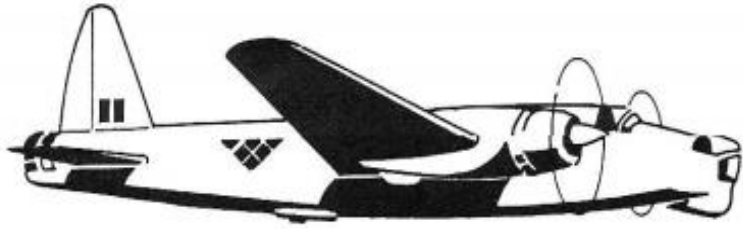


458

SQUADRON NEWS



JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

Year 65 No 250 November 2014



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U.K: Leon Armstrong



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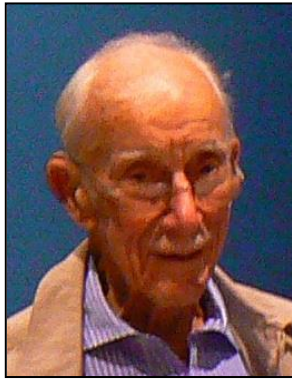
*** Have you notified Roland Orchard if you prefer to receive your newsletter by
email? Are there others in your family, or circle of friends, who would like to receive
a copy by e-mail? Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.*

**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 30th March 2015. Please feel free to mail or email in your stories,
articles or enquires to Roland. All are welcome.**



PRESIDENTS' MESSAGES



It is great pleasure that I offer my congratulations to the members and families of 458 Squadron on the occasion of the publication of this historic 250th newsletter. I would particularly like to thank Roland and Jeremy Orchard for their tireless works in the establishment of our 458 website:

www.458raafsquadron.org

which provides a wonderful history of incidents and events of the squadron's activities during WW2 and to this day. We are continually finding new information of unreported events and in some instances correction of some recollections which were highlighted in Peter Alexander's Book on 458 Squadron "We Find and Destroy"

I do trust that this letter finds our members and families full of enthusiasm for the continuance of our association.

From my perspective I am appreciative for the assistance provided by all members, family and associates of The Squadron who have, in no small way, contributed to our close relationships over the past 70 years. With Warmest Regards,

KEITH COUSINS - 458 Squadron Association President



Many congratulations to 458 Squadron in producing the 250th edition of the Squadron News. A magnificent achievement. The newsletter has helped keep the 458 family together across the Commonwealth countries who contributed to this very special RAAF squadron.

For more than six decades, we've been able to share our thoughts, our experiences, our highs and lows. This has been the focal point that has bridged oceans that has kept us united for so long, despite us being so far apart and, in most cases today, well into our nineties. Now with the younger generations joining the fold, and enjoying seeing us on the Worldwide Web, here's to the next 250 editions.

LEON ARMSTRONG - UK Flight President



First and foremost and on behalf of the five known Canadian members of 458 Squadron, specifically Tom Lindsay, Tom Rowan, Bert Markland, Jack Reynolds and I, our sincere congratulations on the remarkable achievement represented by the publication of the 250th edition of the 458 Squadron Newsletter. Those congratulations include all those whose dedication and hard work, from the 1st to the 250th editions have made this possible. Sadly many are no longer with us.

Starting with returning veterans who initiated publication of the newsletter, over the passing years the responsibility for the Newsletter has inevitably transitioned to succeeding generations and made it possible to maintain and extend the outstanding spirit of 458 Squadron established during WWII. Special commendations to this younger generation, who have taken on this responsibility and, in addition, established a highly successful and well-used 458 website which has resulted in expanding coverage and increasingly larger editions.

**BRYAN QUINLAN - On Behalf of TOM LINDSAY
Canada Flight President**



VALE:-

Jim Whittem. OAM. NSW

Jack Hamilton NSW

Frederick James "Buck" Pederson SA

Dudley McKay QLD

Denis George (Doug) Holland NSW

Jim Palmer WA

Joan Woodhead NSW



BUCKINGHAM PALACE

Mr. Keith Cousins,
President,
458 Squadron Association.

Please convey my warm thanks to the members of the 458 Squadron Association and to the editorial team of the 458 Royal Australian Air Force Squadron Newsletter for their kind message of loyalty sent on the Sixty-Fifth Anniversary of the founding of the Association and on the publication of the Two Hundred and Fiftieth Edition of the Squadron Newsletter.

I appreciate your thoughtfulness in writing as you did and, in return, send my warmest best wishes to all members of the Association and to the readers of the 458 Squadron Newsletter in this special anniversary year.

ELIZABETH R.

16th October, 2014.



His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

Message from His Excellency General The Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

for the 250th edition of the 458 Squadron RAAF Association Newsletter

I have a great deal of admiration for 458 Squadron—the gallant airmen who undertook sustained action against the enemy during World War Two. In the skies over Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean and Gibraltar, flying in your beloved Vickers Wellington, you found and destroyed, just as your motto so appropriately declares. You did your duty and you made a decisive contribution to the Allied victory.

The courage, dedication and tenacity it took to go back up again and again, sortie after sortie is truly commendable. You lost friends along the way, far too many. I know you still carry their memory with you, and you remember their sacrifice, as do I. This is the least we owe to those that paid the ultimate price in the service of our great nation.

On behalf of all Australians, I thank all the airmen of 458 Squadron. Today we live freely, because of you, and all the men and women who fought for our nation during the Second World War.

I also applaud the outstanding support provided by the dedicated members of the 458 Squadron RAAF Association. For 65 years you have cared for, assisted, and informed the surviving members of the Squadron, and their wives and partners. You demonstrate a strong comradeship that still resonates 70 years on from when it was first forged in the midst of battle. I think it is wonderful you have maintained such an unbreakable bond and caring friendship.

For this, the 250th edition of this important newsletter, I send my warmest congratulations to 458 Squadron RAAF Association for this remarkable milestone.



PRIME MINISTER

MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

458 SQUADRON NEWS

I am pleased to provide this message for the 65th anniversary and 250th edition of the 458 Squadron Association journal, *458 Squadron News*.

In 1941, the formation of 458 Squadron RAAF was a crucial response to threats against our freedom and security.

The Squadron's work, from the strategic bombing campaign against Germany to mine laying operations in the Mediterranean, reflects a history of great service and sacrifice.

As the Second World War was fought, Australian members of 458 Squadron were acknowledged as a band of men representing their families and country with honour and facing the "unpublicised and unknown realities of war".

The *458 Squadron News* has carried on the traditions and memory of the many brave men who served as part of this unique Ex RAAF Squadron.

This 65th anniversary coincides with the commencement of the Centenary of Anzac. It is a time when we remember the tide of events that shaped our nation and that still cast a shadow over the wider world.

Each generation has been proud of our soldiers, sailors and airmen because they have been ready to put their lives on the line for our country.

As one who has never worn a soldier's uniform, I salute those who have. I also pay tribute to the widows and families of those who have served in our armed forces.

I congratulate *458 Squadron News* on reaching this milestone. May this journal continue to serve the community and our servicemen and women for decades to come.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tony Abbott'.

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister of Australia

22 August 2014



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS

Department of Defence, R1-G-C001, PO Box 7902, CANBERRA BC ACT 2610, AUSTRALIA

OCAF/OUT/2014/AB17177746

Mr Keith Cousins

President

458 Squadron Association

PO Box 3021

TURRAMURRA NSW 2074

To all members of 458 Squadron Association

In the centenary year of Australian military aviation, it is fitting to commend, congratulate and celebrate 458 Squadron for its exemplary war-time Service and dedication in post-war years.

What a splendid milestone in reaching the 250th edition of the 458 Squadron Journal. The 458 Squadron website and completion of the Squadron photo albums are outstanding achievements of which you can be very proud.

As the RAAF undergoes significant changes in the 21st century, we can look back with pride on the accomplishments of those who went before, both in the air and supporting on the ground.

I congratulate one and all within 458 Squadron for your service to country and community, and in making an indelible mark in RAAF history.

Yours sincerely



GC Brown, AO
Air Marshal
Chief of Air Force

20 March 2014

FREDERICK JAMES 'BUCK' PEDERSEN. 1914 – 2014

Frederick James Pedersen, 'Buck' to his fellow Service colleagues, died quietly at the War Veterans Home in Myrtle Bank, South Australia in the early evening of Thursday, April 10th, 2014, with his family around him. He was in his 100th year and April 10th was the 100th day of the year.

He was born in Gawler, SA, on 30th June, 1914 to Olive and Percival Pedersen, the youngest of three boys. His early life was spent in Gawler, Adelaide and Torrensville. He left school at the age of 14 and became a Metal Spinner with Austral Sheet Metal Works at Torrensville, where his brothers worked. After the war he worked at Chief Kitchenware at Cavan, until his retirement. He was a skilled workman and he loved what he did.

Sport was always his passion. He learned to swim in the junction of the North and South Para Rivers in Gawler with a kerosene tin as a flotation aid. He saved his wages for a racing bike and won Junior Road races in the early 1930s, played baseball and tennis and won the Half-mile footrace at the Bay Sheffield Athletics Carnival at Glenelg in 1936. He was an accomplished Ballroom dancer when he met Ruby Just at the Palais Royal Ballroom in Adelaide. They were married on 7th June, 1941 at St. Patrick's Catholic Church in the city.

When World War II was declared he applied to enlist in the RAAF because he already had a Pilot's Licence, from the Royal Aero Club at Parafield. His application was rejected on the grounds that he "did not have a College Education", so he went to the School of Mines in Adelaide and studied Algebra, Trigonometry and Morse Code. He applied again, was accepted and enlisted on 21st July, 1941, aged 27. He joined Course 18 of the Empire Training Scheme at Mt. Breckan in Victor Harbor and after further training embarked from Adelaide on 11th May, 1942, leaving behind his pregnant wife, Ruby, and commencing a daily handwritten Diary in which he faithfully recorded the events of his Service life.

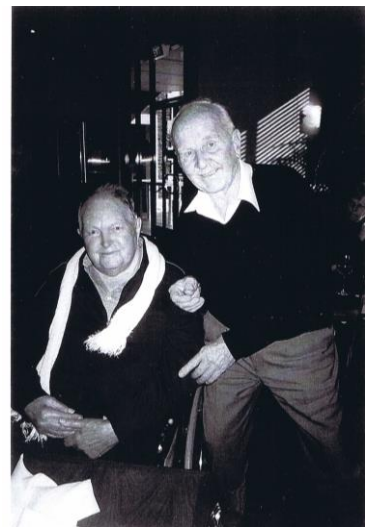
Known as 'Snow' because of his white-blond hair, he was called 'Buck' in the RAAF as there was already another 'Snow' in the group. In his Diary he writes of the places he visited and his experiences en route to the UK on the RMS "Rimutaka"; while posted to Cranage as a Staff Pilot and where he was granted his Commission; with Middle East Command; with 458 Squadron; and on the voyage home on the MV "Stirling Castle". His photos and his collection of Postcards all went into albums and after the war



he told many stories about places and events known to many of his fellow Servicemen at the time. His introduction to the Wellington Bomber came just eleven days after his arrival in the UK. He was billeted with a family who arranged a tour of inspection for him of the Vickers Wellington factory at Chester. After being taken up on a Test flight he met Barnes Wallace, a meeting that he never forgot. He made it his business to know everything he could about the Wellington from that time on. He and his crew from Middle East Command were posted to 458 Squadron in January 1945. He was at Gibraltar for the 1945 Anzac Day March, the Victory

Parade and the Ceremony for the Disbanding of the Squadron and they flew back to the UK via France in June. His Diary, ever mindful of Security, nevertheless gives a detailed account of his wartime experiences while there. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant during his time at Gibraltar.

