



JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL

Year 68 No 256 March 2017

Squadron President:

Keith Cousins - Australia

Squadron Vice-President:

Leon Armstrong - U.K



Squadron Treasurer Beryl Dodds. 8 Yarraman Avenue, Frenchs Forest, 2086 NSW

Squadron Secretary: Stephen Bruce. Unit 5/10 Kissing Point Road, Turrumurra NSW 2074

Newsletter Editor and Publisher: Roland Orchard. 78 Edward Road, Chirnside Park.Vic. 3116

Mobile-0400433382 email:editor@458raafsquadron.org

Flight Correspondents:

NSW – Keith Cousins –C/O Unit 5/10 Kissing Point Road, Turrumurra NSW 2074

WA- Ted Jewell 61 Wyaree Rd. Mandurah, WA. 6210. Assisted by Bob Kelliher.

SA- Rick Michell 5 Armson Ave. Magill. SA.5072

VIC-Roland Orchard 78 Edward Road, Chirnside Park VIC. 3116

UK- Keith Wilkinson 23 Ferndale Pk, Tedmore, Stourbridge, W. Midlands. DY90RB

CANADA- Bryan Quinlan. 1460 Haywood Ave., W. Vancouver, B.C. V7T 1V6.

*** Mail all communications for Squadron Secretary to Stephen Bruce (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to Beryl Dodds (address above) ** Have you notified Roland Orchard if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email? Are there others in your family, or circle of friends, who would like to receive a copy by e-mail? Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.**

Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to The Editor by 30th July, 2017

VALE

John (Jack) Charles Baker

Colin Hutchinson

Mavis Addinall (wife of the Late William Addinall)

Peg Browne (wife of Jim Browne)

NSW Flight

SA Flight

NSW Flight

QLD Flight

458 Squadron Association Flight Reports.



New South Wales Flight Report

by Keith Cousins



Stephen first of all I would like you to send a note of congratulations to our Canadian Flight in order to wish them all the best for their country's recent centenary celebrations. Now I thought I would relate to you some of our times in Shallufa station in Nth Africa. At this time most of 458 Squadron was being reformed following an accident that occurred on an airfield not far from El Alamein which was caused when a South African crew manning a Boston twin engine bomber had to make an emergency landing downwind. Trouble started when their leading aircraft smashed into the lead plane of our eight 458 Wellington's on the runway preparing to take off. The first of our aircraft was struck caught on fire, and then in domino effect all eight aircraft were destroyed on runway. Luckily all crew were lucky to escape death and serious injury. Subsequently the squadron was re equipped rather quickly with new aircraft and Keith saw this as "the starting date of the reformation of 458 Squadron with air force personnel being provided by "The Middle East Pool" and 216 Squadron. There was a fervent hope that the squadron could be re-established as an all Australian certainly an ambitious task as there were not sufficient trained Australians to meet the desperate needs during the height of the El Alamein campaign in October and November, 1942. At the completion of this campaign a considerable number of aircrew were redeployed to Foggia, East Coast of Italy, Malta then later on to Gibraltar." (More details can be referred to in We Find and Destroy by Peter Alexander)

SPECIAL NOTE FROM STEVEN BRUCE

Hi all, Rob and I visited Keith (Cousins) today (21/3/17) to mark his 96th



Birthday at The San and he is in fine spirit, although his physical manoeuvrability is very limited. According to the treating staff it is proposed that Keith will return to his nursing home, Chesalon, later this week.

ANZAC Day 2017 - Sydney

Please review following website from RSL outlining this year's Anzac Day march arrangements. www.rslnsw.org.au/commemoration/Anzac

The modified arrangements for march this year are similar to last year. We are to assemble at corner of Phillip & Hunter St. at 10:00 am and set off around 10:20am +/- . Please advise if you will be attending march and or our function to follow at The Castlereagh Boutique Hotel Level 1, 169 Castlereagh St. Sydney, as is customary. We do need to advise hotel our numbers for catering purposes (sandwiches, hot and cold platters of food and beverage package). Our costs have been maintained at around \$30 per person depending on number of attendees. Look forward to seeing you all there and please don't hesitate to contact me should you need any further information. Best Regards, Stephen Bruce 458 Squadron Secretary



South Australia Flight Report.

