone.

# ARTICLES OF INTEREST.

## Thanks to the following for their kind Donations to 458 Squadron Association .

- Joanne Dilenzo. Narre Warren, Victoria, Australia
- Bryan Quinlan, Vancouver. British Columbia, Canada
- Tom Rowan, Vancouver. British Columbia, Canada
- Dudley & Enid McKay. Wurtulla, Queensland, Australia

These donations help with the ongoing 458 Website hosting, future website development and 458 Newsletter printing & postage costs.



## **Embroidered patch of the 458 Squadron Crest (with Velcro backing)**

**Dimensions - Length 126mm x Width 84mm(5"L x 3 1/4"W)**

**Badge + Postage within Australia:- 11.50AUD**

(Prices for New Zealand, UK & Canada are subject to fluctuations in the Australian Dollar)

Order via website [www.458raafsquadron.org](http://www.458raafsquadron.org) or write to Roland Orchard. 78 Edward Rd, Chirnside Park. 3116. Victoria, Australia. **Victorian Senior Vice President Chris Orchard.**



## **From the Veterans UK Website**

[http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic\\_star\\_index.htm](http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic_star_index.htm)

## **Bomber Command Clasp**



*Bomber Command Clasp*

It was announced on 26 February 2013, by the Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Mark Francois that all the details have been confirmed for the Arctic Star and the Bomber Command Clasp and the

application process is open. This follows Sir John Holmes' independent medal review and the announcement by the Prime Minister, on 19 December 2012, that these awards should be made in recognition of the great bravery of those who contributed to two very significant campaigns of World War Two. Her Majesty The Queen has approved designs for the new awards on the basis of recommendations made by the Royal Mint Advisory Committee. The design for the Arctic Star is based on the other World War Two Stars and the Bomber Command Clasp, to be worn on the ribbon of the 1939 to 1945 Star, follows the design of the Battle of Britain Clasp. Production of the new Arctic Star and Bomber Command clasp will commence this week and could result in up to a quarter of a million veterans, and the families of those who have sadly died, applying to receive the new awards in recognition of their unique contribution protecting Britain during World War II. Priority in issuing the awards will be given to veterans and widows who could receive their awards in a few weeks. Other next of kin may also apply now but will have to wait slightly longer to receive their award.

**Minister of State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Mark Francois said :**

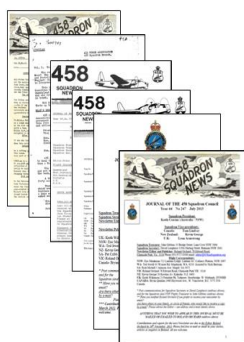
*"All those who served our country in Bomber Command and on the Arctic Convoys deserve nothing but the utmost respect and admiration from us. That's why I am delighted that these special individuals will in the next few weeks begin to receive the Bomber Command clasp and Arctic Star that they have so long deserved. I am also pleased to announce that the families of those no longer alive will also be able to apply for these awards in recognition of their loved one's bravery."*

The qualifying period for the Arctic Star is "service of any length" recognising the particular severity of the conditions experienced by those who served in the Arctic. Whilst the primary intent is to recognise those who served on the Arctic Convoys, eligibility is extended to include all who served north of the Arctic Circle in World War Two. Those eligible will include members of all three Services as well of course as the Merchant Navy who crewed the ships taking the vital supplies to Russia. **The Bomber Command Clasp** is granted to the aircrew of Bomber Command who served for at least sixty days, or completed a tour of operations, on a Bomber Command operational unit and flew at least one operational sortie on a Bomber Command operational unit from the 3 September 1939 to the 8 May 1945 inclusive. This applies to Servicemen after they have met the minimum qualification for the 1939-45 Star, which in many cases, though not exclusively, is sixty days. To be clear, servicemen must have already qualified for the 1939-45 Star before their time can count toward the required sixty day qualification period for the Bomber Command Clasp. A clasp was deemed more appropriate, by Sir John, in the case of Bomber Command as aircrew had already received either the Aircrew Europe Star or the France and Germany Star and another medal would have constituted "double-medalling" for the same service. Further details of the criteria can be found on the [eligibility criteria](#) page. (see last pages of this Newsletter) Eligible veterans and next of kin are now encouraged to apply using the relevant **application forms**, which can be found in this Newsletter. An application must be made as it is simply not possible for the DVA (Aus.), VANZ (NZ), MOD (UK), VAC (Can.) to contact veterans or families of all of those who may be eligible going back almost 70 years. I think it would be safe to advise that if you