In civilian life he maintained his interest in the 458 Squadron and the Wellington aircraft, keeping in contact with Bill Hurford from his crew and Canadian Doug Noel whom he had met at Cranage. Both visited 'Buck', with their wives, in their retirement. He remained an avid reader of the 458 Squadron Association Newsletter right up until his death. During his time at the War Veterans Home at Myrtle Bank he attended Association reunion luncheons and enjoyed meeting Colin Hutchinson and his wife. Colin is now probably the last remaining 458 Squadron veteran in SA. Life as a civilian was full and active. Known as "Snow" again to friends and family, he and Ruby built a house together, raising four daughters. He was an active member of his local Church and supporter of his children's school. He was always a craftsman, making furniture, aviaries and a fern house, adding wrought iron features for doors and fence. He cultivated a truly splendid garden of fruit

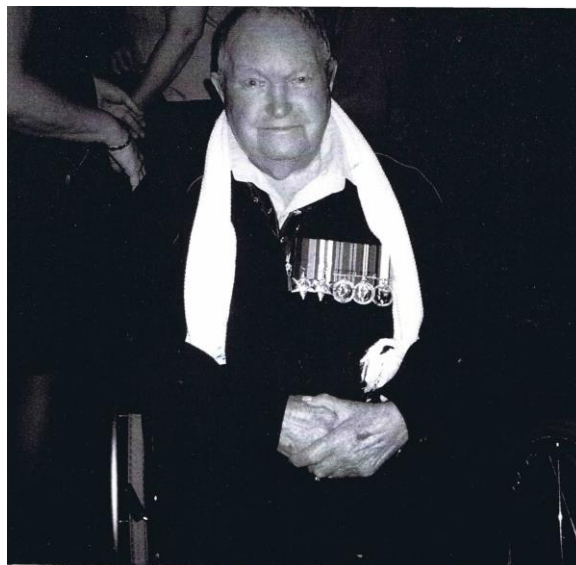


trees, vegetables and amazing flowers, all of which he shared with people in the neighbourhood. He took up sport again, playing basketball, hockey and later golf. He continued cycling to work even after buying a car. He enjoyed photography and was an avid reader of sports magazines, especially about golf. He enjoyed fishing and followed horseracing from radio, newspaper and T.V., always interested in bloodlines, trainers and jockeys.

When he retired he walked – miles, every day, before breakfast. He kept up his interest in Meteorology and would offer information about the weather when asked. He was never wrong. At Ruby's request, however, he never flew again.

He went back to his trade as a metal spinner. He was tremendously proud when he was asked to spin the 'bowl' of the Adelaide Cup, the trophy for the winner of the horse race of that name, in 1986, and again for the next two years, including two smaller trophies for the winning trainer and jockey. What made it so special was that the Adelaide Cup was spun in gold. On his retirement the Company gave him the lathe he had used for his work. He continued to spin aluminium creatively and added wood turning to his list of hobbies. He created many fine pieces treasured by family members to this day. Although not a Diary, he did write down some of his reminiscences that had entertained people who visited him, and he was well known for his amusing verses in Birthday, Christmas and Anniversary cards in his later years.

Ruby died, aged 98, in 2009. They had been married for 68 years. He is survived by his four daughters, 8 granddaughters, 10 grandsons, 7 great-granddaughters and 8 great-grandsons.



Reproduced with kind permission from Buck's daughter Lorraine Lienert.

James Harrington Whitem (Jim)

6th November 1921 - 7th May 2014



Dr. Jim Whitem matriculated from North Sydney Boys High School and then began his studies in veterinary science at the University of Sydney in 1938, at the age of 16. After an abbreviated course he graduated with his class-mates in 1942 and went to war. Jim joined the RAAF and was trained as a pilot in NSW. During his operational flight training in Canada he courted and proposed to his life-long companion and soul-mate, Dorothy. Jim completed a tour of duty as a skipper in Wellington light bombers in the Mediterranean theatre. After one veterinary escapade, diagnosing an outbreak of swine fever in the squadron-leader's piggery in Italy, he found himself in Gibraltar at the end of the war. He ferried his Wellington and crew to England and there he happily terminated his RAAF career after having survived serving his nation as a bomber pilot in wartime.

While awaiting a ship home in 1945, Jim enrolled at Cambridge for a refresher course in bacteriology. During his Cambridge studies Jim received an invitation from Prof Clunies-Ross, to join the faculty at the University of Sydney as a lecturer in pathology. He returned home, was married to Dorothy who arrived on a Bride ship from Canada, and he began his veterinary career.



From 1948 to 1957 Jim taught veterinary pathology to undergraduates at the University of Sydney. He established himself as a thinker and as a leader in evidence-based diagnostic medicine. In collaboration with his class mate Douglas Blood, Jim helped to introduce the systematic application of evidence to clinic-pathological diagnosis. Being one of the first Fullbright Scholars, Jim took a sabbatical during 1950 and 1951 at the University of Minnesota where he studied neuropathology. Jim came to be globally respected as a neuropathologist and was

admitted as a member of the World Federation of Neurology in Comparative Neuropathology, in 1959. Together with his University of Sydney colleagues such as Doug Blood, Jim Steel and Don Titchen, Jim published 17 peer reviewed articles describing their clinical and clinico-pathological findings on a variety of common clinical problems that hitherto had little published evidential description, including milestone publications on arsenic poisoning in dogs, canine distemper and encephalitis, bovine hyperkeratosis, congenital pseudolipidosis in calves, and the first report in Australia of Infectious Canine Hepatitis.

In 1958 Jim succeeded Col. Lionel Rose as the Director of Animal Industries and Chief Veterinarian of the Northern Territory, based in Alice Springs. The next 5 years was the most productive period of his research life, and also marked his transition from accomplished academic neuropathologist into a consummate public health administrator and diplomat. During the time in The Alice, Jim's work spanned many disciplines. He lead the teamwork which described previously unknown plant intoxications. He lead the design of the eradication program for contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia (CBPP) and he adapted the eradication programs for bovine tuberculosis (TB) and bovine brucellosis for the tropics. He was a pioneer in determining the animal welfare requirements for the live export of cattle to Asian markets, producing a report in 1959 on welfare and business aspects of shipment of live cattle to Hong Kong. He was a pioneer as a team member of the first Caucasian 'exploration' of several areas of the Northern Territory and Western Australia. Jim also pioneered the application of pathobiology and epidemiological principles to production systems in arid regions. He was the prime mover pulling the adaption of freight road trains to the transport of live cattle to market, having recognized the economic and animal welfare benefits of avoiding walking cattle via the historical overland stock routes. As a member of the legislature of the Northern Territory, Jim introduced and shepherded the first Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance 1960, being issued with registration certificate number 1. During his last few years in the Territory, Jim was sent by the administration on several international

journeys on behalf of the Territories ambitions in animal industries. These journeys to the USA, Canada, Germany, Hong Kong and South Africa set the scene for his later career as an Australian Diplomat. But first, in 1963 Jim moved to take managerial charge of the CSIRO's Animal Health Research Laboratories at the Veterinary Research Institute in Parkville, VIC. Here he found himself again co-located with his former veterinary school colleagues, as Doug Blood and others reestablished the University of Melbourne's veterinary school. Jim was invited as an external member of the new Faculty Board. For the remainder of the decade he lead the CSIRO research team in studies on bovine fertility, ephemeral fever, tuberculosis, pyrrolizidine alkaloid toxicity and during this time he also identified the need for the establishment of a high security virus laboratory and then set the stage for the establishment of ANAHL (now AAHL), a decade later. The decade in Victoria also allowed Jim to rebuild friendships and raise a young family. He acquired new skills in building small yachts and sailing them, fly fishing, and wine bottling during this phase of his life.



Jim was moved to Canberra in 1971 as the first secretary and executive director of the new Commonwealth and States Veterinary Committee. In this role Jim was instrumental at a political level in

reactivating a 20 year old proposal to establish the Bureau of Animal Health. He was the central coordinator for proposals to establish AAHL, provided central support to the eradication programs for CBPP, TB and brucellosis and wrote the standard definition and rules for these programs. For his work in these disease control programs Jim was honored in 1977 by the award of an honorary Diplome of the American College of Veterinary Epidemiology for "services to his country". Sadly, as was usual in Australia at that time such service was simply expected, and it was many decades before Australia saw fit to similarly acknowledge Jim's expertise, dedication and service.

In 1974 Jim was posted to the Australian Embassy in Washington DC, first as Scientific Attaché and after 2 years as the Counsellor Scientific. In this diplomatic role Jim brought together into productive scientific collaboration Australia and the north american nations. Under his guidance Australia worked closely with NASA to collaborate on deep space discovery programs, communications for programs such as the Landsat satellite network, and also developed co-sponsored programs in energy, agriculture, medicine, meteorology and oceanography. Jim concluded his professional career in 1981 in Washington DC as a consultant pathologist at the National Institutes of Health.



In retirement Jim elected to withdraw completely from veterinary activities, rightly concluding that he had done his bit and that he should take time for himself. Jim and Dorothy sailed their Herreshoff keel boat, living aboard for long stretches while cruising the eastern coast of Australia. In the off-seasons they toured the world, spending long stretches visiting their friends, children and grandchildren around the world.

Jim was an active member of the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) for all his professional life. At various times he was the President of two State Divisions (NSW and NT) and a member of Federal Council on several occasions. He was the AVA annual meeting program convener from 1966 to 1969, a member of the Editorial Committee for the Australian Veterinary Journal for 9 years and a foundation member of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists. Jim also contributed to the nation's youth through the Australian Scout's Association as a Scout Master and later Commissioner, serving the association as a leader for 26 years. In 2011 the AVA recognized Jim's service by awarding him the Gilruth Prize. At Government House in



Canberra in 2013, in honour of his services to Australia, Jim was awarded the Order of Australia Medal. In his last weeks with us, Jim requested that his address in acceptance of his Gilruth prize, which was inadvertently overlooked for publication in our journal, be reproduced in the same edition of the AVJ as his obituary: it is his parting message to the profession.

Dr. Jim Whittem was bereft by the early death of his son Hugh in 1993 and the loss of his wife Dorothy in 2006. He is survived by and he lives on in his children Wendy, David and Ted, 8 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

Ted Whittem



Reproduced with kind permission from Jim's Daughter Wendy Whittem-Trunz.

FLIGHT REPORTS:

New South Wales Flight report by David Longhurst

The return of "The 458 Albums" to The Australian War Memorial

On the 9th April "458 Squadron Photograph Albums" were returned to the Australian War Memorial at an informal ceremony in the presence of 458 icons Eric Munkman and Jim Whittem, various family members and AWMs Assistant Director, Tim Sullivan and Curator of Photographs, Joanne Smedley.

I was given the honour of thanking all who contributed to this fantastic project.