By Rick Michell



It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Colin Hutchinson. Colin passed away on March 10th, to our knowledge Colin was SA Flight last surviving member. He was very active in serving on various committees. Our heartfelt condolences go to Yvonne and family. As there will be no one marching on Anzac Day, those members who would like to join us for lunch, we will meet at the Kensi Hotel Regent Street Kensington at noon. Our midyear lunch will be held on July 6th, also at the Kensi. Contact Rick Michell on 0447 809 738, or Dave Cosh on 0417 867 277.



No Report from UK Flight

We wish all members of 458 Squadron UK Flight the very best.



News from Canada by Bryan Quinlan

Being only Tom Rowan and myself this will be rather limited. I called Tom two days ago and he is still living alone in his house. He does get daily visits to help with things he cannot do himself but still wishes to remain as independent as possible, rather remarkable for someone heading for age 99 this December.

Things are mainly unchanged for Joan and I. We could have moved into a new retirement home but decided we could not handle the quick down-sizing required. After 40 years in this house we have accumulated a lot of stuff so we will stay put for as long as possible, getting extra help as needed in addition to assistance we get from

our Veterans Affairs. I have increasing balance problems after my fall last summer, so my activities are pretty restricted. Joan remains the active one although also in her 90s and we get a lot of help from daughter Peggy and son Dennis for shopping, misc. errands and of course medical appointments. Very best wishes to all. Bryan



No Report from Western Australia.
We wish Ted and everyone in WA all the very best.



Victoria Flight Report by Roland Orchard



ANZAC Day 2017 – Melbourne

The Assembly point is on the Southern side of Flinders Street, east of Swanston Street, at Federation Square. Look out for the 458 Squadron Banner. Form up time is at 9:45am sharp and step off is 10:15am. After the march we will gather at the Jardin Tan Restaurant, Birdwood Avenue, opposite the eastern entrance to The Shrine of Remembrance, at about 11am for brunch. The following is a link to the Vic. RSL web site for any further ANZAC Day details.

<http://www.rslvic.com.au/commemoration/anzac-day/>

VALE John (Black Jack) Baker (NSW Flight). My father's SE Operator on a number of 'ops'. Condolences to Charles, Pat, Chris and family.

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

David & Judy Westgarth

Kim McKenzie

Charles and Pat Baker

Alan Smith

All donations are received with our gracious thanks and can be made via our website on the donations page - <http://www.458raafsquadron.org/donations>

Or by post (cheque) to Roland Orchard. 78 Edward Rd, Chirnside Park, Victoria.
3116

Emails



From- Keith Butterfield
Sent- Wed 22-Mar-17 9:16 PM

To - UK@458raafsquadron.org
Subject - WAG Sgt. Clifford Ebbage - 458 Squadron

Good morning Keith (Wilkinson)

I have obtained your e-Mail address from the excellent 458 Sqn. Website. Whilst researching my family history, I established the above gentleman was in fact a first cousin of my father. My father spoke very little of his childhood nor indeed his relations so I knew nothing of him. He did however have two elder brothers who he did maintain contact with over the years before they died. All three brothers served during the war – one in the RAF, one in the Navy and my Dad in the army.

When looking through my father's memorabilia I came across this newspaper article that he kept tucked away in the back of his army paybook, which put me 'on the trail' of Cliff. When I did my research, I found that Cliff, along with majority of his crew mates died when on active service with the squadron. The report below details the loss of his aircraft which was given by the sole survivor. (Obviously I obtained this from the 458 Squadron's website) You will note that the aircraft was flying out of Protville (Tunisia) at the time of its loss. I was hoping that you might have any further information on Cliff and if I am really lucky, a photograph, something I do not have. He originally came from Beeston in Leeds. Hoping you can help.