wish to apply for this Clasp you can either fill out the form provided (for Australians only) and post to the address at the bottom of the form or fill it out and email. Alternatively, New Zealanders contact Veteran Affairs New Zealand, P O Box 9448 Waikato Mail Centre, Hamilton 3240. Or search website <http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/index.html> and email on <mailto:veterans@xtra.co.nz> Members in the UK Free call 0800169227 or search Veterans UK on [http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic\\_star\\_index.htm](http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic_star_index.htm) and read details. Members in Canada visit the following page on the Veterans Affairs Canada website <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/cmdp/mainmenu/group04/cvsmbcbb> for more details on the Bomber Command Bar available to eligible Canadian Veterans.



**MICHAEL VEITCH – NEW BOOK** - Michael is a well-known actor, comedian and author of books Flak and Fly. These books were written based on his interviews with World War II Aircrew. I was privileged to see Michael's theatre production of "Flak" based on his books. (twice:) He is touring his one man production next year (2014) starting in WA (dates to be advised) Michael is currently writing a 3<sup>rd</sup> book and asked if any 458 (or any other RAAF, RAF, RCAF) Veterans would be willing to sit down with him and talk about their experience for possible publication. Any Veterans who are interested please write or email the editor Roland Orchard. [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)



### ***Collecting ALL Journals/Newsletters project, including seeking input for the upcoming 250<sup>th</sup> Edition!***

We have made great progress with our efforts collecting the complete set of the 458 Squadron Journals/Newsletters. Thanks to our many members including Wendy Whittem-Trunz from Canberra. This one is the 248th published since 1949! The editions we still need to collect are:

**Numbers 23 and 24**  
**Number 32**  
**Number 35**

**from 1955**  
**from 1957**  
**from 1958**

We have digitized all of them (except the 4 above; although we do have pages 1& 2 of #35) and placed them on the Website for a worldwide audience to read. See the Newsletters page <http://458raafsquadron.org/newsletters-and-publications.html>

Please contact / mail your copies of the missing ones to the Editor, Roland (address above). Best of luck in finding these remaining treasures waiting to be discovered again :)

### **458 Squadron Journal – 250<sup>th</sup> Edition**

Contributions and ideas for our 250<sup>th</sup> Edition to be published in the second half of 2014 are also being sought from everyone. Please mail / email ideas (or phone call) for this truly amazing milestone Edition to the Editor, Roland. The initial plan is to follow the format of the magnificently produced publications of the 100<sup>th</sup> (in 1974) and 200<sup>th</sup> (in 1999) Editions. These can be found at our Newsletters page. I wonder if any other WWII Squadron or Unit can say they have published this number of Journals for this length of time???? - next year it will be 250 Journals over 65 years!