The 458 albums are unique in that not only are they an intimate photographic record of the daily lives of members of 458 over the course of the Squadron's involvement in WW11, but they record the subsequent social interaction of its members over the course of their entire lives as a result of that "experience". The records that remain exist due to the efforts of a number of key personnel, who nonetheless changed over time. Few if any other military units have photographic and newsletter records such as these. What isn't unique but which is not always understood by people who have not served in the services is the bonding that occurs through that service, a bond that lasts a lifetime. These photos and newsletters record that lasting mateship over the course of 70 plus years!

What made this occasion momentous was that technology in the form of broadband access now allows everyone access to both these photos, as well as past issues of the 458 Newsletter and many other related articles and links to similar information and organizations worldwide. No longer are 458's photographic record, its newsletters and other relevant documentation locked up at AWM with a special visit to Canberra required to view them.

The question came to me whilst this process was underway, "How did our merry band of resourceful 458 fathers acquire film for their cameras during the war?" After all it was likely to be in short supply, especially in some of the remote locations from which they operated? The answer was delivered by President Keith Cousins. Apparently a certain 458 member had the talent for cutting down the D^AD film used in the aircraft cameras for recognizance purposes so that it could be used in personal cameras.

458 Squadron Association is indebted particularly to Peter Hedgcock and also Jeremy, Chris and Roland Orchard for their efforts in bringing this project to the stage that it is at, 524 pages, 1500+ photographs and nearly all past copies of the 458 Newsletter, accessible via the 458 Squadron website.



This required many hours of work, done out of love and respect for our veterans, with still more to be done.

Having established the website any material that comes to light can be relatively easily added to it. So if you have a unique item please bring it to Peter's attention, if the detail can be scanned or photographed it can be placed on the website where it will become available not just to 458 members and their families but any person worldwide who has access to the web.

There is also other work on a separate front that needs to be done. We need to ensure that the memory of this proud squadron is kept alive in a respectful manner. For instance in Sydney there are attempts to prevent the banners that display the record of each squadron's service being paraded on Anzac Day, something that has occurred from the end of the war until this point in time.

Additionally on my recent visit to "The National Memorial to the Few" at Capel-le-Ferne between Dover and Folkestone (probably the most impressive of all Battle for Britain Memorials.) I discovered that 458 doesn't get a mention. This certainly needs to be looked into and the appropriateness of pursuing such a request, given that I am unaware of the criteria for inclusion.

Finally we are greatly indebted to the Australian War Memorial for offering a very fitting home for the 458 Albums.

South Australia Flight report by Rick Michell

Congratulations to our Veterans past and present for enabling us to enjoy 65 years of continuous publication culminating in this very special 250th Edition of the 458 Squadron Association Newsletter. South Australia Flight is not as active as previous years but we still feel very much connected because of this Newsletter.

Our Christmas luncheon will be at the Kensi Hotel on the 7th December, 2014. The Kensington Hotel 23 Regent Street Kensington. SA. 5068.

Note from Editor- On behalf of all we wish Rick a speedy recovery and a happy and healthy future.

West Australia Flight report by Ted Jewell



When we were at Protville, the mates and I had a French car to run around in. We used to drive down to the local swimming pool on the river nearby when we had time off. We didn't have any bathers but swam in the nuddy. One day a car turned up and a lovely lady arrived in bathers for a swim, we had to stay in the water until she had gone. On the way back to camp we called into a French farm for some of their wine. The farmer was a fairly old French man. One day there appeared at the doorway two lovely young girls. The old bloke yelled something to them in French to go inside. He followed them inside, when he appeared later he had D.B shotgun in his hands and stayed that way until we left. We got the feeling he didn't trust us! When we were at Bone, the transport section totalled clapped out Ford trucks with wooden bodies. It was arranged at a salvage depot that some trucks would have some of their old bodies removed and replaced with steel bodies. One of the drivers, Laurie "Pop" Grigsby was to drive a truck to the salvage yard for a new body. The old one was removed at our camp. Laurie asked me to go with him. We arrived at the front gate and handed the guard the papers. He said to back up to the ramp and men would be there to fix the new body. When they were fixed a siren sounded and the three men said it was lunch time, and they shot through. They must have had better food than us as they moved so fast! After they had gone I looked at the pile motor bikes next to us. I looked at Laurie, and he looked at me. In no time, we had six bikes on the back of the truck lying on their sides, with the back up so they couldn't be seen from below. We drove up the gate, and the same guard was on duty. He said "Are you all fixed up?" and away we went back to camp. The rest of our time at Bone we had great fun in the sand hills near our camp on the beach.



Cliff Williams, Junior Davies & Ted Jewell - Tunis

Jim Palmer passed away on the 15th July 2014. Jim was in the first batch to leave Australia for 458 Squadron. He was 94.

Canada Flight report by Bryan Quinlan



The most lasting memories of most 458 WWII Veterans involves the special friendships formed, unfortunately sometimes ending prematurely, but many that continued into peacetime and some still to the present. 458 was a friendly and informal Squadron inclusive of several Commonwealth Nationalities, naturally with a predominance of Aussies, mixed in with RAF, RNZAF, South African and RCAF

airmen and even a lone Belgian.

Speaking on a personal basis of friendships that were formed while on 458 include Bill "pebble" Hailstone, (because of his slight stature – nicknames were popular), who with his crew were lost in a brave and daring torpedo attack on an enemy ship in an Italian harbour. Also a very close friendship with Mick "the cowardly lion" Reid because of his abundance of curly hair and an imagined resemblance to that character in the film "The Wizard of Oz".

"Cowardly" he was not! Our friendship grew even stronger in the postwar years until his death on 27 Jan 2004. Other close friendships formed on 458 which continue include George "Cobber" Unitt and George Dunmore, RAF, who flew with me at Limavady and on the flight to Egypt via Gibraltar where we were split up, but in contact again when he joined 458 at Protville and became C.O Col. Bruce McKenzie's second pilot until taking over his own crew. We stayed in contact via telephone, mainly at Christmas time. There were many others, including my RAF crew formed at OTU.

Of course, a lasting memory is the dynamic and daring leadership of Bruce McKenzie and his informal mode of military discipline.

Typical of his personality he took the time on a visit to Vancouver in the 1970's to contact me and invited me for a drink at the hotel he was at in downtown Vancouver. Earlier in his business trip to Canada while in Ontario, he had met with Peter Eastcott, his first navigator, George Powel, one of his wags and Mick Reid for a few drinks, again at his hotel. I have a photo of that meeting.

In conclusion, during my 4-1/2 years in the airforce I served on a RAF squadron, a RCAF Squadron and of course RAAF 458 squadron. I have no hesitation in saying that 458 is by far my favourite in all respects, compatibility, leadership, operational and recreational activities during stand-down time. Finally a heartfelt tribute and thanks to all our Aussie mates we salute you and wish you every success in all your future endeavours

BRYAN QUINLAN

United Kingdom Flight report by Keith Wilkinson



This being a special year for 458 Squadron, we had quite a special reunion in the UK – though not quite the one we had planned. In fact former pilot Jack Christianson turned out to be the last man standing – literally. The night before the reunion our UK vice-president Leon Armstrong, also a former pilot, had a fall in his flat and banged his head. On the advice of his doctor, he was unable to join us on the train down to London so, sadly, for the first time in many a year Leon – always the life and soul of any gathering - couldn't make it.

We had booked into the RAF Club in London, a wonderful place, full of old world charm and bags of character. Leon has been a member for a long time and was able to get us in to the Club for the reunion. We'd been concerned that with Leon not being able to make it, we'd not be able to carry on with the function as it's a strictly Members Only establishment. But they were both understanding and accommodating when they heard about Leon's predicament.

Jack came along with his wife Audrey. This year they have toasted 65 years of married life, receiving a card from The Queen. They have also been celebrating the arrival – in Western Australia – of their very first great grandchild, a baby boy. At the reunion, Jack and Audrey were joined by their daughter and son-in-law. And I was there with my wife.

Our special guest was Adam Wagstaffe from Canada, nephew of Warrant Officer John Michael Wagstaffe, a pilot who died in a plane crash with three other crew members whilst serving with 458 Squadron in Malta in 1944. Adam is himself a commercial pilot, flying an Aeronca L-3B, which he bought in 1996.

He'd been staying in France and came over on the train, hoping to meet Leon who had flown on the squadron with his uncle, and also crashed on landing in Malta. So there was some sadness that Leon had at the very last minute had his unfortunate accident. But Adam and Jack got on very well, exchanging views about flying (even in his 80s, Jack had taken flying lessons to keep his hand in!). Jack was telling him how he learned to drop torpedoes in 1943. Adam described how he flew around the Toronto area, navigating largely by following roads and checking water towers which have place names written on top of them.

At the RAF Club we had the reunion lunch in the pub in the basement called The Running Horse where we consumed Spitfire ale. We then walked across the road to the magnificent sculptured memorial to the men of Bomber Command. This was the UK Flight's second trip to this memorial, and last time Leon was with us. Leon has arranged for us to dine in the past at the Club, and it was due to his hard work and persistence that the 458 plaque hangs proudly on the wall there, among many others from Australia and the Commonwealth. This time we stayed overnight which is quite an experience, the club having so many historic connections. My wife and I joined Jack and his family at the Savoy Theatre to see Dirty Rotten Scoundrels.

I am pleased to report that Leon made a full recovery from his fall and is keen for us to have future reunions, quite possibly again at the RAF Club. Unfortunately the number of people in the UK able to attend reunions has fallen considerably over the past few years. Only a handful of veterans remain and those still with us have problems making journeys of any length, now that they are in their nineties. Jack has always been of the view that we should continue to meet once a year, even if it's a tiny informal gathering, like this was. At least it keeps the tradition going, and it is quite fun. So, if anyone else has any thoughts about reunions, please do let us know.

As for Jack being, as I said "the last man standing", he too had a recent fall – hitting his head and arm on a concrete path, and giving himself two black eyes and a number of bruises and scratches. Thankfully, despite being, like Leon, in his nineties, he came out of it largely unscathed.



RAF Club London



Jack Christianson and Adam Wagstaffe at the Bomber Command Memorial, Green Par

Queensland Flight Report by Christine Thomson



Christine & Adam Thomson

Congratulations to all the Veterans for the 65 years of dedication and commitment in keeping the 458 Squadron memories alive and spread across the globe. We honour you and will not forget the sacrifice you made. It's a fantastic effort to think that this is the 250th edition to be published. Well done from both Adam and I, and our family! For this edition we felt it would be appropriate to share some memories that Jock had shared with Adam, as a young boy. (See Adam's article "MEMORIES OF JOHN (Jock) WALLACE THOMSON")

Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard



Sixty-five years since the men of 458 Squadron RAAF decided to carry on the mateships that were molded during wartime in the form of a Newsletter and still going strong in the 21st Century. It has been an outstanding achievement to have the foresight and persistence to keep it going for so long. As Editor and Publisher I can only hope to carry on this grand tradition in keeping with my forebears. Another momentous occasion this year was completing the digitization process and subsequent handover of the Official 458 Squadron Photo Albums to the Australia War Memorial, Canberra on the 9th April. A contingent of 458ers headed by the Late Jim Whittem OAM and Eric Munkman were met by the Assistant Director Tim Sullivan and Head Curator of Photographs Joanne Smedley in the Administration Facility. An eloquent hand-over presentation was made by The Squadron Secretary David Longhurst followed by an equally eloquent acceptance by Tim. Importantly, I would like to add, not only the significance of this hand over but the statement Assistant Director AWM Sullivan made, which was quickly backed up by Head Curator AWM Photographs Smedley. I quote:



"The Australian War Memorial has yet to see a more detailed photographic account by any other Operational Unit from World War 2."

