



## JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

Year 66 No 253 December 2015

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Lest We Forget.



**Commemorating ANZAC Centenary 1915-2015**

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**Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to the Editor-Roland Orchard by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Please feel free to mail or email in your stories, articles or enquires to Roland. All are welcome.**

**John Gibbins**  
**Eric Jewell**  
**Ben Robinson**  
**May Croft**  
**Bob Jacklyn**  
**Don Bitmead**  
**William Kelliher**

**VALE**  
**NSW Flight**  
**Victoria Flight**  
**UK Flight**  
**UK Flight**  
  
**NSW Flight**  
**WA Flight**

### **VALE- Eric John Jewell**

Eric John Jewell was born on the 10th of June, 1921 to Hubert and Caroline. With his sister, Dora, Eric grew up on a wheat and sheep farm at Invergordon just outside Numurkah. A childhood bout of pneumonia meant that his health was strongly protected by both his parents. Eric and Dora would share a horse when making their daily journey to and from Invergordon State School. They continued their education at Shepparton High School and Eric, in due course matriculated gaining his Leaving Certificate, as was the practice then.



In 1938 he came to Melbourne and joined the Commonwealth



Public Service as a junior clerk. There he was appointed to a position with the then Department of Civil Aviation. Civil, at the time, was a branch of the Defence Department but in Eric's post-war employment there it became a Commonwealth Government Department in its own right. In 1939 he commenced Bachelor of Commerce studies part-time at Melbourne University. At that time he visited the St. George's Presbyterian Church Manse in East St. Kilda. (The Jewell family had previously had Methodist

association.) There he met Rev. Samuel McKenzie, his wife Marjorie, and their children David, Elizabeth, and Moira. Thus began a "foster" family relationship which continued throughout Eric's life. Finding his student accommodation not really satisfactory, he boarded with the McKenzies in Cintra Avenue and chose to become involved in several aspects of St. George's church life, including a period of service on the Board of Management. Against his parents' wishes - they were very mindful of his childhood illnesses - Eric enlisted in RAAF aircrew during 1941 and trained in Australia as a pilot. He remained on reserve within Australia until the following year when he was posted to Great Britain. He served for three years with 458 Squadron RAAF which operated as part of British Bomber Command. With 458,



which operated Vickers Wellington twin-engine bombers, Eric and his colleagues saw service in the UK, Middle East, North Africa, and around the Mediterranean. He and his aircrew mates survived more than a few "heavy" landings including one which saw an almost catastrophic undercarriage failure. As a second pilot Eric had an excellent view of their many operational activities. A great number of 458's missions involved hunting for enemy submarines and so the much-loved ""Wimpy" bombers were fitted with belly lights for night-time operations. Much of this activity was recorded in his friend and colleague Don Charlwood's book "No Moon Tonight".

In 1946 he was discharged from the RAAF and returned to Melbourne to complete his B.Com, now full-time, over two years, under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme. On completion of his studies, Eric resumed work with the DCA in their Melbourne headquarters. He worked predominantly in personnel administration (Today he would have been known as an HR Manager.) where he rose to the position of Senior Inspector-In-Charge, Recruitment. This work was interrupted by a life-threatening diagnosis of Tuberculosis which resulted in a number of lengthy spells in the Repatriation General Hospital, Heidelberg and the Convalescent Home in nearby Macleod. Some of his drug therapy was certainly at the experimental edge of medical care and many advances in TB treatment were made as a result of the work with Eric and other war veterans at Heidelberg. Family members undertook many trips to visit Eric at this time. TB and the hazards of air activities during the war had left Eric with greatly-reduced lung function, total deafness in his right ear and severely-affected hearing in his left. Eric was forced to adjust to life using a hearing aid and the routine of battery changing, cleaning and regular hearing tests. Eric had continued his association with the McKenzies after the war. Following Rev Samuel's death in 1948, Marjorie and Moira, together with Eric, moved out of the St.George's Manse around the corner to Odessa St. Eric continued to enjoy his hobbies including his beloved stamp-collecting, landscape and wildlife painting, travel and photography. These latter two developed into a passion with huge numbers of albums stacked wherever space could be found. Over an eighty year period he managed to fill scores of photo and stamp albums and also countless scrapbooks with postcards and other small memorabilia from his travels. During the 1950s Eric took a break from government employment working with the Stokes Silverware company in both design work and sales.

After a short period, however, he returned to Civil. By the 1960s Eric, along with other senior DCA staff, was involved in many overseas trips to destinations such as Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Papua-New Guinea, and ten times to the UK, seeking to recruit aeronautically-experienced candidates for Air Traffic Control training in Australia. These trips and the resulting recruits assisted greatly in the rapid expansion of Australian aviation and the industry's impressive safety record. They also provided countless

opportunities for Eric to extend his photographic talents and, when in the UK, to visit foster-sister Elizabeth ("Betty" to family) and husband John Newman and children Kim, Simon and Deborah.