## 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 (address on cover page). Since the advent of the Website I receive many emails per week and endeavor to copy most in this new feature of the Newsletter. However due to the sheer number I am unable to publish all. **I thank you for your emails and encourage more to help with the ongoing 458 Squadron Veterans story.** <http://458raafsquadron.org/honour-roll/servicemens-stories.html>



### 1270949 Sgt George Rowland Potter

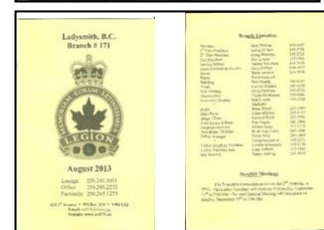
From: Tony Curtis To: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) Subject: WEBSITE FORM: Online Enquiry. Name-Tony Curtis Enquiry-Dear Sir, I am currently researching the above member of 458 Sqdn who died on 16th Sept 1943, when his aircraft failed to return from an operation. I am carrying this out on behalf of his daughter who is in ill health and is unaware of the circumstances of her father's death. He was a British member of the Sqdn born in Deptford. She informs us that he has no known grave and that his name appears on the memorial in Malta. I found the Sqdn log entries for the incident, which says that it failed to return from its operation on the 16/17 Sept 1943. He was in Wellington 'K' flown by F/O P. Driver. I would be grateful if you can add any detail to the story for her, such as; a. Where did he fly from on that operation (I know the squadron was in multiple bases throughout the Med)? b. He is listed in the log as SE/operator - what would this role be in the crew? c. Any personal references to him and his crew that your organization may have. This all came about when my wife informed her that we were going to Malta this September, which coincides with the 70th anniversary of his death. So we promised to visit the memorial for her. It would however, be fantastic to give her more than this in such a significant year for her. As a former serviceman myself, I am happy to pay my respects on behalf of the Sqdn at the same time. If the Sqdn is unable to help, I would be grateful if you could point me in the direction of where I might find more details? **Kind Regards Tony Curtis**



From: **Di Atherton** To: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) Hi Roland, I presented the 458 Patch and book to the Legion here in Ladysmith BC today (see the attached). They are going to display it in their hall and the book was taken by the President right away to read. It will be added to their library I was told as they have quite a few books for the reading. Some Photos that you might



find interesting also the contact list of those of this Legion Hall. I was saddened to read of Laurie Crowley Passing, he took me on a few Helicopter flights and on up in Cairns for my 21st. Also Mr Purcill ('Rinso') I



never met him however Dad always spoke fondly of him. My Brothers met him on a trip they did with Mum and Dad once I believe back in the late '60's. The ranks are surely getting thin now. **All the best, Regards Diane Atherton**



From: Barb. Sent To: [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) Subject: Mike Netherway son of Len at Stalag Luft III. Hello Roland, Just wondering if you can do a favour by way of putting me in touch with Mike Netherway, son of Len who

was at Stalag Luft III. My father was also at Stalag Luft III, as well as an Italian POW camp before that, Dad knew Len's cohort. I'm writing because there's a sketch that a prisoner of war did which Mike might appreciate, as well as a few other things. **Many thanks, Barb on behalf of Don Edy, Stalag Luft III.**

Roland Orchard wrote: Hi Barb I've forwarded your email to Mike. I've also requested (if I may be so bold) to be cc'd when you both communicate. As Editor & Publisher and webmaster of our Squadron Newsletter and Website, I feel a very interesting story coming on. By the way, Barb, your email address doesn't seem familiar. Did you read Mikes story on the 458 Squadron website? I don't mean to be nosey but I'm always interested how we make these type of contacts. Cheers and thanks Roland Orchard

Hi Roland, Thanks for your reply. The reason I was going to contact Mr. Netherway was simply because he seemed to have an interest in his father's war journey, and that of his father's friend, Bill Fordyce. Last week, along with a son and a daughter of two other Stalag Luft III POWs, we were trying to sort out something, who it was who was depicted in a sketch done at Stalag Luft III after the Great Escape.