This statement alone speaks volumes. (Pardon the pun)
It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge Mr Peter Hedgcock, Victoria Flight Honorary Historian, whose tireless work and many hundreds of hours of camera and computer work helped make this project an outstanding success. The entire photo collection from the 458 Squadron Albums will be rolled out for all to view on the 458 Squadron Website. www.458raafsquadron.org

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

These donations help with the ongoing 458 Website hosting, future website development and 458 Newsletter printing & postage costs. All donations small or large are most welcome and appreciated. Shown here are those since our last Newsletter was published.

- Colin Bruggy
- Ian Robert Palmer, Jim Palmer
- Marilyn Bell from Lalor Park, New South Wales
- William Laughlin from Launceston, Tasmania
- Linda Harvey from Cornwall UK. In memory of Dad, Hal Lee
- Dominic Healy from Melbourne, Victoria
- Eric Munkman from Collaroy Plateau, New South Wales.
- Anonymous from Victoria (2nd very kind donation)
- Michael Tricarico and Simon Lamacraft of Silvan Engineering, Dandenong South, Victoria (printing work for large Iconic Squadron group photos)
- George Ward, RSL Bayswater Victoria, Historian (research assistance)
- The full listing of our Supporters can be found at our webpage link. We wholeheartedly thank you all; we couldn't do it without you.

<http://458raafsquadron.org/memorabilia-shop/financial-supporters-friends.html>

Feature Story

As promised in 458 Newsletter #249 we carry on with Part 2 of the story of Dudley and Enid. As Editor I feel the need to share stories from a woman's perspective, when directly related to a 458 Squadron Veteran (and especially having served her country herself.) Let's face it, many women bore the brunt of the psychological traumas that were often and still are, inflicted on front line Service Personnel caused by the horrors of war. Having that to contend with, plus in most cases, bringing up children was and is no mean feat. This article is a salute to those women whom did just that.. However, it is with great sadness I report Dudley's passing on the 2nd of July. Deb Favier is one of six daughters and emailed the sad news. Deb's words in her first paragraph below show her father's true character. **ed.**



From: Alan and Deb Favier
Sent: Wednesday, 9 July 2014
To: Roland Orchard
Subject: Dad



Am just letting you know that our beautiful, amazing, loving, caring, selfless, funny, proud.....father, Dudley McKay, passed peacefully on 2nd July. I was blessed to have him as my Dad & also to be with him when this happened.

Two nights after he died, while I was looking for Mum's list of songs to be played at his funeral, the cd player came on all by itself (no time delay switch & no one had touched the player for 2 days)....the song..."All I have to do is dream"...opening with words, "Dream, dream, dream..." Our father was an idealist, a dreamer. It was a direct message from him. He always expressed his love for us & was letting us know that he hasn't gone forever.

Thank you again from the depths of my heart, for doing such a lovely tribute to him. He was a humble person who didn't need validation or affirmation of who he was but it would have meant a lot to him. We buried him yesterday with a great tribute however. The grandkids did a very funny presentation, remembering all the fun & loving times they had with him. One of them read while another acted out being Dad. Also had absolutely beautiful photos of him where his handsome face & smile shone through right til the end. **Thanks again, Deb Favier**

Dudley & Enid McKay

Part II



Enid married Dudley McKay in November 1945, several days after Dud's return from service overseas. They lived in Sydney for several years after which the family (now with 3 girls) moved north to Calen and on to Cairns. Enid was kept busy looking after her young family (6 daughters under the age of 13 years old). Dudley's earth moving business meant that he was often away from home, so Enid, by necessity, became very resourceful, tackled many things including painting the house inside &

out, even the roof of their Freshwater home (blue)! Enid's bookkeeping skills proved invaluable at the girls' primary school, where she became the school's unpaid secretary. Believing in the significance of reading, Enid established a library at the small school. She was an active member of the P& C Assoc., making history, becoming the first woman to ever hold office in Qld in this male-dominated association. At the forefront of fundraising, Enid helped organise fetes as well as host garden parties & fashion parades in the lush grounds of their Freshwater property. She also helped coach the girls' hockey teams, chaperoned the girls' representative teams in the state championship titles and documented the weekly hockey reports which she read out weekly on radio.

Enid joined Dudley in Weipa where he had contracted to Comalco. They, with youngest daughter, Marisa, spent many enjoyable hours fishing, catching some incredible reef fish.

The family then moved south to the Sunshine Coast. Enid always kept busy, travelling overseas with Dud, as well as pursuing many U3A interests that developed her mind & intellect, such as Armchair Travel (where members discussed highlights of their travel experiences), Discussion Group (exploring varied topics of interest) as well as learning to speak German, French & Italian. One of Enid's passions was making beautifully crafted ceramic dolls which grace her home at Wurtulla & are cherished gifts in many homes of family & friends. She is an avid crossword player. Enid still regularly goes to Bingo, attends Shelley China meetings & enjoys Ex-Service Women's luncheons, outings & trips away.

When she can be caught at home, Enid appreciates visits from her family of daughters as well as grandchildren (13) & great-grandchildren (10.7)! She is currently knitting a beautiful rug for her 11th great grandchild! Over the years both she & Dudley have spent many enjoyable hours with family at their holiday homes (at Rainbow Beach, Cairns & Norfolk Island). Their verandas hosted many Christmases & birthday parties. Enid is a feisty, independent lady who still drives. She takes her dog, Bobby, for regular walks to the park. She is mourning the loss of her husband, Dud but she has many happy memories of their time together.



Articles from Members

MEMORIES OF JOHN (Jock) WALLACE THOMSON

By Adam Fielding Thomson



At the age of 12, all I knew of my father's military past was that he was a bomber pilot in WW2. He spoke little of those years as was the case it appears for many of the men that went through the horrors of war in those days.

Like many boys at that age I thought the sun shined because my father told it to. Being inquisitive, I wanted to know more about my hero. One day rummaging through the back of his cupboards I found some kind of cap/hood with

speakers in it a cord attached with some kind of switch device all looking like it plugged into something. Next to that were two leather jackets, one short and one long. Are these what I think they are? Of course I wore them. Dressed as a bomber pilot I presented myself before my father for further explanation. From that time onward he shared some stories with me about those years. When dad first left Australia as a young man of 19, he was stationed in England for training exercises. He, like most young men on an adventure with their mates didn't mind blowing the froth off a couple. There was, however, one man who liked blowing a little more than the rest. On one particularly foggy English night when old mate was passed out in his bunk, my dad and a few of the boys carried his bunk with him in it outside and to the middle of the airfield. Of course when he came to, he had no idea where he was or what was going on, much to the rousing applause and delight of all his mates in the squadron. I often wondered if it wasn't dad in the bunk that night. I guess I'll never know.

"So what did you bomb dad"? I asked, wanting to know more about this living legend. "Our main mission was to bomb German supply shipping convoys," he answered in a serious tone. The squadron would search the waters of the Mediterranean for these convoys trying to slip through under the cover of darkness in order to supply the enemy with much needed supplies.

Remembering that in the early 40's, radar, surveillance and any electronics equipment were very basic at best. The convoys would consist of the supply ships and accompanying destroyers as protection. The ships would be "blackened out" to avoid detection. Once the squadron had detected the convoy they would make a second circuit. On this run the bombers would deploy flares in order to "light them up." Immediately,



“the night sky would light up with tracer bullets”, dad said. The third and final circuit for the squadron was their bombing run. Pilots and crews would line up their targets and make a steady track. The bombardiers would make their coordinates. “steady, steady, steady.... bombs away. Let’s get out of here”. The entire payload of a Wellington just unleashed hell. It was now time for the ocean and the ships upon her to light up. All this is carried out by men with cool heads, while enemy anti-aircraft weaponry is trained on the slow moving bomber, bullets punching holes through her fuselage often killing crew members. Many planes and many fine young men never came home.

If flying the mission and making it home alive wasn’t dangerous enough. Just when you think it’s all over for the night, a very real danger lurked closer to home. The enemy, very aware of these bombing raids, the squadron, not always aware of the number of planes lost, would have a bomber stealthily join the squadron for the home run. When the last of the squadron had finished their circuit’s, landing and taxiing the enemy bomber, under the guise of part of the squadron would make a pass over the airfield dropping her payload on the now grounded planes and on the airstrip inflicting horrendous casualties and damage.

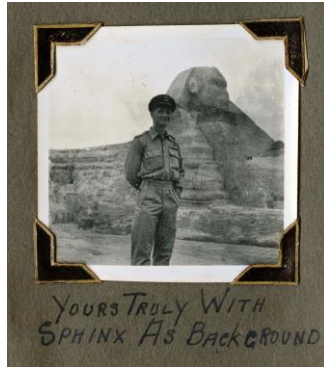
Dad had a scar on his right calf muscle. When I asked how he received that, I was told that during one of these missions, a bullet penetrated the bottom of the fuselage just forward of the pilot seat and blew a hole through his fly boot and necessarily through his lower leg. “I didn’t even know I’d been shot until I climbed down from the plane on my return and realised my boot was full of blood.” He said in a casual manner. “Legend? War hero? Struth! He’s been shot and everything.” In recent times I’ve had the opportunity to view dad’s service and medical records. It seems that while taxiing the plane a stone was picked up and thrown by the propeller through the fuselage and into his leg. I’m sure it felt and hurt like a bullet but a bullet she ain’t. Oh well, never let the truth stand in the way of a good war story I always say.

A very important must do before landing the Wellington after a mission was to check the bomb bay to ensure that no bombs were still lodged, because they were now live and armed. If there were, they were to be dislodged and dumped over the ocean. If this was not done, there was a very real danger that any bombs still lodged would dislodge on landing inflicting unthinkable carnage. My father’s last entry in his personal diary was on one such night. While watching as the last of the wellingtons returned home after a mission dad was pleased to see that his good mate had made it home safe, only to witness the Wellington explode on landing killing all on board. Was it the fatigue, was it the adrenalin? We’ll

never know why they didn't check the bomb bay. My dad asked me a rhetorical question. "Have you ever smelt burning human flesh?" My eyes were like saucers. "I hope you never do." This tragedy was etched in dad's mind and must have haunted him till the end.

Dad didn't like war but he loved his county, believed in the cause and was willing to stand up and be counted. Well after dad's death in 1974 mum told me, "Your father told me he wanted to serve as a bomber pilot because he didn't want see the people he was

killing."



As many boys my age do, I had a fascination with guns. Dad had a way forward to fulfil that fascination. While in service Dad had become friends with a British "Gurkha" officer, a friendship that endured. Dad had asked him to come over and introduce me to weaponry.

A gentleman appears at our door, well dressed, complete with a moustache. He

looked like he was straight out of a movie. In

one hand he had a stranded 303 rifle in the other was a "Khukuri." (Standard issue Gurkha knife.) He proceeded to show me all the

safety procedures and protocols of handling a weapon. He disassembled and assembled the rifle several times. He showed me how to load the magazine, (with live bullets), the correct action for using the bolt, how to position oneself on the ground to achieve best results from the rifle and explained the capabilities of the 303.