In 1967 Eric moved from East St.Kilda to his own home in Derby Street, Laburnum, near Blackburn, built as part of the War Service Homes Scheme, next door to the house his parents, who had retired from farm life, and sister, Dora, had built. (Hubert had died two years earlier.) Marjorie McKenzie, who had provided a home and foster-mother role for Eric for almost thirty years, moved with him as she had earlier

in the 1960s finished her work with the old Mutual Store in the city. For thirteen years Eric was a train commuter - into the city from Laburnum each day, then home again in the evening. In 1980 Civil Aviation was amalgamated with the Federal Department of Transport and a move to Canberra loomed for Melbourne staff. Not wishing to relocate, Eric, in his own words, "more or less elected to retire on medical grounds".

Eric and Marjorie enjoyed numerous picnics and drives to nearby country destinations. The Dandenong Ranges along with the Mornington Peninsula were favourites. In 1987 Marjorie died and Eric undertook a number of tours with various groups such as Young At Heart. On one activity he met an RAAF officer's widow, Moira Esler, who also enjoyed travel. They undertook many local and overseas tours and cruises together and Eric, of course, continued to fill even more photo albums. Mindful of the difficulties in obtaining travel insurance for older travellers, Eric and Moira very reluctantly limited their time together to weekly visits which would often involve a meal together at a suitable eastern suburbs venue followed by an afternoon of Scrabble games and jig-saw puzzles.

Following a severe stroke five years ago and resultant hospitalisation and three months of after-care, Eric moved to Brimlea Aged Care where he enjoyed the largest upper-storey room in low care overlooking leafy Railway Avenue, Murrumbeena. For several years Eric continued to enjoy filling scrapbooks with photos, post and greeting cards, colourful magazine and newspaper cuttings and other small items. He continued weekly letter writing to travelling companion Moira who eventually moved in to Vasey House Aged Care in East Brighton.

In Eric's recent years one of his main areas of Interest were his wartime recollections, whether through sharing his memories or by looking at his extensive collection of wartime photos. Eric enjoyed visits from 458 Association members as well as those of a local RSL representative. A few minor falls preceded a more substantial one in