I'd found the sketch in Alex Cassie's obituary, you can see it online:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/alexander-cassie-bomber-pilot-who-helped-forge-false-papers-for-the-great-escape-7814477.html>



In the sketch Alex Cassie depicts himself, mourning the loss of his six escaped friends and roommates. Cassie had later marked crosses alongside four of them who were ordered executed by Hitler for their escape attempt. The other two in the sketch were recaptured. The son of one of those murdered escapers had asked me if I could identify the five other

escapers? We figured out four at first, the caricatures clearly depict Alex Cassie's roommates and friends who were forgers. They had done thousands of documents for the escape, a team of men who'd named themselves 'Dean and Dawson' after a British travel agency. Those names were confirmed as he noticed very faint penciling, names beside each caricature, which confirmed all but one. So I checked the list of 76 escapers (50 of whom were ordered murdered by Hitler). Amongst the 26 who were recaptured, Bill Fordyce most resembled the caricature in the back row, right. In fact Bill looks exactly like the unidentified escaper in Cassie's sketch. Photo of



BillFordyce <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au/aawfa/images/~interviews/0523-2-portrait.jpg>

Later we found that there is an extremely faint penciling that might say 'Bill' and 'Fordyce' in the upper right. So mystery solved, of who the sixth man is in Cassie's sketch. Cassie and Fordyce must have been good friends, the connection being forgery. They would have spent a lot of time together making those thousands of maps and documents covertly in camp. As for Mike, while I was looking for

that photo of Bill Fordyce, I noted that Mike Netherway had mentioned Bill Fordyce on a friend's WW2 Memories Project and again on your website. I tried Mike's posted email address, thinking he might be interested in seeing the Cassie sketch showing his father's friend Bill Fordyce depicted escaping. But Mike's email returned lapsed, so I thought you might have a more recent one. Many thanks, you could forward this to Mike so to save him an email, as that's it in a nutshell. But, now that I think of it, if his father was POW in Italy he might be interested in my father's memoir too. I don't sell the book myself, but I help my father with online inquiries from readers. Our friend Dr. Jonathan Vance is one (Vance authored 'A Gallant Company' about the Great Escapers) who was first to snatch up Dad's reprint 50 years after Dad's original book had gone out of print. Jon proclaimed it a thoroughly

enjoyable read, of the 'nuts and bolts of being a PoW in Stalag Luft III' with details he'd never run across before. Vance was very pleased to read Dad's description of life in the Italian PoW camps, telling us practically no one else but Dad wrote about those camps in such detail. My father's book also includes anecdotes of several RAAF pilots from their time together in North Africa to their PoW journey together, including his friend Rusty Kierath who was one of The Fifty executed after the Great Escape from their camp. Anyway, Dad didn't print many copies, just for those who need a gem once in a while, it does exist. And, because of his book website we get a lot of questions from fellow Stalag Luft III families, and that is how I ended up being asked to solve the Alex Cassie sketch mystery, as I know many Stalag Luft III ex-Krieigie POWs, and now their families. My father, Don Edy, is 96 now, still sharp as a tack, but his book was written right after the war when a young man's memories of being a pilot and PoW were fresh and accurate. He'd wanted to preserve all the men's stories for a time when our generation was old enough to appreciate their war journey. Smart guy.

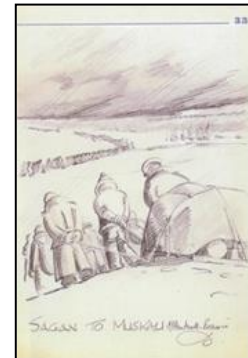
Many thanks for passing this along to Mike. Best regards, Barb On behalf of Don Edy Flight Lieutenant, MEF No 33 Squadron. POW Capua, Padula, Stalag Luft 3, and many camps along the journey. See Don's book - <http://www.goonintheblock.com/>



**From:** Marilyn Walton **To:** 'Roland Orchard'; **Subject:** Enforced March pic and Len's JHB sketch. Roland, I see by your address



458raaf squadron. By coincidence, my father (U.S.) was with the 458<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, so there is a commonality right there! The son of another POW (American) and I occasionally send out newsletters via email about the camp at Stalag Luft III,



if you would like to be added to our distribution list. I'll send you the last one we just sent out. **Marilyn. The photo & sketch are of Allied POWs forced march from Sagan. 1945**

458<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group USAAF website. <http://www.458bg.com/> Note – still under construction but still able to view some pages.