He left the rifle with me for a couple of weeks, (minus the ammunition) so as to, "get the feel of it". Then there was the "Khukuri". He explained the reason for the curved shape to the knife was twofold. Firstly, the Gurkha soldier was so skilful and well trained that they could sneak up on a man at night till they saw the whites of his eyes and cut his throat. Secondly when thrusting the knife into a man's guts. It seems the upward curve of the knife was particularly helpful. I was told, "If a man says he's not afraid of dying, he's either lying or he's a Gurkha."

I'm twelve, I've just had a crash course in weaponry from a highly skilled and decorated British military officer and he's my dad's mate.

In summary, if you have a story etched in your memory write it down and pass it on for future generations before it's lost. We look forward to hearing stories from more veterans, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and other family members to keep this history alive. Till next time...



Adam and Christine Thomson



Frank McMahon Service Nos 417964 and 041546. **Francis (Frank) Leslie McMahon** enlisted in the RAAF in Adelaide on 15 August 1942 as an Aircraftman. After 4 months of Initial Training at Victor Harbour and Parafield, he was posted to Cootamundra, Sale, Nhill and Bairnsdale for further training. He spent time in London (Personnel Despatch Centre) before being posted to the Middle

East, spending time in Gianacis, Ein Shemer, Almaza and Fort De L'Eau (Algeria), finally joining up with 458 Squadron in Corsica.

Dad was part of the crew that escorted the surrendering U541 to Gibraltar (see page 186 'We Find and Destroy'). After the war, Dad was discharged 'On Demobilisation', only to re-join the RAAF in 1952 after gaining a degree in economics at the University of Adelaide. After postings to Laverton, Albury and Dubbo, he attended the RAAF Staff College, Point Cook in 1960.

In 1962, Squadron Leader McMahon was posted to the United States, as an exchange officer. The 2 year tour of duty saw Dad assigned as Deputy Chief, Supply Management Services, Kelly Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. We returned to Canberra in 1964, where Dad worked with the Department of Air, Russell, until he passed away suddenly in 1966, aged only 42, leaving behind wife Jessie May, and sons Stephen, Michael, David and Christopher.

I was fortunate enough to meet with two of Dad's Wellington air crew, Tom Moore and Col Hutchinson at the All States Reunion, Orange, in 2003. Tom and Col shared their fond memories of Dad with me, not only of flying, but also stories of their travels around UK while on leave. Dad made many friends during the war, as you can see from the photos. **Dave McMahon**



Warrant Officer (WO) Maxwell (Max) G. Egan
Service Number 423682 b17.11.1923 - d17.12.1990

Max Egan at 2WS Calgary 1943



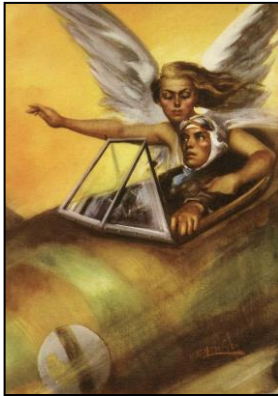
Max along with his father, William (Bill) Egan and younger brother Keith initially joined the Army during WW11. He enlisted on 6th January 1942 in Sydney. But it wasn't long before he decided the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) was where he really wanted to be. After 6 months in the Army the decision was made, he *enlisted in the RAAF on 18th July 1942 and served until discharge on 14th December 1945.* This was a decision that would map his destiny for the future. For it was while serving in England with Bomber Command, Max was to meet his future wife Jean, who was serving in the British Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes & Expeditionary Force Institutes on the British bases. Jean, like many of the young English beauties, fell for the handsome young airman from Australia. They became engaged and following the end of the war, Jean travelled on HMT Otranto to Sydney, arriving 31st December 1946 and carrying 495 passengers. This was one of many ships that brought war brides/fiancée to Australia. Max & Jean were married on 18th January 1947 and settled in Sydney. They had 6 children, 3 girls and 3 boys, and have left a legacy of 12 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren. Max did not embellish war to his children while we were growing up. He taught us respect for Australian servicemen and women, and the sacrifices they and their families had made for our country and the flag they served under. He encouraged his children to join him and his family at Dawn Services and marches on ANZAC Day. It wasn't until we were older we came to understand what both our parents and their families in Australia and England, endured during WW11. More recently my family came across a letter our 22 year old Dad (Max) sent to his father in 1945. This was to tell his Dad that he was okay and recuperating, after their Wellington bomber had crashed into the ocean while on a training exercise off Gibraltar, in February 1945. His loss and sadness were visible in his words, as he told his father of the tragic loss of their four crew members;



**“The Crew” of the crashed Wellington flight.
1945 Gibraltar.**

*Left back Flt.Sgt NL “Shorty” Taylor 2nd Pilot,
Flt.Sgt BLR “Tubby” Conolan WOP, W/Off
KH “Keith” Watts NAV., Flt.Sgt MG “Max”
Egan WOP, W/Off MT “Merv” Lee WOP
Front Flt.Sgt “Jack” Fox Skipper.*

**FSgt WJ Fox 428682 (P) KIA
WOff KH Watts 429839 (Nav) KIA
FSgt BLR Conolan 428070 (W/Op) KIA
WOff MT Lee 410993 (W/Ag) KIA
FSgt NL Taylor 419777 (2/P) Inj
FSgt MG Egan 423682 (A/G) Inj**



**Two of the many, what I believe
were called “propaganda”
postcards Dad (Max) brought home.**



**Max Egan Cairo 1944; Middle back in “Sheiks
Headgear” Max Egan, front row young boy is their
“batman”. Names of others unknown.**

**Max Egan Vancouver 1943;
back left to right Tych, Dal, Mr
Poynter, Mick Poynter & Max
Egan, Front left to right The
Duke & Jim Vancouver B.C.
20/8/1943**

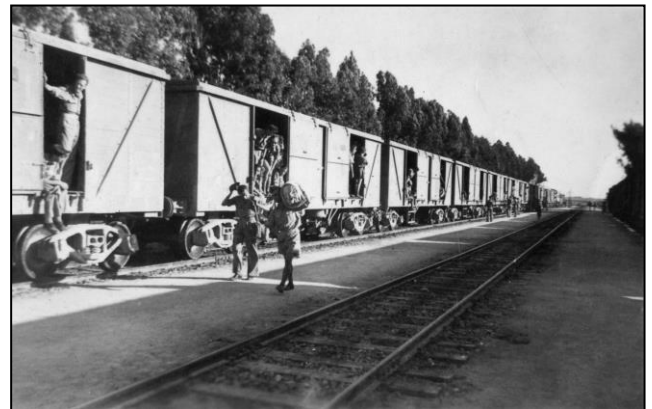


Street Barber in Cairo, October, 1944.



Max Egan at 2WS Calgary 1943; back left to right Max Egan, Greg & Bill front left to right Al & Frank.

458 Squadron "our special reserved trained", yes freight cars ,but we lived through it October 1944.



Victory March Calgary 1943

Max Egan Elbow Road Calgary March 1943





Max Egan & "Killer" Pearse Canada 1943



Max & Jean Egan on their wedding day 18th January 1947 Campsie, Sydney. Best man Name unknown, is a 458 Sqd. Member.

I hope other 458 Squadron members or family members may be able to identify those men not identified, especially Dad's Best Man. If required I can supply further photos and postcards.

Lest We Forget – Written by Marilyn Bell (nee Egan)

Thank-you Marilyn for your kind donation.-ed.

A Daughter's Memories by Jane Foster

When I was a little girl Dad didn't talk about the war much. But when he did it was always the same few stories like-

- The time when they successfully flew their burning Wellington back to base in Malta with birds' nests in the wings fuelling the flames or
- Trying to torpedo-bomb enemy ships at night in the Mediterranean by flying low over the water and keeping enemy ships silhouetted in the moonlight while trying to keep out of their fire or
- Barely surviving on the meagre rations on the island then hearing of yet another supply ship being bombed before it reached them or
- Being moved by some of the Maltese people who would show their gratitude to the allies by offering their rations and any belongings they had left to the defenders or
- The seemingly endless destruction from the continuous bombing raids in an attempt to "blow Malta out of the Mediterranean."



I remember the times when he would sit at the end of my bed and instead of a night time story he would softly sing war songs like "I've got sixpence..." It was always a favourite. And I remember the respect in his voice whenever he spoke of his crew.

Ron Eggers was so proud to be 458.....and I am so proud he was my Dad. He will always be my hero.

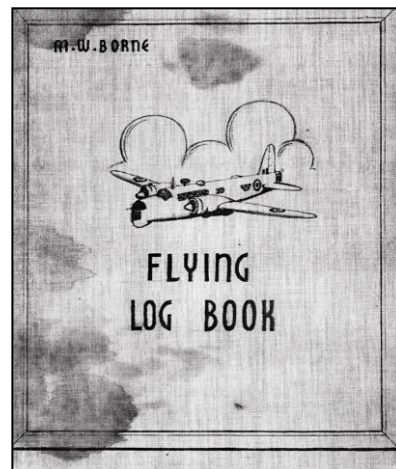
My Late Father – Ken Wilkinson



– became something of an unofficial artist-in-residence for 458 Squadron. Not only did he fly as a wireless op/rear gunner in Wellingtons, he also drew them, as seen in these two images. One Christmas, while serving with the squadron, he sent a message home to his mum in Lancashire, England. He drew his Wimpey with comic sketches of his crew mates waving from the aircraft. “To Mother,” he wrote. “A Merry Christmas from your ever

loving son Ken xxxx”.

Some years ago, I attended a 458 reunion and came across a former pilot, Mo Borne. I asked him if he remembered my dad from his squadron days. To my utter amazement, he produced his Flying Log Book and said: “Your dad drew this.” He had drawn a Wellington bomber on the front of the log book. It was a highly unofficial thing to do, and I have no doubt in some RAF squadrons, it would have resulted in a reprimand from the commanding officer. But, of course, this was an Australian outfit and there was far less “bull” to endure.



My dad was quite a strong Christian believer and carried with him in the squadron a small 1939 Forces issue bible, complete with its message in the front from “His Majesty The King”. He’d even drawn in this - an attractive woman with wavy hair, and his RAAF tent in the desert.

I believe he produced quite a bit of art for people in the squadron and, who knows, someone reading this may actually have a Log Book drawing he did. He also used to

sketch his friends. Before he joined the RAF, he was studying art at Art School. One of his first tasks in the war effort was to paint camouflage on factory roofs to protect industry from The Blitz by the Luftwaffe.

The story has something of a sad ending. In his late 60s, my dad had a stroke. I remember him attending an art class as part of his rehabilitation. His lifelong skill in drawing had totally disappeared and was never to return. So it was wonderful to come across Mo that day, years later, with a surviving example of what his drawings used to be like, and how they had clearly brought pleasure in a time of war.

It would be interesting to hear from anyone else who has any stories of people who painted and drew while serving in 458.

KEITH WILKINSON. UK Flight Correspondent



Keith Cousin's recollections of events in August, 1943.