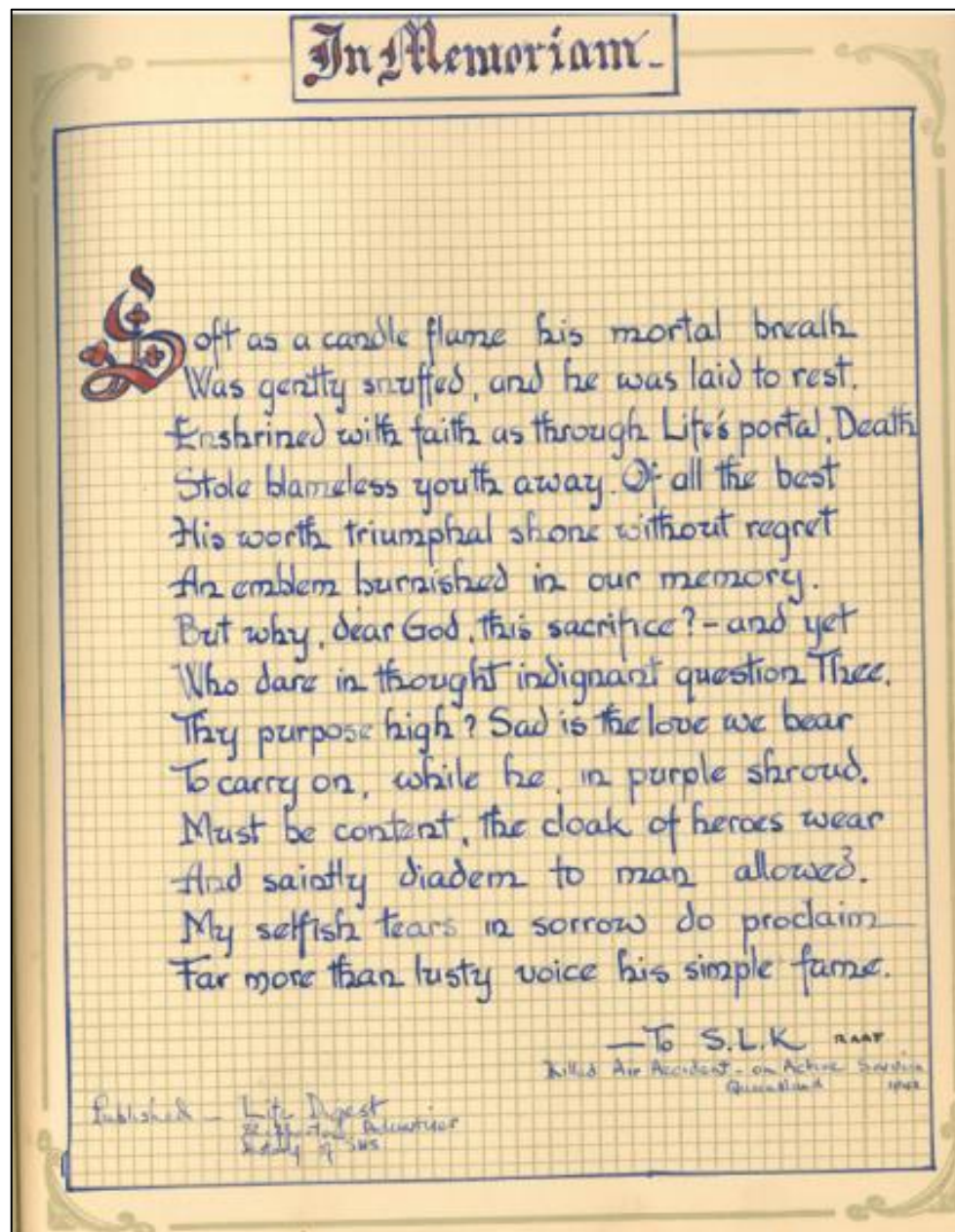


September 2015 and hip replacement surgery took place at Dandenong Hospital then a return to Brimlea, as rehabilitation wasn't considered an option. To his last few weeks Eric enjoyed thrice-weekly visits from family but sadly his deterioration continued. As recently as two weeks before his death the visiting physiotherapist was fitting him with new orthopaedic shoes but a further rallying was not to occur. Eric slipped peacefully and gradually away being bed-ridden for his final four days until his passing on 10 November, the evening before Remembrance Day.

We honour the passing of one of the last surviving Victorian members of 458 Squadron RAAF, a faithful son and brother, a loving and kindly-benevolent foster-brother, uncle, and great-uncle.

A life well-lived. Rest in peace, Eric. **Eulogy by Steve Gray.**

The following is a poem written by Eric in Memoriam to a childhood friend killed in an air accident in Queensland, Australia. Note, this is Eric's handwriting.





## **Vale Bill Kelliher**

Bill was born in Narrogin on 4 June 1921, and grew up on the newly established family farm Bonievale, near Toolibin in the wheatbelt

Bill drove a horse and buggy to Noman's Lake Primary School with his elder brother Noel and his two sisters Denise and Nancy. This method of conveyance confirmed his idea that horses required more food intake than the energy they provided, and he was very pleased that his father sold all the horses when his Blacksmith Shop became the first Ford motor car dealer in Narrogin, and the first rubber tyred tractors replaced horses for the farm work.

In 1934 Bill went to Narrogin High School with his brother Noel, and the next year the two boys were sent to board at Christian Brothers College

in St Georges Terrace. A plaque remains in the footpath where the College was at that time, now the Duxton Hotel.

In 1936, Aquinas was set up at Mount Henry, and the all the boys were sent up there to plant trees and clear the oval. It was slave labour according to Bill!

At the end of 1938 Bill did his Leaving Certificate, and went back home to the farm for that Christmas. He had applied for a place at an RAF training school, but received a letter saying that due to the outbreak of hostilities, the school had closed. He then spent 1939, somewhat uncomfortably, at the farm, but in March 1941 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force at Pearce Airbase.

After initial training in the most important aspects of the Airforce in wartime, like marching in unison on parade, the selection of aircrew proceeded. With his good school academic results, Dad applied for pilot training.

Pilots needed to have a suitable leg length, to fit the standard distance of seat-to-peddle arrangement in aircraft, but when Bill was measured, he was (just) under to minimum length. (This could have been the end of our erstwhile airman's career). Fortunately, the Chief instructor at Pearce was Sir Norman Brearley. When Brearley was barnstorming in an early biplane around Narrogin in the 1920's, Bill's father was the first person to take up the opportunity for a flight over the new farm.

When Brearley heard that a Kelliher was applying for pilot training but was short of leg length, he checked with Bill that he was actually the son of Dan (his father). Brearley then handed a note to the Sergeant which said something like "make sure this bloke records the correct leg length". They had Bill lying on his back, legs extended, a burly bloke pulling on each leg, and so the correct measurement was recorded.

In June 1941 Bill was sent to Cunderdin as one of the 6 top student pilots, for advanced pilot training in Tiger Moths! In August 1941 he took the train to Sydney, and then the NZ boat Awatea to Vancouver, Canada. A train trip across the Rocky Mountains led to the AirCrew Training base at Fort Mcleod, Alberta. (They were all short training periods)

Training in Avro Ansons, Bill completed the course with above average results in Mid November 1941. With some leave available, the base Commanding Officer suggested a visit to the US and arranged Canadian passports for Bill and his colleagues. They arrived in New York and later visited Times Square. On 6 December 1941 wearing their air force uniforms, their only suitable clothes, they went to the movies to see the opening night of the American patriotic film about the Airforce, "Keep 'Em Flying". The film stars, including the beautiful Carol Ray, were there for the opening and Bill with his uniformed colleagues were taken to the after-show party. (A good time was had by all!) The next morning was the bombing of Pearl Harbour, and he woke up to all US Newspapers and News banner headlines that were only about the attack. The next day the US declared war on Japan.