**Editor's Note – The Stalag Luft III emails soon snow balled into a virtual novel. The four main contributors were Mike Netherway (Qld. Australia son of 458er Len Netherway), James Douglas (UK – son of 458er S/Ldr John Douglas) Barb Edy (Canada- daughter of F/Lt. Don Edy 33 Squadron RAF and Marilyn Jeffers Walton (USA – daughter of Col. Thomas F. Jeffers 458<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group, 754 Squadron, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, USAAF) The common thread with these very interesting people? – Their fathers were all POWs at Stalag Luft III. During the course of these emails it was nice to hear from Bill Fordyce's daughter Jane. As we know, Bill was also a POW at Stalag Luft III and was designated Number 84 escapee in the famous World War II "Great Escape". I have made a separate folder to keep this historic record from the 'children' of POWs. It is very interesting reading. Sorry for not including all of the emails but the email trail would take up another 20+ pages. (Mike and James I will endeavor to pick up the trail in the next edition. The Stalag Luft III – Great Escape-saga certainly holds great international interest still to this day.**

## FEATURE STORY

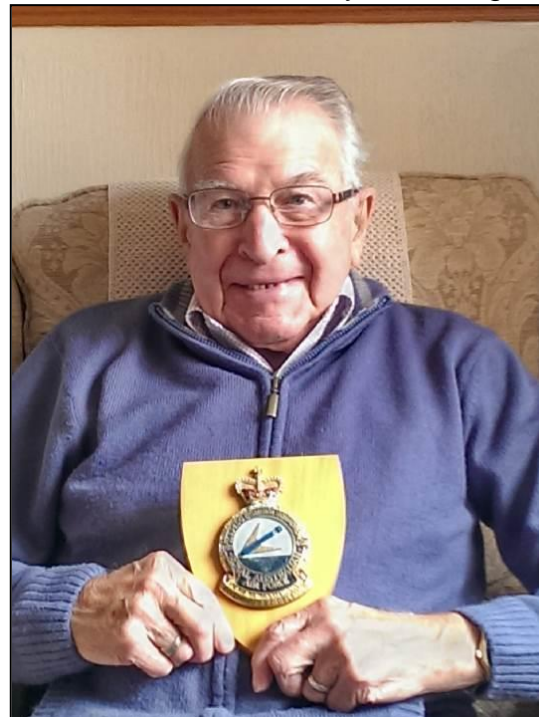
### Steve Search UK - 458 Squadron



After my daughter had been doing some research on 458 Squadron via the internet, she told me about a report written about one of my old comrades, Roy Springall. Like Roy, my wife and I attended a few reunions during the 1950's and kept in touch with a few members of the squadron. I still receive Christmas greetings from Bob Jacklin who was a member of the same crew as me.

Unfortunately I lost touch with several other people. Now that we have the joys of the internet it is wonderful to know that a few of us are left and hopefully we can make contact again. Whatever happened to Jack Ellis, (I believe he has died) Nev and Kev (Kevin Walsh and Nev Vance) I think they came from Perth.