Kind regards Keith Butterfield

Unit: 458 Sqn RAAF Summary : Wellington MP700 which was detailed to carry out a recce in the Tyrennian Sea took off from RAF Protville (Tunisia) at 2226 hours on 4/5th August 43. A message was intercepted from MP700 at 0017 hours on the 5th August "returning to base engine trouble, position 40.02N 10,10E." Nothing further was heard from the aircraft and it failed to return to base. The aircraft was one of six aircraft from the Squadron detailed to carry out armed recces during the night of 4/5th August.. Crew: RAAF 402262 Flt Sgt Spencer, R G Captain (Pilot) RAF Flt Sgt B E Adams, (2nd Pilot) RAAF 407903 PO McKay, L (Navigator) RAF Sgt C Ebbage, (Wireless Air Gunner) RAAF 403865 PO Fischer, J M (Wireless Air Gunner) RAAF 406705 Sgt B A Watson, (Wireless Air Gunner) The Sqn ORB also records " On 12/8 a message was received from HQ NACAF that Sgt Watson, a WAG in Spencer's crew missing on the night of 4/5 August had been picked up after 8 days in a dinghy. Watson reported

that at 0025 hours the port engine had cut out and the airscrew feathered. The aircraft set course for base sending out signal 'JR'. The torpedo was jettisoned. Suddenly the Pilot shouted 'stand by for ditching', but the aircraft went straight in before anyone could take up positions. He did not know whether the aircraft had become unmanageable or whether the pilot had not realised he was too low and unprepared for crash. Sgt Watson was able to open the astro hatch, and he must have shot through this but only remembers struggling under water. On surfacing he saw burning oil on the surface and an uninflated dinghy floating 20 yards away. Although bruised and unable to use his arms he made for the dinghy and after half an hours struggle managed to get into it. Sgt Ebbard also survived the crash and managed to get into the dinghy although badly hurt, vomiting, could not see and was in great pain. Watson found the ration box tried to open it for the morphia but fainted. He came to 2 hours later and Ebbage appeared dead. Two days later Watson buried Ebbage at sea. During the whole time in the dinghy Watson strictly rationed water and Horlick tablets and when rescued still had five cans of water and 4 tins of Horlicks. During this time several aircraft including Germans had appeared but he could not attract their attention. On the 12 August a Catalina appeared with Lightning escort. Watson got their attention by standing up and waving red flag. The Catalina circled, alighted and picked up Watson with a rope. He was brought to Bizerta and taken to 56th General Hospital. Rescue was possible by Watson's persistent confidence and refusal to give up hope He sang and talked to himself during the day and kept cool by dipping his clothes in sea." The names of the five crew who lost their lives are commemorated on the Malta Memorial.

If anyone has information on WAG Sgt. Clifford Ebbage for Keith Butterfield, please forward same to me (editor@458raafsquadron.org) or to UK Flight Correspondent, Keith Wilkinson 23 Ferndale Pk, Tedmore, Stourbridge, W. Midlands. DY90RB. UK.



From - Ean Rose

Sent - Mon 27-Mar-17 10:31 AM

To- president@458raafsquadron.org

Sir, for some years now I have 'REPRESENTED' 458 Sqdn by applying a Velcro type badge to my Air League uniform. My brother John was a pilot with 458 from Bone in Nth Africa to Foggia in Italy. This has all been very casual and nothing "official". I shall do the same this year if it is okay with your Association, but would also like to know if there are any other 458

contacts around Coffs Harbour. If so I would to catch up with them. I am the O C of Coffs Squadron Australian Air League. I am also a member of Coffs Harbour RAAFA due to John's 458 membership and being eligible through the AAL Membership. Trust to hear from you in due course.

Regards Ean Rosenberg

By all means, Ean, please continue to wear the 458 Squadron Badge with pride and tribute to your brother's service. We would dearly love to know any other information you have about John. Please contact me.