Bill then took the old tramp ship Letitia on 14 December 1941 from Vancouver and arrived in Liverpool on Christmas Day 1941. Dirty old ship, foul weather, dodging U boats, Xmas dinner on the ship was cheese and pickles.

Bill was initially sent to an empty holiday home in Brighton, then transferred to an Instructors course in Rugby, flying Airspeed Oxfords, Avro Tutors, and a Blackburn Botha. He left early on 8 August 1942, with above average pass mark of 81.2%, as Coastal Command required aircrew.

So to a Astro Navigation course at Harrogate Spa and to Turnberry on 27 August for conversion to Beaufort's and training in torpedo/bombing, instrument flying, night flying landings, photography, night navigation to December 1942.

January 1943 were test flights in Oxfords and the Beauforts, then Bill, with a Pommie and Canadian crew, flew a Beaufort to Gibraltar, then onto Blida in Algiers and to Cairo's Marble Arch landing Ground by 27 February.

After some month's training in low flying, flare attacks at night, night flying in the Mediterranean Sea, Bill fell ill with an ear infection and was holed up in Cairo's Heliopolis Army General Hospital from June to October, before being cleared for flying. (This could have been the end of flying)

Then shipped to Southampton, on leave, lost to the Airforce and when he complained that he had run out of funds, was put on a train to Wales the next day. Finally arrived at Haversfordwest and started conversion to the Wellington Bomber, with circuits and landings, Flapless landings, Glide landings, night circuits and landings, conversion to Mark X and completed qualifications as a Wellington pilot.

It was here that Bill, the last to arrive, collected his crew of left overs, John Dunn, Horrie Campbell, John Longford, Cliff Hayward and a surplus fighter

pilot, Bill Turier as second pilot. These turned out to be the “ best ever Wellington crew in the RAAF”.

After some training with the new crew, and a brand new Mark 14 Wellington Bill and crew flew overnight to Casablanca on 3/4 February and slept through the next day, missing dinner. When asked where he was going (he thought that they should tell him) he replied “to 458 Squadron in North Africa” as he had heard this was a RAAF squadron of Wellingtons. They flew the next day to Bone, where the 458 CO asked why they was here, but on seeing the brand new Wimpey and said “welcome to 458”.

U-Boat hunting in the Med was the main game, along with convoy escort and in June /July 1944 checking shipping along the French coast, bombing coastal facilities and illuminating enemy ships.

So in August they were flying and bombing along the south coast of France on the days prior to the 15 August 1944 invasion of the south coast of France, when, at dawn on that day, an awesome convoy of 2,000 transports and landing craft, 300 warships, the US 7<sup>th</sup> Army and the French 2nd Corps landed on the south Coast of France between Toulon and Cannes. 458 crews were protecting the invasion fleet in the days after the invasion. (On 7 August 2015, Bill, the remaining survivor of the 6 man crew, was awarded the Legion of Honour medal by the President of France. This medal was received on 10 December 2015.)

Then a transfer to Foggia in Italy until “tour expired” and Bill was sent to Cairo for discharge on 5 December 1945.

A more detailed description of memorable flying events during Bill and crew’s tour of duty was included in the Bill Turier Obituary, written by Bill Kelliher, and included in a previous edition of 458 Squadron News.

Bill married Flip in 1948, the girl he had first met on the beach of the Red Sea, and continued courting by letter over the ensuing 3 years.

Bill went to UWA and graduated with a Bachelor of civil Engineering in 1950. He then pursued a brilliant career with the Main Roads Department of WA, and retired in 1981, aged 60 years old.

Both he and Flip were made Honorary Life Members of the South of Perth Yacht Club in 1992.

Bill passed away after a thankfully short illness with pancreatic cancer on 13 December 2015.

**Bob Kelliher.**



## **Vale Don Btimead**



Many thanks to Bev, Jenny, Peter and Lesley for inviting me to pay tribute to Don on behalf of President Keith Cousins, who sends his apologies and condolences, and the members of 458.

Don passed away last Friday – 11 December – aged 95

On Monday, we received news that one of Don's fellow squadron members, Bill Kelliher, had passed away on 13 December in Perth – aged 94.5.

And, not long ago, we farewelled Eric Munkman, aged 96.

So, it's a sad reality that we are now saying farewell to a large number of their brave generation.

And, in the case of those gathered here today to farewell Don, there are no superlatives necessary – suffice to say he was a member of 458!

These men created their own reputation and numerous superlatives by their actions 75 years ago over the skies of the Mediterranean.