On 1st August, 1943 a significant date as it transpired, the Chief Instructor summoned me to his office inquiring if I had been to Ireland before. After my reply in the negative, he then informed me that my next assignment was to assist a F/LT pilot in getting to BELFAST for the purpose of conducting a court martial and

return with seemingly little navigation involved. The return was a bit doubtful as there was the possibility of us ending up at an aerodrome in England due to an adverse weather report. Thus briefed we were transported from Alness to a neighbouring aerodrome along the N.E. Coast of Scotland.

I met up with the pilot and his transport, an Airspeed "Oxford", as used for Navigation training and communications. Our intended route across Scotland was via the Caledonian Canal, a series of Lochs dividing Scotland from Inverness through to Fort William on the West Coast. Our flight, in overcast conditions, and with steep heather clad hills on either side gave us the impression of flying through a long tunnel. Leaving Fort William, at the western end behind, we passed SW into the North Channel of the Atlantic separating Scotland and Ireland where we were met by a most impressive sight, a convoy of merchant vessels about six abreast line astern for as far as the eye could see causing some tears to roll down my cheeks uncontrollably as I yelled to the pilot "we are going to win!".

Shepherding this convoy which was likely bound for Liverpool or ports south was a Liberator which circled the convoy.

Upon crossing the North Channel we entered Belfast Lough to land the “Oxford” at the airstrip at Short & Harland’s work site. The pilot proceeded onto his unpleasant duty of a court martial leaving me in the company of a white coated supervisor and we managed the afternoon exploring the area.

My first impression of the site was the apparent lack of activity here in the middle of wartime, not a rivet was to be heard driven into Sunderland and Stirling aircraft or the small naval vessels under construction in the factories, the only noise being a tractor some distance away towing a newly completed Stirling bomber for its air test with the crew already on-board except for the pilot ,who with her blonde hair flowing in the breeze, clad in flying suit, was waddling to join them with her seat-type parachute strapped to her rear. She added a touch of life to one of those wartime days.

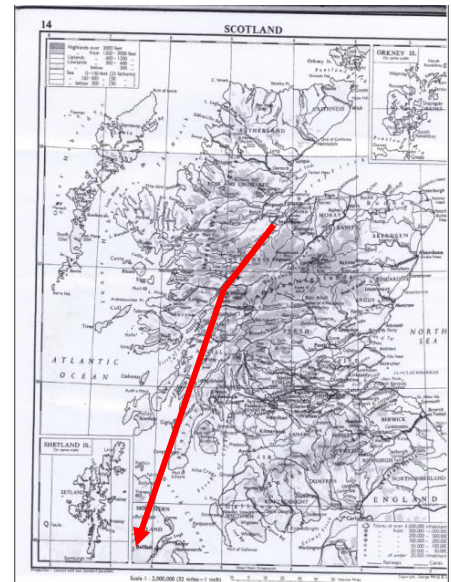
On my remarking to my “guide” that it was eerily quiet he quickly explained to me that it was Orangeman’s Day and for the sake of relative peace most of the workforce were stood down as they were from “south of the border” .Upon the return of the “the local lads” skin and hair will be flying around here he stated. How prescient his words turned out to be!

The return flight was not without incident. Leaving Fort William behind and cruising at 1,000 ft. as before, we entered Lochy to be met with several rounds of fire from a Royal Navy ‘Fairmile’ type launch which had dropped anchor there since our sojourn in Belfast.

Putting the nose down and giving the feeling that the propellers would be showering water over us, the pilot skilfully avoided any damage.

The remainder of the flight proved uneventful.

A return to Alness by jeep and a welcome bunk in the Nissen Hut ended a long day. My fellow inmates were curious as to the result of the court martial, to which my reply was too tired ask!



The Last of the 458 Originals by Eric Munkman



458 Squadron was formed at Williamtown RAAF base on the 8th July, 1941, and did not depart for overseas until 8th August, 1941. The only remaining airman of the original 39 airmen enlisted in Sydney and to leave Australian soil on that day is Eric Munkman. Eric gives us an insight of that time at Williamtown

It was boring in that month after formation waiting for the orders for embarkation. Many of the squadrons had already been formed and left for overseas and all of the

men of 458 were waiting, excited and ready to go. The men came from all over Australia and friendships were formed at this stage. Fellow originals, "Lofty" Trewatha and Freddie Strom, were my good mates through the war and that friendship continued in peace time until their passing. Days in that month of waiting were filled with rifle practice, general maintenance, sport and free time. At weekends the men were free to either go into Newcastle for a drink or even go back home to see their families if they were from Sydney or close by. When the orders to embark did come through we left Williamtown on the same day. We travelled by train to the dock, by ship across the Pacific, into Canada, picking up more men for the squadron and then onto England to Holme on Spalding Moor, Yorkshire, to begin our duty.

For the full list of "The Originals" see our website (link below) and click on the word **squadron** in the 2nd sentence under subheading **OVER EUROPE**.
<http://458raafsquadron.org/about-us/wwii-history-campaigns.html> ed.

Eric Munkman is a former 458 Squadron Association President.

458 ORIGINALS		
THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF 458 SQUADRON R.A.A.F., FORMED AT WILLIAMTOWN R.A.A.F. BASE, N.S.W., ON 8 JULY 1941. REPORTEDLY WILLIAMTOWN R.A.A.F. WAS THE ONLY RAAF BASE REPORTEDLY VISITED BY R.A.A.F. MEMBERS AT 4-00 P.M. ON THE DAY THE SQUADRON WAS FORMED. MEMBERS OF 458 SQUADRON, THEN KNOWN AS 458 SQUADRON, WERE REPORTEDLY VISITED BY MEMBERS OF 458 SQUADRON, THEN KNOWN AS 458 SQUADRON, WHEN THE SQUADRON BECAME OPERATIONAL UNDER 458 SQUADRON R.A.A.F. THE FIRST SQUADRON WAS REPORTEDLY FORMED ON THE 8TH JULY 1941.		
1.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
2.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
3.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
4.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
5.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
6.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
7.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
8.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
9.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
10.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
11.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
12.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
13.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
14.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
15.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
16.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
17.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
18.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
19.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
20.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
21.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
22.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
23.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
24.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
25.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
26.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
27.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
28.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
29.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
30.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
31.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
32.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
33.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
34.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
35.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
36.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
37.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
38.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"
39.	ANDERSON, R.C.	"BOCK"

458 Squadron Journal

**... In the skies for 65 years and still powering on ...
Reflections of Those Who Served**

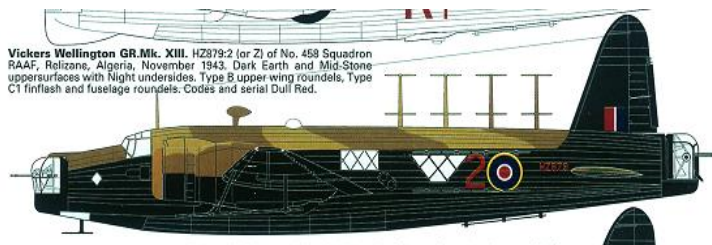
by Chris Orchard, son of Gordon Orchard



Whilst you read and reflect on the significance and magnitude of this 250th *milestone* edition (perhaps the longest, unbroken publication of its kind, anywhere), think on the anniversaries that have passed this year, ...

- 100 yrs since the start of World War I,
 - 100 yrs of military aviation in Australia,
 - 75 yrs since the start of World War II,
 - 70 yrs since the Normandy, D-Day landings
- the largest armada and force ever assembled, ...

And, for me, a personal milestone - reaching 50 years, bringing kindred thoughts of my father (Gordon Stanley Orchard, service no. 400732) and his three brothers, who also all served with the RAAF. My father was born on January 23, 1919 (just 73 days after the World War I Armistice), and passed away during his 80th year, on June 8, 1998. A further anniversary comes in March next year, that will mark 70 years since my father lost his youngest brother, Norman Henry, and we (all seven of his offspring), lost their never-to-be met Uncle. At just 20 years of age, Norman, a Lancaster pilot with 463 Squadron, was engaged in a bomber-fighter training exercise over RAF Waddington, UK. On that night, 11 March 1945, his aircraft and a Hurricane collided with one another, a sequence of events still perplexing to this very day. With all men lost, the tragedy seems even further heightened by its occurrence less than two months before the final victory and cessation of the War.



Vickers Wellington GR.Mk. XIII. HZ879-2 (or Z) of No. 458 Squadron RAAF, Relizane, Algeria, November 1943. Dark Earth and Mid-Stone upper surfaces with Night undersides. Type B upper wing roundels, Type C1 fin flash and fuselage roundels. Codes and serial Dull Red.

We all remember different things about our loved ones, whether by direct or other accounts. What

stands out as one of the enduring legacies of my father was his attention to detail, but particularly when it most mattered. This is confirmed during his time as a pilot with 458.... , as two accounts from 'We Find and Destroy' show:

1)... At four in the morning of 4 October (1943), crews captained by F/O Maxwell, F/Lt Orchard, F/Sgt Verity and W/O

D.O. Watson dropped 250-lb bombs on the docks and warehouses at Bastia (a port at the northern end of the island of Corsica, the enemy's last evacuation point). F/Lt Orchard (piloting a Wellington Mk. XIII, no. HZ370), dived from 5,000 feet (1.5 km) and bombed from 700 feet (213 metres). A member of his crew, F/Sgt J. C. Baker, the special equipment operator, records "collecting quite a lot of shrapnel from our bombs", ... and moreover, the Commanding Officer, Colonel McKenzie, having landed his personal Hurricane there about the same time, was an interested spectator of his aircrafts' accurate bombing.



2)... On 22 October 1943, the CO (Colonel McKenzie) and S/Ldr Thompson left 458 Squadron, the latter being 'succeeded as Flight Commander by S/Ldr G. S. Orchard, an Australian from Geelong. On a Squadron which had set a remarkable standard of informality in attire, S/Ldr Orchard was possibly the most informal member. His rank was rarely discernible from his uniform and strangers to the Squadron were frequently very much taken aback. A new pilot, recently arrived on 458 and reporting to the Flight Commander and accordingly attired, would be received by Orchard wearing khaki drill trousers and elderly blue battledress tunic, epaulets trailing from the shoulder and a cap on the very top of his head, with a greeting of, "How are you, old horse?" ' Dad enlisted in the RAAF on 13 October 1940, at age 21 years 8 months 21 days. His elementary flying training took place at No.5 EFTS, Narromine, NSW. As a trainee of course No. 7, he finished equal top of the class, but more interesting is that he knew fellow trainee, Rawdon Hume Middleton, service no. 402745. Sadly, their paths would never cross again, as R.H. Middleton would later lay down his own life deliberately (piloting a Stirling aircraft with No 149 Squadron, on a night operation to bomb the Fiat Works, south of Turin, Italy, 28-29 November 1942) to save some of his crew, and with such a gallant act be awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. The first experience of flying must have been a special one for Dad as he kept a framed photo near his bedside, a self-portrait in full flight gear standing next to his Tiger Moth – a constant reminder of youth and the thrill of taking to the skies. What a privilege it



is now to have this portrait, taking pride of place by my bedside. He left the Australian shores on 22 February 1941, then 3 years 9 months and 13 days later disembarked at Brisbane. His love for flying and to help get the job done didn't end there, though, with further postings on RAAF Liberators, starting in February 1945 to No. 7 OTU Tocumwal, NSW, followed by "Test and Ferry" duties at No. 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton, Victoria, then to HQ 82 Wing at RAAF Base, Fenton, NT (appointment to Second in Command), and finally some active operations with 82 Wing, Balikpapan (now East Kalimantan, Indonesia).