(editor@458raafsquadron.org) Please contact Ean through the editor.



From - Ian Thwaites

Sent - Sat 31-Dec-16 9:56 PM

To- president@458raafsquadron.org

Dear Keith (Cousins)

I found your web site a while ago and have been meaning to contact you. My father Vincent Thwaites served in 458 squadron and I believe was injured during the campaign but I know he travelled out to the middle east with his crew and served up to Italy. I remember a lot of stories he told me when I was a child and in particular the time he spent in Malta. I am currently rereading the book about the squadron that I bought a few years ago and have booked a holiday in Malta later in January so I can see the island a little for myself and get a feel for the stories that he told me. I am trying to understand on which aircraft my father served as he told me that his plane was modified with a canon in the nose and that this picture when it was taken worried him as everyone was standing on his aircraft. I enclose a small picture with my father circled.

My brother and I have scanned the few pictures that my dad had of his time with 458 and wondered whether you would like copies? My dad died in 1983 as he always said that the war years were the best in his life. I am really looking forward to my 3 weeks in Malta (also a nice holiday for my wife and I as my boys are now both at University) but I do want to spend some of the time looking at the islands history particularly in respect of the time that 458 were there. Many thanks for your time and a very Happy New Year to you and everyone involved in the squadron.

Best wishes Ian Thwaites

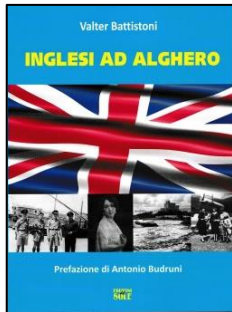


[Ian Thwaites Photography](http://ianthwaitesphotography.com)





From - Valter Battistoni (email - battvtr@tiscali.it)
 Subject – Book : The English in Alghero". Presentation.
 Dear All,



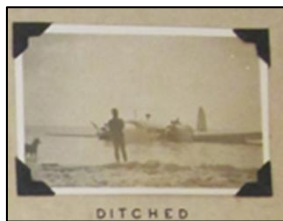
Yesterday evening I had the pleasure to present my last book "Inglesi ad Alghero" (The English in Alghero).

It's a short review of events and biographies involving the British presence in the town since 1800. Barbara and Mark: the story of the Countess of S.Elia raised great interest as her



Villa (now hotel Las Tronas) is a major city monument.

Patrick: the story of Cornelius Keefe and the rest of the crew of FK124 was very touching and appreciated.



Roland: during the presentation I projected on a screen some pictures including the 458 Squadron Wellington's wing appearing from the water that you kindly provided, even though it was not strictly connected with the topic (it was Australian). There was a general

surprise, especially among the elderly people and it is possible that some new information about that event come out from somebody's memories. I'll let you know. I would like once again to thank you for the precious help you all gave me in writing the book and hope to maintain these contacts in the future, and maybe meeting up with you here in Alghero! **Kind regards Valter Battistoni**

(Thanks again, Valter, for thinking of 458 Squadron and including the photo in your book presentation. Best of luck with it. Those interested in purchasing a copy, contact Valter. Ed.)



From: Arthur Browne
Sent: 7 December, 2016 9:28 AM

To: editor@458raafsqadron.org

Subject: Jim and Peg Browne. Hi Roland, I am Arthur Browne the second son of Jim and Peg Browne and feel that I need to update on the situation. I have been shown the copy of Journal of the 458 SQUADRON Council that has my mother's letters written to you. Her last letter was in June this (2016) year and she was quite ill at the time. Sadly for all of us all but especially Jim, Mum passed away 16th of August just 9 days before her 94th birthday. The material that Mum spoke about is still in the pipeline and I will try to get this to you. I have been spending some time with Dad who still lives at home and even though I worked with him for 35years