There are descendants and family of Don's 458 mates here today – and I'm sure, whilst farewelling Don, they are also thinking about and remembering their loved ones – including Peter Alexander, Bob Bruce, Jim Whittem, Eric Munkman, Stan Longhurst, Vic Gibbins, Bob Lyndon, Gordon Orchard and my father Bill Wilkinson.

As far as I know, Dad didn't really know Don well – but that was the case with many, given the size of the Squadron. But they were 458 mates, and all, seemingly, cut from the same cloth.

Don Bitmead joined the Air Force on the 10th October, 1941 – he actually waited until he turned 21 so he could get his Dad's permission to join up. He was discharged 51 months later on 10th January 1946. He was a tail gunner, flying sorties over the Mediterranean in the infamous Wellingtons. He was stationed in Tunisia, Algeria, Sardinia, Malta, Italy & Palestine. His daughter Jenny tells me, having studied Don's log book, that his Proficiency Assessments were always above average, and, when discharged, Don was a Flight Lieutenant. She relates this story:

“Whilst stationed in Bone (Algeria) he was diagnosed with appendicitis, so was not able to fly to Malta on a series of anti-submarine sweeps in the Mediterranean. Instead, he was carted off to hospital. It was the 19th May 1944, a very black day with nil visibility, and the plane, with Don's replacement onboard, crashed upon returning to Malta, killing his English counterpart”.

Before disbanding and returning to Australia, Don collected the names and addresses of his squadron mates, but subsequently lost the list. Once back in Sydney, he advertised in the newspapers for 458ers to send him their contact details, making it possible to form the 458 Squadron Association – the prime movers being Don and his mate Sam Barlow – along with other stalwarts.

Don was a very active member of the NSW Flight and spent many years as Secretary.

He attended many Reunions, cricket matches and other activities, not only with his beloved Bev, but, as I understand, with his little Ford Anglia, back in the late 1940's. I'm told the dickie seat in the back was regularly used to support a keg of beer at the cricket games.

David Longhurst tells of a story from one of the more recent Reunions :

"I have what I think is a unique and memorable tale which says a lot about Don. In fact I had a number of quiet chats with him at the Reunions, and other functions, and found him to be an engaging and interesting man.

During the Bowral reunion in 2009 one of the outings was to the Illawarra Flyer. As Don was in a wheelchair, they were going to leave him sitting beside the cafe while the rest of us walked down to the Flyer, a structure that offered a walk above the tree tops, views out over the coast as well as the experience of standing on each end of this large structure when it bounces up and down.

I decided that it would not only be a good experience for Don, but a good work out for me, seeing as the route down was pretty steep and pushing him back up the hill would require considerable effort. When we got down the hill to the Flyer he suggested that I go out on it by myself, but I insisted that it was no big effort to push him. So, off we went and when we got to the point where it moved up and down he again suggested I'd done enough, but I wasn't deterred and we were soon bouncing up and down on this vast structure. We eventually worked our way, (well actually I shoved Don) to the other end, where he insisted I'd done enough. During a brief break before negotiating the steep track back to the cafe, parking area and hence the bus, Don explained that he was a Rear Gunner for a very good reason, he was scared of heights and experienced motion sickness every time he flew. As a Rear Gunner he was the only one compelled to endure the fruits of his motion sickness."

I've thoroughly enjoyed my time with 458 – for about the past 12 years – as I'm sure have many other sons and daughters – including Don's – because it has enabled me to meet a number of inspirational men.

458 is definitely the "family" Squadron – made up of several generations – all keen to march behind that banner.

Speaking of Anzac Day, Don was one of the wheelchair trailblazers – and set the scene for a number of his mates to enjoy the March in comfort.

Us "next generation" take great pride in maintaining the 458 traditions to honour our fathers.

As you all know, these men didn't talk much of their wartime experiences, but, I must say, during my association with 458, it's been wonderful to squeeze some of those stories out – a lot of which have since been published in our well-read journal. We've recently published the 250th edition of the journal – a wonderful record and, I'm sure, one of the longest continually-produced newsletters of any Squadron. I have no doubt in his years as Secretary, that Don

was responsible for many of those early editions.

We hadn't seen Don for a while recently, but we were all so grateful that he made it to lunch last Thursday at the Kirribilli Club – our Christmas celebration and NSW Flight meeting. I sat with him, and chatted and I could tell how much he was enjoying catching up with many of the 458 family.

In finishing – I urge you to regularly take a moment to salute these “heroes” – because that's exactly what they are to us – true heroes.

Back in August, I put together a few words for Eric Munkman's funeral – and the majority of those words could apply to any of the 458 men – so I would like to re-read a couple of verses, with Don in mind.

THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THESE BOYS FROM 458

TOGETHER THEY EPITOMISED THE TERM GOOD MATE

THEY CAME FROM ALL OUR CORNERS AND JOINED UP AS A BAND  
AS THEY WENT OFF INTO WAR TO DEFEND OUR SACRED LAND.