It's a fascinating coincidence that I now work (though not as a pilot!) in the same place he did during May/June 1945 (no longer called No. 1 Aircraft Depot, but RAAF Williams Base, Laverton). It reminds me of the stories he conveyed to his offspring, at various places, and at totally unexpected times, priceless snippets of moments in his life during the War. So far I have collected about sixteen, all quite short, some while with 458 Squadron, all



important connections to him. I also reflect on the life philosophy that he gently opened the door to me while in my late teens. Out of all the tumultuous events he experienced, it seems that his personal quest in post War years was to find answers to all the "big" questions of life, and have it make sense altogether. I owe it to him, and we owe it to all who served with 458 to keep the 458 Journal going. We are forever indebted to all the Editors of the past and present for their tireless service. May the future incumbents keep her powering on in the skies above, and to all in the 458-fold, a callout to add your father's, or grandfather's, or uncle's, or relative's story to the 'Serviceman's Stories' page of the 458 website. You have the tools at your disposal – the Squadron website, with digitised Photo Albums, the Operations Record Book – all 835 pages, the Magnum opus "We Find and Destroy (A History of 458 RAAF Squadron)", and Personnel records available from the national archives of most countries' governmental websites. ... We owe it to all of them to keep 458 going ...

Colour photo is Gordon at our Late sister Felicity's Wedding 1984. ed.

EMAILS



D-Day 70th Anniversary from Cherbourg Normandy, France.

Georges DENNEBOUY

Tue 10/06/2014 5:33 AM

Dear Friends ,

Mickael send me these pictures of the ceremony in the cemetery of Cherbourg in the Commonwealth part of the cemetery where are buried the crew members of the Wellington .Regards , Amitiés , **Georges**



Hi Congratulations !!!

I never flew with 458 - in the air- but I taxied with them as I was at a desert station in North Africa when you arrived with your new Baltimores (sic) and I was over the other side of the sand strip with 203 RAF Sqn with their Baltimores. I had to help your boys get used to the new aircraft — the BALT so I had to crouch on the wing and hold on to the cockpit held on to the cockpit (and hope the pilot would not stop me closing the throttle - for pilots to learn to experience the pressure - on take-off - in their new aircraft. MIND YOU I HAD to tell them to not stop me pulling the throttle back so I could live. Also when I came back to Adelaide in April 45 I did not know who to join for the Anzac Day march as I knew someone in each of groups — GB ME FE and I knew some in 458 — Brian Woodhead, bloke from Port Lincoln (Bob Drinnon Mel Priest — and someone else so I marched with 458 in 1945 and have done it ever since and NOW I am the only one with 458 in Adelaide — I think.

Unprintable trivia but still fact.

Thanks again so keep it up. I shall always read it..... if I am still here??

Are you related to an Orchard who was looking after the RAAFA in Adelaide back in 1970 ish? (ed - No relation to my knowledge, Lyne)Regards and thanks. **Lyne Skinner**



From: Linda Clay

To: editor@458raafsquadron.org

Subject: WEBSITE FORM: Online Enquiry

Name Linda Clay

Enquiry I live in England. My mum's first husband (they were married less than a week) was FRED HINTON. My mum's name was Jean Warner and our family grew up hearing about their love story and the way he gave his life for freedom. My mum remarried and had two daughters and we all gave thanks for the young hero who gave his tomorrow so that we might have our today. Does Fred have a memorial anywhere? Thank you.

Hello Linda

Thank you so much for emailing. Such a heart-warming but sad none the less, story to go with such an epic conclusion. Please click on the following link and read about Fred and his crew whose lives were cut short as were so many, during the war.

<http://458raafsquadron.org/education/lest-we-forget.html>

If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me again. Kind Regards **Roland Orchard**.

Dear Roland, thank you so much for replying to my email, that was so kind of you. My mum (Fred Hinton's widow) would have wanted to know those final details, to know his body was not incinerated as she had always thought. In those early years she was convinced he had survived and had lost his memory, living somewhere in France. As I said in my email she went on to marry my dad and had two daughters but the sacrifice of Fred and so many others always formed part of our family history. It says that Fred was 21 but he was six years older than my mum and I believe she was 19 or 20 when they married. Once again, so many thanks for contacting me and for sending me the attached article. It means a lot to me. The saying "they gave their tomorrows so that we could have our today" will always stay with me.

Kind regards, Linda Clay, England.



R1785 Crew L-R: Fred Hinton, Bob Birnie, Peter Hickey, Albert Austin, Vic Johnstone, Wally Forgan.



In early October 2008, a magnificent granite stele was erected in the heart of the tiny village of Golleville (population 160). Relatives of the Australian airmen and Fred Hinton (RAF) made the pilgrimage to France to attend the unveiling of the stunning memorial in the shape of the Wellington's tail plane.

See our webpage

<http://458raafsquadron.org/education/lest-we-forget.html>

for the full story "R1785 – A Ring Story" by Rob Forgan.



Email titled "We Find and Destroy????"

From Ian Atherton

Thursday 8/5/14 3:30pm

Greetings,



I am Ian Atherton one of two sons of Alan (Snowy) Atherton, I believe you already know our sister Diane, who I believe has corresponded with you before.

During the squadrons operational period Alf Peak and our dad were best mates and apparently went everywhere together, on deployments, secondment etc. On arrival home Alf was best man at my parents wedding and possibly vice versa.

It is funny how life has its twists and turns, at every corner someone is waiting to remind us that we are really all connected. I have an incident that happened to me yesterday, that you may be interested in.

I am currently an Inspector for the Rural Fire Service in Queensland. One lunchtime, while at work, I decided to go up the street and get myself some lunch. So away I went and returned to sit quietly at the back of the Fire Station to eat my meal. One of my mates, and a very experienced old Firefighter, was there talking to a young fella, who is around thirtyish (Now that possibly gives away my age) and who has been filling in as a junior rank for one of the other permanent crew members while that member was away on a course.

As I sat down the young fella turned to me and said, "Excuse me Sir; Are you any relation to, or do you know an Alan Atherton?"

"Yes." I said

Is he an Uncle, Grandfather or..... something like that....."

"Yes. Something like that." I said.

"Oh!... Is he your father??"

"Yes..... He was my Father."

"Oh! Well I knew him.... I met him quite a few times, My Grandfather was Alf Peak."

"Well! I will be buggard. So your dad would be Clive Grimshaw? and ya mum's name is....um! Christine?"

"Yup! Sure is, How did you know; Have you met them?"

"Geez no mate; I'm just physic...."

"Actually I went to boarding school with your dad, and I knew he had Married Alf's daughter after we left school. Actually; I did meet your mum a couple of times I think; years ago."

He grabbed his mobile and rang his dad immediately.

The young man and I talked for some time after that, about Alan and Alf, their friendship, their passing, the 458 squadron and the thing they had got up to and the tough times they had been through for us. What a buzz. The young man's father was in my "thirds" cricket team at boarding school, when I succeeded in convincing the teachers it was unfair to make those students who were rather hopeless at sport do work parties around the school, just because they couldn't make a team. So we were permitted, then later encouraged to form our own scratch team for those of us that were willing to play, but just couldn't get the bat to strike the ball very often. Clive actually reminded me about that when I spoke to him briefly on the phone.

The 458 family are everywhere and friendships have extended far beyond where the original members would have ever thought. Can you imagine those young blokes in the desert of North Africa, hot sand blowing into everything that was open, or shut, and thinking. "When this lot is over we will have an association that will cross generations."

Maybe just staying alive long enough to get home would have been more of a priority back then?

The book, whose title I used as a subject line, may have been correct at the time; however, out of that came the fact that the families of the ones that were there during WW2 can say "we find and become friends." There are a lot of names we have heard all our lives, we have never met, but somehow there seems to be a connection to an extended family of friends who still care.

Best of luck to all

Cheers

Ian

Ian Atherton

Inspector

RFSQ Area Director, Innisfail



Far North

Rural Fire Service Queensland

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

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Snapshot from Bone, Algeria, December 1943

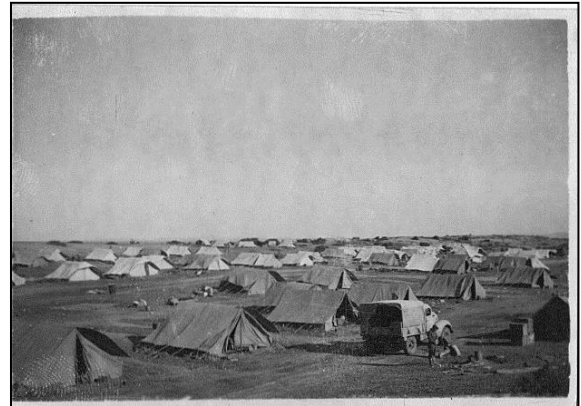
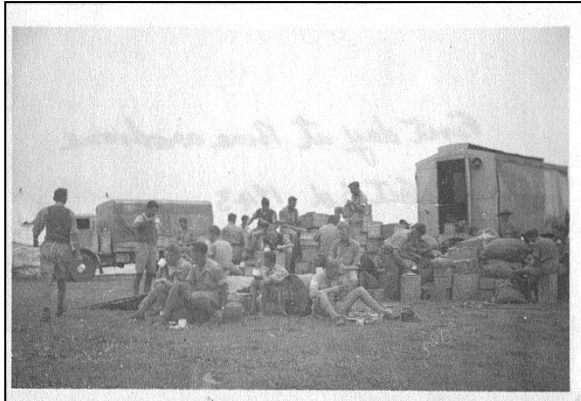
Letters Home by SGT Hal Lee, 458 Squadron.



Email from Lynda Harvey daughter of Hal LEE.