without hearing anything of substance, I am now hearing small bits of his experience during his service. Last night he was telling me about being mentioned in a book on 458. Apparently while looking for a target in enemy territory someone inadvertently bumped the switch for the headlight of the plane and they were flying around looking for the entrance to a harbour with the light on. He told me that they were to drop depth charges and mines at the harbour mouth but could not identify the correct position. They apparently noticed this light and realised that it was theirs so I gather that it went off very quickly. He also was telling me that on another occasion they could not find a suitable target and that AAC guns were firing at them so before they went home they dropped the bombs over the AAC guns. He also told me of doing convoy patrols and that, on his account, nearly every time they attached to a convoy that regardless of firing the correct flare colour sequence the Navy would fire a couple of anti-aircraft shots at the plane. (did say "felt like replying in kind at times"). Bit of a ramble but may be interesting. As I said I will ensure that we get an electronic copy to you ASAP. Regards Arthur. (Condolences to you, your Dad Jim and family. I'm saddened by the fact that your Mother didn't get to see her letters published in the special 75th Edition of the 458 Squadron Journal - Ed)



From: Tony JONES

Sent: 19 January, 2017 1:47 PM

To: NSW@458raafsquadron.org

Subject: 458 Photo Album on EBay

Dear David(Longhurst), My Grandfather (Alan Piggott) was with 458 Squadron & I occasionally do some minor research. Maybe you are aware of the following but just in case. Currently on eBay there is a photo album with 235 photos taken by a 458 Squadron member in the period 1942-43. I have no personal link to the seller I just thought that maybe the Association might be interested . Best Regards **Tony Jones**

Tue 31-Jan-17 11:35 PM Hi Roland, I ended up purchasing the album myself as I didn't want to run the risk of it passing into the wrong hands. I wasn't sure if the Association had the financial means to purchase it. As mentioned before, my grandfather was a 458 Squadron member (Sargent Alan "Pontooney" Piggot) and I know that my Aunty would be very excited to see it. I will be down home to Sydney in the first 2 weeks of April and only happy to let someone from the Association to view it. Best Regards. (On behalf of all 458ers, thanks Tony. We hope we can get digital copies at some stage to share through our website. Ed.)

A book you may want to read is RAAF Bombers over Germany 1941-1942 by Anthony Cooper PhD. Available in hard copy and e-book form. Please contact Scilla Rosenberg
sales@rosenbergpub.com.au



RRP \$34.95
ISBN 9781925078923
Epub 9781925078930 \$17.99
paperback, 208pp
285 x 210 mm, 50 photos

RAAF BOMBERS

over Germany 1941-1942

Anthony Cooper

This is tale of three Australian bomber squadrons at war, flying with RAF Bomber Command in the early part of Britain's bombing offensive upon Nazi Germany, from August 1941 to September 1942.

This campaign saw the only major and ongoing Australian contribution to the war against Hitler's Germany. For the aircrew participants, it

was proportionally the most dangerous campaign in modern Australian and British military history, with the chances of a crew surviving a tour alive dropping to about 25 percent by Autumn 1942.

Nos 455, 458 and 460 Squadrons operated Hampden or Wellington twin-engine bombers from bases in Yorkshire or Lincolnshire, all too often flying impossible missions, using inadequate equipment and undeveloped navigation methods to try to hit the most formidably defended targets in the world.

This book also provides the first ever detailed combat history of these three squadrons in their initial incarnations, using original sources to lay out a coherent narrative of what was attempted, when and by whom, and of what went wrong.

Anthony Cooper is a Brisbane schoolteacher. He is a former glider pilot instructor and has a PHD on German Aviation History.