AS THE SUN MAKES ITS WAY O'ER THE YARDARM TODAY

LET'S REMEMBER DON FONDLY AS HIS SOUL FLIES AWAY

AND CELEBRATE GOOD CHEER, A MAN WITH THE MOST

HAVE A BEER IN YOUR HAND AS YOU RISE FOR A TOAST

We salute you Don Bitmead – father of 3; grandfather of 4; great-grandfather of 5; and “brother” to the many who served under the 458 banner. May you rest in peace, Don, because you and your mates deserve to rest in peace, satisfied, and proud, that you served your country with distinction, when called upon.

**Rob Wilkinson**

**Vice President**

**458 Squadron NSW Flight**



### **New South Wales Flight report by Keith Cousins**



Firstly I would like to mention the passing of Don Bitmead.

He attended the last Council meeting for 2015 of which I was unable to go and by all accounts had a great luncheon, however passed away the following day. Our sympathies are with Bev, Jenny, Peter and Lesley and families. Don was the other half of the two founding members of the 458 Squadron Association. Sam Barlow was the first one so that is the two founding members gone. In the meantime one of my granddaughters has graduated as a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Melbourne and after serving her Residency at Shepparton Hospital, they wanted her to go to work straight away but declined as she has had her nose to the grindstone for the last eight or ten years, which is fair enough. She and two other girls are on a much needed holiday. One other girls has graduated with a Doctorate in Veterinary Science and the third will graduate as a Medical Doctor next year. The three of them have moved into a very nice unit in North Melbourne and going by the pictures they have sent me it looks very nice indeed. The other news is Sophie, my eldest granddaughter, announced her engagement to a nice fellow and has been

traveling around for the last six months with a personal guard as she been allocated by the World Health Organisation the BBC and SBS as a side project to try and convince the Indian public to give up smoking and temporarily based in New Deli, hence the armed guard. In the mean time she has had time to slip over to Istanbul to cover the elections and the Himalayas to report on the earthquake there. She has been a very busy girl. I met Sophie's fiancé at a family gathering and he seemed to be a very nice guy. That is it from me for 2015 and would like to wish everyone the compliments of the Season and wish one and all a happy and healthy 2015.



### **UK flight report by Keith Wilkinson**

**Ben Robinson:** The UK flight has lost one of its great characters – former 458 cook Ben Robinson from Huddersfield (pictured here posing in a Wellington bomber at Shallufa).



Mr Robinson, a retired butcher, died peacefully at the age of 94 in October at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary. Ben had many stories to tell of his times with the squadron – the challenges of catering for large numbers, often while on the move, or in tented camps in deserts or on beaches.

A rear gunner colleague of Ben's – the late Fred Briggs from Wigan – once described him as “a bloody good cook”. That was quite a compliment from plain speaking Fred, not always noted for his tactfulness, as he also said many other RAF cooks he'd come across were “bloody rubbish”!

Ben treasured the memories of his time with 458 squadron, right through its history from Holme-on-Spalding Moor onwards. I spent a day with him in Yorkshire in 2002 when he proudly showed me some of his old haunts, like the old butcher's shop where he started work as a boy of 14. He had gone on to own the shop until he retired in the 1980s. He said he'd worked there seven days a week. Even on Sundays he'd gone there to scrub the place from top to bottom. But it wasn't unusual for people to be hard grafters in Ben's world.

In his Yorkshire accent, he told me of a shopkeeper he knew: “His wife died ya know...he went to the funeral in the morning and was back behind the counter that afternoon!”

Ben used to cycle for miles up and down hills on his butcher's boy bike, delivering meat to customers. It had a huge basket on the front, and only one gear.

His mother, he said, had been tough, even helping his dad as a blacksmith, wielding the hammer for him.



Ben loved the companionship that came from being in 458 but it could be a tough old place, and he would stand his ground to make a point.

One night, he said, a sergeant had complained about him being in the sergeants mess, saying: "We can't get to the bar because of all the other ranks."

The next morning Ben refused to give the guy his breakfast. He said: "If I am not good enough to be in the sergeants mess, I am not good enough to serve you breakfast!"

### **May Croft:**

Sadly, I must also – belatedly - report the loss of another loved member of the 458 family – May Croft, widow of squadron pilot Jim Croft. May, who lived in Southport in the north of England, passed away at a nursing home, aged 95.

The Crofts were regular attenders at 458 reunions until Jim died at the age of 77 – still carrying shrapnel in his body from his time in the war. May had joined us all for the UK flight reunion in Sardinia (SEE PICTURE) along with her son David and 458 Pilot the Late Mo Borne. She was with us at the airfield at



Alghero when a flying display was put on just for our private entertainment.

May watched flying displays by the Red Arrows from her garden as well as training aircraft which flew from a night fighter base close to her home. Every time a plane flew over at low level, she said, it reminded her of Jim.