I was exempt from war work until early 1941 and so as a 19 year old in 1941 I joined up and initially trained as a pilot but when I found out that I was due to go the Far East, I opted to remuster and train as a navigator. I was sent to St. Andrews in Scotland and then to South Africa on the *Stirling Castle*. I remember when we got on the *Stirling Castle*, we had to jump up onto the hammocks but I jumped just a little too far and went right over the top!! The *Athlone Castle* came with us with another load of troops and we set sail for S. Africa. One night it was stinking hot and I thought I would just open the porthole to get some air. I had no sooner done it and a message came over the tannoy to say that a light had been seen from the *Athlone Castle* and to put out that ..... light!!. I realised then what I'd done. We were able to travel to places like Palestine, Cairo, Kenya whilst on leave and finally I was sent to Foggia in Italy to join 458 Squadron. When I entered the mess room I was greeted by a load of Australians, which at my tender age of 20 was a little daunting. Although I was more than apprehensive about joining what I thought was an Aussie squadron, it turned out to be the best thing that could have ever happened to me. The only person who initially welcomed me was Ken Crago. However when all the other chaps realised I could play the piano, I was well away and the parties started. After Foggia I went to Gibraltar where we were on convoy escorts looking for U boats. After Gibraltar when the war was over I was put on a boat to Cairo while the others were sent home or to England. To this day, I have never known why!!! I did nothing at Cairo and just wanted to be home.







I kept in touch with Ken until his death 10 years ago. We were fortunate to see Ken again early in 1970 when he came to England and stayed



with us for three months. He met my family and we sent tapes back and forth for several years from that day onwards. Ken very kindly sent me the book *We Find and Destroy* which I treasure to this day. I have the squadron crest and a picture of the Wellington in my house also.

I really hope that I will be able to keep in touch with a few of the old crew who may also have similar memories.

*Thanks to Steve's daughter Brenda Fordham for bringing him back into the*

*fold, so to speak. If anyone would like to contact Steve, please email or drop me a line. Ed*

### **That Fateful Night. By Ron Kirk**



On 14/02/42 the three aircraft took off for Stanton Harcourt where we stayed overnight and in very good spirits we took off heading for Malta at 2200hrs. The next day we were routed over France direct to Malta. On the way over England we were fired on and a bullet destroyed our IFF (Identification – Friend or Foe equipment) Our pilot P.O John MacKellar decided to carry

on although we no longer had any identification. When we were about 100 miles from Malta I broke radio silence and sent a message to ask for instructions because we knew they would shoot down any unidentified aircraft. The Instructions they gave us was to fly on a specific heading and height directly over the Grand Harbour. We did this with baited breath. All went well and we landed 9hrs 30 minutes after take-off. At that time they had no aircraft, so they took ours and said we would have to stay on Malta, which was being bombed day and night. Then came the dreadful news that the other two aircraft we had been flying with hadn't made it so we lost our Commanding Officer Wing Commander Mulholland in one aircraft and my friend Len Thick in the other. We were feeling very sad at this news. Then they decided to send us to the local Y.M.C.A and that evening there was an air raid and our Wellington was destroyed so the net day we were billeted not far from the runway and with air raids all the time, it wasn't very pleasant. WC Mulholland was an excellent CO and was greatly missed. By the way, I received my Bomber Command Clasp yesterday. I'm sure there must be quite a few that qualify for it in Australia.

**ALL BEST WISHES RON KIRK**

## **Orch's Orate**

by the son of the original Gordon 'Orch' "old horse" Orchard - Roland Orchard.



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

Every year we repeat these most solemn words. At the 11<sup>th</sup> hour on the 11<sup>th</sup> Month, 2013, I rose from my work desk to join my work colleagues in paying silent homage to those who lost their lives during all wars and armed conflicts since World War 1. The well-meaning person on our PA system announced the approaching 11<sup>th</sup> hour with a short but thought provoking sentence. "This day celebrates the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War" he said in a very matter of fact manner. By this time my head was bowed and mind transfixed in thoughts that always come to me – my Dad, Gordon, my Uncle Norman-KIA 1945, Dad's other brothers Alan and Ted, my Grandfather Stanley, my great Uncle Billy who served on the Western Front, France 1916-1918, my Mum, the 458 Veterans and widows with whom I've had the privilege to meet and talk over the phone and the millions who's lives needlessly came to an abrupt end due to armed conflicts. Amid these thoughts of loved ones my brain wandered into the perfunctory statement made by my esteemed associate.