He is available for interviews and can be contacted: For review copies please contact scilla@rosenbergpub.com.au

Australian Flying Corps and Royal Australian AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

INCORPORATED

ABN: 89 071 673 997

Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AKMC (Retd)
Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

President:
Air Vice-Marshal B Espeland AM (Retd) E-
mail: natpres@raafa.org.au

Secretary:
Peter Colliver
E-mail: natsec@raafa.org.au



Suite 3, 24 Camberwell Road
HAWTHORN EAST, Vic., 3123

PO Box 1038
HAWTHORN BC, Vic., 3122

Tel: (03) 9813-4600

www.raafa.org.au

75th anniversary of the commencement of Bomber Command operations Australian War Memorial, Canberra,

Sunday, 4 June 2017

In recognition of the contribution of Bomber Command to the Allied war effort, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs has made available a grant to assist with the travel costs of Bomber Command veterans' wishing to attend the national commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the commencement of Bomber Command operations, in May 1942. The commemoration is hosted by the Australian War Memorial, and, subject to weather will be held at the Bomber Command Memorial in the Sculpture Garden.

As in previous years, the Memorial's Last Post Ceremony will include the telling of a Roll of Honour story relating to Bomber Command on the preceding evening - Saturday 3 June 2017 - commencing at 4:55 p.m.

Further information regarding the Last Post Ceremony can be found at <https://www.awm.gov.au/events/last-post-ceremony>.

This is not a formal tour organized by either the Department of Veterans' Affairs or the Air Force Association. Veterans will be responsible for organizing their own travel, accommodation, and insurance requirements. The grant will provide only partial re-imbursement of the travel costs of interstate veterans wishing to attend the national commemoration. The amount of the re-imbursement cannot be accurately predicted until the numbers attending and their points of departure are known. Re-imbursement will be made proportionately based upon the best airfare of the day from the points of departure.

Veterans wishing to avail themselves of the partial re-imbursement of costs are required to advise an expression of their interest, on the accompanying form, to reach the National Secretary of the Air Force Association, by post or e-mail, no later than 5:00 p.m. AEST on Monday, 24 April 2017. Estimates of the amount of re-imbursement will be advised no later than 30 April, to allow veterans to make an informed decision to travel or not. For this reason, expressions of interest received after the closing time will not be entertained.

Re-imbursement will be made upon the presentation of relevant airline boarding passes or accommodation receipts to the National Secretary, Air Force Association, by 30 June 2017. Enquiries may be directed to the National Secretary via the contact details above.

It is understood that the Australian War Memorial is to host a luncheon in ANZAC Hall following the commemoration service. Details will be posted on the Memorial's website in the near future; separate registration, via the Memorial, to attend the luncheon will be required.

15 March 2017

A Member of the Alliance of Defence Service Organisations

To: National Secretary Air Force Association
PO Box 1038
HAWTHORN BC,
Victoria. 3122
Or natsec@raafa.org.au

**75th anniversary of the commencement of Bomber Command
operations Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Sunday, 4 June
2017**

Expression of Interest

I am interested in attending the commemorative service at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra on 4 June and availing myself of partial re-imbursement of costs from the grant of funds provided by the Minister of Veterans' Affairs.

Name of Veteran

Service No.

Squadron in which served

Residential address:

Street and Suburb

State and Postcode

E-mail address

Telephone number (....)

Alternative Contact:

Name.....

Relation to Veteran.....

E-mail address

Telephone number (....)



Supporting the Air Force family



Our Memorabilia Page at

www.458raafsquadron.org

458 SQUADRON BADGE (VELCRO BACKING)



In stock

| | |
|--|----------|
| Badge + Postage within Australia:- | 15.00AUD |
| Badge + Postage and Transaction costs to New Zealand:- | 17.00NZD |
| Badge + Postage and Transaction costs to UK:- | 10.00GBP |
| Badge + Postage and Transaction costs to Canada:- | 17.00CAD |

2 PHOTO-DVD SET OF OFFICIAL SQUADRON ALBUMS



This two DVD set presented in an artistically 458 motif DVD case contains all 273 whole page images of Album 1 and 866 individual images from these pages. And all 251 whole page images of Album 2 and 626 individual images from these pages. All images are in high resolution format.

Our [Official Squadron Albums](#) web page explains the remarkable story of the Squadron and its Albums and the project to digitize them.

\$20.00 AUD when ordering **one** 2 DVD set (price includes postage anywhere in Australia). [Contact Us](#) to order, including notification of total cost if ordering multiple sets (postage will vary) or postage to international destinations. This item will be posted on receipt of payment. Thank you.