### **Legion of Honour latest:**

You may have read elsewhere of the possibilities of 458-ers being entitled to

the French "Legion d'Honneur". The squadron did play a part in the liberation of France in 1944. I have been in touch with the French embassy and the British Ministry of Defence, and application forms are available.

One person who has applied is former pilot Jack Christianson. At the time of going to press with this newsletter, Jack was awaiting an acknowledgement from the MoD.

To obtain an application form (for *British* applicants) you can write to: Personnel and Training – Defence Services Secretary – Commemorations. Floor 6, Zone C, Ministry of Defence, Main Building, London, SW1A 2HB.

Awards will not be given posthumously.

### **NEWS FROM CANADA by Bryan Quinlan**



heading.

With only two known survivors of the Canadian Flight, Tom Rowan & myself, we hardly qualify as flight status and as agreed earlier with Roland we will now submit our input under the above

I received a call from Tom Rowan to report on his activities from his home in

Carragana and the nearby community of Porcupine Plain in northern Saskatchewan. Winter has arrived there but a wintry night did not stop Tom driving the 12 km to Porcupine on a wintry night for the weekly card session. Only problem was that no one else braved the weather so no cards that night. With the death of the oldest resident in that area Tom took over that role and was asked to perform the official annual turn-on of Porcupine's Christmas light display.

I was pleased to receive a letter from Gladys Markland enclosing a synopsis of her late husband's life before, during and after WWII up to his death on May 17 2015. Bert was born Preston Lancashire on October 22 1921. He left school at age 14 and worked for the Loxhan car co. The families of Bert and Gladys were close neighbours and they knew each other from an early age and were married March 8 1943. He enlisted in the RAF in May 1941 and trained as a wireless operator air gunner (wag), training in England and joined 458 RAAF Squadron in North Africa, Sardinia, Italy and Gibraltar. He flew with Ian Armstrong's crew. He returned to the UK in April 1945 and received his discharge in 1946. Bert and Gladys immigrated to Canada in June 1951 with their two children, Leigh 4 and Graham 3. They settled in Rossland BC for 32 years where Bert was employed with Cominco. Bert was an avid golfer and hockey fan. He retired in June 1982 and they moved to Christina Lake and lived there for 21 years before being invited to live with their son and his wife in Kamloops so that he could look after them when Bert's health was declining with Parkinson's disease which soon necessitated moving into a long term care centre where he resided for 6 years until his death in 2015 at age 93. He was visited weekly by Gladys and his son and by other family members as often as they could. (We used to holiday at Christina Lake in the 1960s and early 70s and enjoyed several golf games with Bert at the excellent Christina Lake course). Bert attended several of the Commonwealth Air Training Plan reunions in Winnipeg in the late 1980s and early 90s.

2015 was an eventful year for Joan and I starting in August attending a 65<sup>th</sup> reunion luncheon of the 1950 faculty of engineering class, including 4 of the 25 surviving members of civil engineering, (out of the original 90 plus). September included my 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday party, followed in October by my voluntary retirement from driving, (which began in 1943 on 458 in Tunisia. a very difficult adjustment). In November we celebrated our 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary followed by Joan's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and our Granddaughter Alison's 30<sup>th</sup>. Peggy organized a fantastic family party to celebrate all three events. That about covers this first "News from Canada" report, except to include our collective best wishes to our Australian mates for a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy 2016



## WA Flight Report by Bob Kelliher (assisting Ted Jewell)



Dad, Bill Kelliher, with his recently received Legion of Honour medal, and the Certificate signed by the President of France. (His Mark 14 Wimpy photo and the 458 map of operations in the background). He has been recently diagnosed with inoperable pancreatic cancer and is undergoing palliative care to remain comfortable and pain-free.



The 458 group here had a lunch at the Bullcreek Airforce club on 28 August and a lunch at the South of Perth Yacht

club on 29 November. Ted Jewell says he is well and may still keep his driver's licence, especially as his legs won't take him far.

*(Unfortunately Bill passed away on the 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. Sympathies to the Kelliher family from all 458ers. ed)*



## Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard



It was with great sadness that I received word from Peter Gray, a great family friend of Eric Jewell, telling me of Eric's passing at Brimlea Aged Care, in Murrumbidgee, Victoria, on November 10<sup>th</sup>. Jeremy and I represented The Squadron at his Funeral which took place at the Springvale Cemetery on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. It was a great service for a wonderful and very complex and talented man. He will be missed by many and it was an honour to be part of his send off. A true hero in every sense of the word. RIP Eric.



### South Australia Report by Rick Michell

Well Christmas is here again and the 458 Members of the SA Flight celebrated with our Christmas Lunch at the Kensi on December 6th.



Everyone had a good time. The table was decorated with Bon Bon's (supplied by Trish Cosh). The Late Buck Pedersen Grand Daughter made her fantastic cupcakes in RAAF colours and I (Rick Michell) supplied chocolates that were in Gold Star Boxes. Everything made the table very festive.