*"This day celebrates the end of the First World War"*

Very true statement but there is much, much more to Armistice or Remembrance Day. It is a day to remember all gallant men and women who marched off to serve their countries in times when dark clouds loomed over our way of life. These brave folk ventured not for glory or fame did but to do a 'job'. A 'job' as my Dad once said to me. "A Job that needed doing" To paraphrase Winston Churchill; "Some Job...some doing"

***Lest we forget.***

### **Eligibility Criteria for Bomber Command Clasp to the 1939-45 Star**

A Clasp to the 1939-45 Star is granted to the aircrew of Bomber Command who served for at least sixty days, or completed a tour of operations, on a Bomber Command operational unit and flew at least one operational sortie on a Bomber Command operational unit from the 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1939, to the 8<sup>th</sup> May, 1945, inclusive. The award of the Clasp is to be denoted by a silver rose Emblem when the ribbon alone is worn. Eligibility is extended to those members of Bomber Command aircrew who did not meet the qualifying criteria due to service being brought to an end by death, wounds or other disability due to service, service marked by a gallantry award or taken as a prisoner of war. Foreign nationals commissioned or enlisted into British or, the then, Dominion Air Forces (e.g. Royal Canadian Air Force or Royal Australian Air Force) are eligible provided the individuals did not receive a similar award from their own Government. Eligibility to the Bomber Command Clasp has no effect upon eligibility for World War Two recognition previously awarded and does not suggest automatic eligibility for any further awards.

### **Application Forms for Bomber Command Clasp**

**Australia** - Application forms are attached to this Newsletter – The last two pages.

<http://www.defence.gov.au/medals/Content/+055%20Application%20Forms/AD807.pdf>

<http://www.defence.gov.au/medals/Content/+055%20Application%20Forms/AD809.pdf>

**New Zealand** - Veteran Affairs New Zealand, P O Box 9448 Waikato Mail Centre, Hamilton 3240. <http://www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz/index.html> and email on <mailto:veterans@xtra.co.nz>

**UK** - Free call 0800169227 or [http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic\\_star\\_index.htm](http://www.veterans-uk.info/arctic_star_index.htm) and read details.

**Canada** - <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/collections/cmdp/mainmenu/group04/cvsmbcb> for more details on the Bomber Command Bar available to eligible Canadian Veterans.



AD 807  
Revised 5 Mar 2013

Australian Government  
Department of Defence

## Application for the Issue of Medals and/or Clasps

### Office use only

Application number	Bar code number
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- Please use BLOCK LETTERS only
- **Note:** If the member is deceased, please complete AD 809 - *Application for the Posthumous Issue of Medals and/or Clasps*. If the medals of a deceased member have already been issued they cannot be reissued.
- If you require more space to answer any of the questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper to this application.

### Personal details

Family name	Given name(s)
Rank or title ( <i>Mr, Mrs, Ms etc</i> )	Date of birth
Family name served under ( <i>if different from above</i> )	Given name(s) served under ( <i>if different from above</i> )

### Contact details

Address	Suburb	State	Post code
Email	Telephone number(s)		

### Service details

Service and/or PMKeyS number ( <i>if known</i> )
--------------------------------------------------

Type of service (*Tick all that apply*)

Navy ☐ Army ☐ RAAF ☐ National Service ☐ Merchant Navy ☐ Qantas ☐

Date of enlistment	Date of discharge	Branch of Service	Permanent or Reserve

If you are applying for the Australian Defence Medal, did you complete your initial enlistment period or four years service?

Yes ☐ No ☐



If 'No', please specify your reason for discharge and provide copies of any supporting documents ( <i>Do not send originals</i> )
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Commission date ( <i>if applicable</i> )
------------------------------------------

Do you have eligible overseas service?