With 2 photos

1. Arrival at Bone October 1943
2. Bone + 4 hours



23 27.12.43

Bone Algeria 1313883 Sgt. H. H. Lee 458 Sqdn. RAAF (RAF) B.N.A.F



Dear Ma

Herewith is the chronicled the episodes, happenings and escapades of the celebration of Christmas by one named Lee H H for the year nineteen hundred forty three to be preserved for the improvement of the minds of the generations to come. Put under my hand this twenty seventh of December at my Lodge somewhere not in England. Three days before the great day the turkeys, ducks and three of the pigs met maker, indeed it was a sad day for everyone. The flag (which is Australian) was lowered to half-mast even the butchers had tears in their eyes when they were doing the job for we were fond of

these animals (sob). Preparations went ahead the mess was decorated with palm leaves; it really looked good the tent poles looked like palm trees and over the door was a triumphal arch. Christmas Eve day we went into town and saw two Deanna Durban pictures "First Love" and "The Amazing Mrs Halliday" which cheered us up no end. And before I go any further don't get the rest of this wrong and don't think your "baby" is going off the rails and remember it was Christmas. Well we got back to camp fairly early and went over to the mess and of course being Christmas eve things were fairly gay, they had some brandy French stuff

which as I don't like the whisky I started in on. Well it was pretty deadly stuff and as time went I started to feel good will to all men, everyone was happy and having a good time, a singsong was in progress and all the old squadron songs sung over and over again. By this time we had had about seven brandies each but I am pleased to say apart from feeling very cheerful and happy I was none the worse I must inherit the quality of taking my drink from Tony. It was getting late so we thought that if we were to get in bed before papa Christmas came we had better push off to the tent. We three Bill, Trevor and myself got outside the mess and started in a wavy line in the general direction of our tent when without any warning Trevor dropped dead pulling Bill with him. When I had sorted them out Bill took Trev's head and I took his feet and we continued. By instinct we discovered our tent and got Trevor to bed, we undressed but before we tumbled into bed I pinned my sock to the flysheet of the tent, then into bed and away I went. I awoke next morning early and with flash realised it was THE day. I sprang out of bed and rushed to the flysheet and looked for my sock but couldn't find it anywhere until I saw a scrap of paper pinned up, on it was written "thanks very much I will call for the other next year signed father Christmas. Well!! I felt no ill effects and had not even the slightest twinge of a headache. Bill and Trev however had bags of skin off their faces and looked as if they had had an argument with a mowing machine. We toddled over and dined in bacon and eggs for breakfast then back and tidied ourselves up and off to church. The church was in a Nissan hut with a sanded floor, the altar was made of wood from packing cases, on it was a wooden cross, two silver chalices which the padre brought and a bunch of purple irises in a beer bottle which had been cut in half. The seats were planks of wood on petrol cans. The hut wouldn't hold many, our crew was there in full force. We had carols without any accompaniment and sang them well. The C.O. read the lesson, felt a little homesick when we prayed for the folks at home then a nice little sermon, I don't think I've enjoyed a service more it was so genuine everyone had their hearts and souls in it. After the service there was a little communion service. At twelve o'clock we had a light meal of bully beef and cheese and then went over to the airman's mess to serve their dinner as you know it is the custom in the Air force for the officers and senior NCOs to wait on the erks as they are known at their Christmas dinner so for two hours I was bustling up and down apron around my waist serving hungry blokes with turkey, pork, baked potatoes etc. they each had two bottles of beer on the table and each one to whom we served would ask us to have a swig- you can imagine at last it was over and I didn't drop one plate though had some near squeaks. So went back to the tent to put on

Sunday best and have a polish up in readiness for our “do” which was a five o’clock. Throughout the rest of the afternoon the Erks who were pretty far gone by now were having a gala time there would bear roar and a motor bike would tear past in between the rows of tents with five blokes on it one standing up on the seat others seated on the front mudguards with another on his shoulders it was amazing how they kept their balance. Then there would be a long caterpillar winding in and around the tents with a chap playing hot swing on a trumpet at the head and others beating plates and what have you. Then as five o’clock drew nigh we went over to our places at the tables, what a sight met us as we entered the mess on each table was two bottles of beer for each man, plates of tangerines, nuts, boiled sweets, raisins, mince pies, cigarettes, doughnuts with cream in them. There were too many NCOs to all sit down at together so it was divided into two sittings, we were in the first, two chaps from the second sitting waited on each table and when their turn came vice versa. Soon everyone was seated and the dinner started off with a beautiful onion soup, which was really good, then on came dinner. I had goose (a leg) some chaps had turkey with pork baked potatoes, soft green peas, apple stuffing the plate was piled high. It was delicious the cooks had certainly excelled themselves. It took me half an hour solid eating to clear my plate to the last morsel. Then on came the Christmas pudding which was just what a pudding should be absolutely crammed with all sorts of fruit very rich with white sauce, after that was disposed of we dug into the mince pies and the extras. The beer was then opened and the speeches began the cooks were brought in front the kitchen and given three cheers and some beer. The C.O. then gave a speech and read a telegram from the chaps who had finished and were back in Blighty. Then as the second sitting were at the door with tongues hanging out we dispersed to the bar. That is all except the chaps who were to wait on the next sitting. Trev was one of those so to keep him company I stayed as well. The running around helped to dispel that heavy feeling that was hanging over us. If you think I stayed to get some more free beer you’re wrong though I must admit I didn’t say no. After the second dinner was over and we had tidied up the place a bit we all followed in the footsteps of the first sitting – to the bar! Our skipper and the rest of the crew were already in a corner so we settled down a noisy evening. The bar I should explain is three marques CONTINUED IN NUMBER 24.



24 27.12.43
Bone Algeria

1313883 Sgt. H. H. Lee
458 Sqdn. RAAF (RAF)
B.N.A.F

Dear Ma

CHRISTMAS CARRYINGS ON or WHY SANTA'S HAIR IS
WHITE (**continued**)



Joined together into one big tent with quite a lot of space but as the whole squadron was there it was pretty packed sardines wasn't in it they do have a layer of oil between them. Before eight thirty things were going with a swing and everyone was well away. We each had ten bottles of beer, the fruits of many weeks of drink less privation, well we only get a ration of one bottle of beer for a week so work it out

for yourself. As we were the oldest crew here now we were one of the elites but I am afraid we aren't treated quite with the awe due to us. The C.O. came over and had a noggin with us. Many lines were

shot and there was much reminiscing of by gone days and we told each other what we had thought of one another when we first came together in Ireland last February and of those three blissful days we spent at Blackpool and we've made plans for a crew reunion in London when all this over amongst other things a dinners at Simpson's' in the strand and then a show. It was decided that to get everything in and to make it a really historic occasion it would have to last three days at least. The evening wore on and beer wine and spirits were drunk tales were told and songs were sung. There were cigars on the house gigantic torpedoes the atmosphere could quite easily be cut with the proverbial knife. The punch was a marvellous stuff with gin, whisky, brandy and French wine in it and slices of lemon floating around. The cheroots you sent out had been all smoked after the dinner except one which was handed with due ceremony to our skipper Mac who enjoyed it very much as we had one. The evening sped by and we were all in good sprites and having a fine time but at one o'clock we bid each other adieu and once more wended our happy way home without any casualties this time however. We tumbled wearily into bed and fell fast asleep only to be awakened ten minutes later to find the tent full of people. They were chaps who had dined at the saw table with us and with whom we've been since Limavady days. There was nothing for it but to admit that I was awake. Someone said 'have an orange' to me I replied "OK" the next minute being battered by a cloud burst of tangerines. They had a huge full sack of them and had just upended it over me. They then woke Bill up and asked him to have one which he refused so for the next half hour we

heard them begging and pleading with Bill to have one to help his hangover in the morning but he was firm. He did not want one and he was not going to have one. They still persisted almost in tears until Bill lost his temper and hustled them outside so quickly they staggered for a hundred yards before they realized they were outside the tent. We weren't disturbed anymore that night and soon fell asleep again. The next morning (Boxing Day) we awoke to find the floor absolutely covered with about a hundred weight of tangerines, which we gathered up and returned from whence they came except for a few pounds. I still had no ill effects and found it rather amusing to see the pale and haggard faces of the others. I sure must be a second Tony that afternoon we went into town which boasts a very nice athletic field to watch a football match between our squadron (Aussies) and the Kiwis or New Zealanders but first there was a game of {"Aussie Rules " which is an Australian game similar to rugby. Then whilst we were waiting for the big match to start an Australian – *corrected by censor to Canadian*- officer drove a Truck onto the cycle track which goes round the football field. The track was banked up steeply at each end. He went tearing around this track flat out and how the thing never turned over goodness only knows when he went around the banked corners the T rack was parallel to the ground still it was very funny. The big game started Trev and I pulled out a huge cigar each and lit up but the game was so exciting that I had to throw mine away as it was chewed to shreds and it was only half smoked. I am afraid we lost but it was a jolly good game the poor old ambulance was on the go all the time. We got back to camp and dined on what was left from the previous day's repast and had another helping of that beautiful Xmas pud. In the evening we went over to our mess to find that we hadn't any drinks left except "plonk" which is French red wine. The bar was like a tomb when the telephone rang and the barman asked if Sgt Lee was in the mess I went over with misgivings thinking we may be flying. It was Mac and he invited us over to the officer's mess, so over we went. Their bar was still well stocked as the majority of the officers had been in our mess most of the time. Anyway a bright evening developed and once more songs were sung, stories told and beer drunk, even the monkey was there still on his feet after a hectic three days I think I enjoyed myself even more than the two previous evenings and once more we went to bed very happy. Today, two days after Christmas has been very quiet and tonight I sit me down and pen a poor picture of my 1042 Christmas. In many ways it is unique for never before have I and for three nights running throughout Christmas but believe me it has done me no harm and I have had a really smashing time with the best company. Don't get any more grey hairs worrying that I have gone astray and that I am a slave for life to Bacchus for that is not so. Merry I may have been but drunk no. At no time throughout the three days did I not know what I was doing. You should know that for the truth for you should know that to tell you fibs I would not do. I hope you had a good time and weren't too lonely and did not eat too much and that you

had a little nip or two, did you feel me thinking of you, if not very thick skinned because I was thinking hard enough. I received your number 23 to which I will reply on my next, which will be along shortly. That £12 10s I am remitting home is on its way. Just had the last of a series of inoculations so that's over with until the next time thank goodness I should think I am just about immune from everything now. I don't know when I shall go into hospital to get that lump cut off it doesn't hurt at all now and has gone down quite a bit. I will wait until I want a few days off. It's quite a simple thing I should be in and out in a day. It's similar to that lump that came up on Nancy's ankle a long time back. Well ducks I think I will just pop over to the mess for a cordial- there see I've reformed already, Keep well, Love HAL

P.S. Received your third parcel posted 25/11/43. Thanks very much.

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Orch's Orate

by the son of the original 'Orch', Gordon Orchard - Roland Orchard.



I feel very privileged to be involved in this milestone 250th Edition of the 458 Squadron Association Journal, following in the footsteps of Peter Alexander, Peter Pettit, Jim Whitem and Rob Wilkinson. I draw inspiration from those that went before me and, of course, from my Dad.

Gordon Orchard.

Thanks to everyone who has helped with this edition. To the many who have contributed articles and emails, our wonderful financial and in-kind donors are owed endless gratitude from us all.

The following people are not affiliated with 458 Squadron but went out of their way to assist.

- Wing Commander Andrew Gilbert. Prime Minister's Office
- Colonel Michael Buchanan. Prime Minister's Office.
- Bronwyn Morris. Governor General's Office.
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- Christopher Sandamas Chief Clerk to The Queen.
- Jacqueline Godden. The Queen's Secretary's Office.

Special mention to Victoria Flight Secretary/Treasurer Jeremy Orchard for his persistent approach to see this to its fruition and his many hours of dedication to help me.

Last but by no means least, Mr Keith Cousins, Mr Eric Munkman, Mr Leon Armstrong assisted by Keith Wilkinson, Mr Tom Lindsay closely assisted by Mr Bryan Quinlan and all other 458 Squadron Veterans. Those Veterans who are still with us and those who have passed on, we owe our lives to you (in one sense quite literally) for your service to country and post war your dedication and persistence in maintaining the camaraderie in the form of the 458 Squadron RAAF Journal.

Your legacy lives on. Here's to another 250 editions.

Note on Cover and Back page design – the front and rear photos of the Wellingtons came from the Official Squadron Albums and depict the start of 458 service (with Bomber Command), Coastal Command and final duties at the end of the war (at Gibraltar)

Photographs from the 458 Squadron Albums.