We had in attendance Colin and Yvonne Hutchinson, Pat Cribb, Trish and Dave Cosh, Rick Michell, The Late Buck Pedersen daughters Lorraine and Pat, Gillian Bell and her mother, Joan Hepton.

Hope to see our members on ANZAC Day at the Kensi.



### EMAILS

#### Email from Nick Bertram

Hi Roland. Hope you and the family are well.

Have you heard from anyone in WA regarding Ted? I must admit I have been so busy I struggle to find the time to call anyone at the moment.

Can I ask a favour? I am looking for info on the following 458er

**1 BARNETT FREDERICK JOHN : Service Number - 28604 : Date of birth - 12 Mar 1916 : Place of birth - BROKEN HILL NSW : Place of enlistment - ADELAIDE : Next of Kin - BARNETT HERBERT [Serviceperson living]**

Whether or not we are in touch with his family? Does any of the 458 veterans remember him? I am in possession of some photos which I believe belonged to him. There are a few comments written on the back of the photos which I will scan on my R&R and send through. **Just wanting to know his story?**

**Thanks. Nick**

#### Email from Marjorie Jacklyn

Hello Roland,

I have been meaning to email you for some months to tell you that my husband, **Bob Jacklyn** (pictured), passed away on 18 June 2014. He was 92 and had been suffering from mild dementia for some years. He was a cosmic ray physicist with the Antarctic Division and in 1951 went to Macquarie Island for twelve months and to Mawson for twelve months in 1956. He always enjoyed reading the 458 newsletter and he kept in touch with the other crew members of his Wellington for many years. With best wishes, **Marjorie Jacklyn**

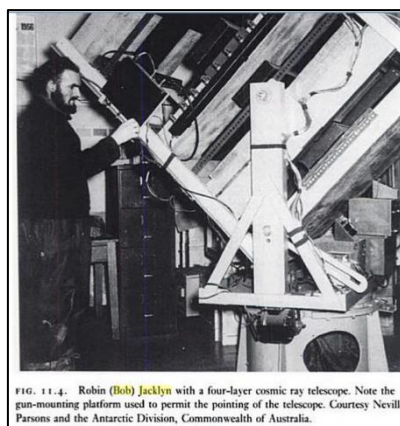


FIG. 11.4. Robin (Bob) Jacklyn with a four-layer cosmic ray telescope. Note the gun-mounting platform used to permit the pointing of the telescope. Courtesy Neville Parsons and the Antarctic Division, Commonwealth of Australia.



### **Email from Wendy Whittem-Trunz**

Hi Roland,

I have one nice, short add to the newsletter, in a month of sadness.

I attended the Christmas lunch with the Sydney flight last Thursday and enjoyed it very much, especially catching up with all the regulars, including the Bitmeads. Jenny Higgs (nee Bitmead) told me that she had recently found and bought a 458 Mug in an op shop in Port Macquarie on a trip from Nabiac NSW where she lives. I believe it is one of the few mugs that I couldn't keep and had sent to the Salvos when I was disposing of my dad's final nicknacks before selling his house. I am very happy to know this mug is now residing in an appreciative 458 family home. **Cheers, Wendy**

### **Message from The International Bomber Command Centre in the UK.**

A search is underway for every living Bomber Command veteran in order to invite them to the unveiling of a memorial spire in Lincoln, UK on 2 October 2016. The spire, taller than the Angel of the North, is surrounded by a wall recording the 55,573 names of men who died serving with the formation and is part of new International Bomber Command Centre which is due to open in 2016. Around 900 veterans have been identified so far, and it is thought that over 100 are still out there. Anyone knowing of any Bomber Command veteran is urged to register their names by emailing [events@internationalbcc.co.uk](mailto:events@internationalbcc.co.uk) Or by writing to The IBCC, 13 Cherry Holt Road, Bourne, Lincolnshire, United Kingdom. PE10 9LA.

### **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.

**Chris Sherrah NSW**

**Bob Springall UK**

### **Orch's Orate** by Roland Orchard

Another year has come to a close and 2016 is already with us. We pay homage to our Veteran Members as, sadly, each leaves us to join their own departed family and comrades. For the rest of us our lives go on with thoughts of love and respect for our own family members as we head into new challenges for the coming year. I certainly hope that your challenges are happy and rewarding ones.

One of my challenges for 2016, as Editor and Publisher of this Newsletter, is to gather a tally of names of all 458 Veterans who are still with us today. I ask all Veterans and families to please communicate to me, Roland Orchard, via letter or email details of those 458 Veterans who are still alive today. I would like to gather this list so we can keep up to date with our records. Thank you.

Compliments of the Season to each and every one of you and hope that you all have a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2016.

## Our Memorabilia Page at [www.458raafsquadron.org](http://www.458raafsquadron.org) Merchandise



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Digitized DVD set sits atop the two Albums

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