Yes ☐ No ☐



If 'Yes', please specify in which country or operation and give the approximate dates

Country or Operation	From	To

### Supporting information

Awards requested (if known) and any other information in support of the application

### Consent for the Directorate of Honours and Awards to access health records, if necessary

A number of medals have criteria which allow them to be awarded due to service being brought to an end because of service-related illness or injury. To assess the eligibility of personnel who did not complete the qualifying period for this reason, the Directorate of Honours and Awards requires access to relevant information contained in their health records. If you were discharged due to medical reasons, and wish the Directorate of Honours and Awards to progress your application, please confirm your consent by ticking 'Yes'.

I authorise the Directorate of Honours and Awards to access my Defence health records for the purpose of claiming medals:

Yes ☐

No ☐

(Please be aware if you do not authorise access to your Defence health records, DH&A will not be able to process your application if you did not complete the qualifying period.)

#### CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF HEALTH INFORMATION

Collection, storage and use or disclosure of personal information is subject to the Information Privacy Principles as set out in Section 14 of the [Privacy Act \(1988\)](#), referred to in this document as 'the Act'.

Health information is to be managed in accordance with the Act and is given a privacy marking of STAFF-IN-CONFIDENCE or MEDICAL-IN-CONFIDENCE. The 'need to know' principle is to be strictly applied.

A Health Record for Defence personnel has been maintained of medical, dental and psychology services provided to them during ADF service. Identifiable information or copies of health records may not be given to other parties outside Defence, such as hospitals and private health practitioners, unless it is required by law or permitted under the Act.

### Privacy note

The Department of Defence complies with the Information Privacy Principles of the [Privacy Act \(1988\)](#) in the collection, storage, handling, use and disclosure of personal information.

This information is being collected for the purpose of assessing your application for a medal or award. Medals and awards are conferred in accordance with executive instruments of the Crown.

This personal information may be disclosed to the office of the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia for approval of medals and awards.

### Authorisation and declaration

I authorise Australian Government departments, agencies and other organisations and individuals to disclose to the Department of Defence any personal information required to process this application.

I acknowledge that, with the exception of any health information, the Department of Defence may disclose this personal information to the office of the Governor-General for approval of the awards.

I declare that the information I have given on this form is correct.

I understand that there are penalties for deliberately giving false or misleading information.

Signature	Printed name	Date

### Return this application to:

Directorate of Honours and Awards  
CP2-1-016  
PO Box 7952  
CANBERRA BC ACT 2610





Australian Government  
Department of Defence

## Application for the Posthumous Issue of Medals and/or Clasps

### Office use only

Name	Date of acknowledgement
Application number	Bar code number

- Please use BLOCK LETTERS only.
- **Note:** If medals have already been issued, the medals **cannot** be reissued.
- If you require more space to answer any of the questions, please attach a separate sheet of paper to this application.

### Your contact details

Family name		Given name(s)		
Title ( <i>Mr, Mrs, Ms etc</i> )	Relationship to member			
Address		Suburb	State	Post code
Email		Telephone number(s)		

### Deceased member's details

Family name		Given name(s)	
Family name served under ( <i>if different from above</i> )		Given name(s) served under ( <i>if different from above</i> )	
Rank ( <i>if known</i> )	Service or PMKeyS number ( <i>if known</i> )	Date of birth	

### Type of service (Tick all that apply)

Navy ☐ Army ☐ RAAF ☐ National Service ☐ Merchant Navy ☐ Qantas ☐

### Awards details

Awards requested ( <i>if known</i> ) and any other information in support of the application
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

- Please sign the declaration on page 2

### Consent for the Directorate of Honours and Awards to access health records, if necessary

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I authorise the Directorate of Honours and Awards to access the Defence health records of \_\_\_\_\_  
(insert name) for the purpose of claiming medals:

Yes ☐

No ☐

(Please be aware if you do not authorise access to the member's Defence health records, DH&A will not be able to process the application if the member did not complete the qualifying period.)

#### CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF HEALTH INFORMATION

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Signature	Printed name	Date

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