ICONIC GROUP PHOTOS OF THE SQUADRON

NEW ARRIVALS

These **poster size** wartime photograph reproductions will make magnificent wall history/art. A fine [example](#) elegantly framed. Sizes shown below:

Squadron at Protville, Tunisia, 1943: **size 973 mm x 220 mm - \$30.00AUD**

'A' Flight at Bone, Algeria, 1944: **size 973 mm x 296 mm - \$30.00AUD**

'B' Flight at Gibraltar, 1945: **size 785 mm x 300 mm - \$30.00AUD**

All prices include postage **within Australia Only**.

All prints will be posted in a mailing tube.

Prices for Outside of Australia - On Application. [Contact Us](#) to order. Items will be posted on receipt of payment. Thank you.

COLLECTORS EDITIONS:- 458 SQUADRON ASSOCIATION 250TH & 75TH ANNIVERSARY EDITIONS NEWSLETTER.



\$20AUD. per copy PLUS Postage*

*Postage within Australia \$2.10 per copy.

*Postage to UK, Canada, New Zealand - price on application.

Please note- All monies are used for on-going costs involved in web-site, printing, postage of these and all Memorabilia items.

These Publications were made possible with the grateful assistance of grants received from the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Commemorative Grants Section and the Victorian Government and Public Records Office Victoria.

Vickers Wellington Key Tags

ONLY 6 LEFT FOR SALE -



\$10 per key ring Plus Postage*

All proceeds go to website and 458 Squadron Association Journal Publishing costs. Please email Roland Orchard for your order- editor@458raafsquadron.org One key ring per member please. I will order more if needed in future.

Thank you for your support. *Postage within Australia \$1.

per key ring *Postage to UK, Canada, New Zealand - price on application.

Anniversary Cup 1941 - 2016

75TH ANNIVERSARY CUP



In 2016, 458 Squadron celebrated 75 years since its formation in 1941. 458 is only 20 years younger than the RAAF itself! Therefore what a more fitting way could there be to reflect on these occasions than to enjoy your favourite beverage from your very own 75th anniversary cup. Special price until Anzac Day 2017 is AUD\$22.95 (anywhere in Australia). Buy now before the price goes up. Please note that it is price-on-application for orders overseas from Australia.



Please contact the editor for all orders or order online via our website www.458raafsquadron.org

Through Adversity & Struggles to the Stars...



by Chris Orchard, son of Gordon Orchard (service no. 400732)

The title of this addition to the Journal, and the motto of the Royal Australian Air Force, is the Latin, “*Per Ardua ad Astra*”, and while I am tapping away on the keyboard producing this article, the RAAF is turning 96 (on the 31st of March)!

For those who don’t know and to those who may not have heard it for a while and will afford a chuckle, the friendly rivalry between the armed services on the topic of “stars” goes something like this:

“The Navy steers by them, the Army sleeps under them, while the Air Force books their accommodation by them.” Yet another *fact* that was recently brought to my attention is that the RAAF *actually* stands for “Rarely an you around Fridays”, all fun intended, and surely no truth in that rumour.

As the years inevitably roll by and the memories increase, I am reminded of a story about some veterans (both ground and air crew) of the B24 Liberator bomber, visiting the restoration of RAAF-designated number **A72-176** (at the site in Werribee, Victoria) for an inaugural test starting of one of the Pratt & Whitney turbo-supercharged radial engines. Upon hearing the sound of the engine start and roar into life, the memories and emotions flooded back so intensely that tears flowed freely amongst the group. I now think of all 458s air and ground crews of the Wellington variants, and imagine one of those Wimpys flying, perhaps at an airshow, with other warbirds of the time, ...something too, no doubt, would bring tears from many of us, thinking of our loved ones.

Now that the month of March is coming to a close, and a third of the year complete, we turn attentions to Anzac Day and what it means to us, to our colleagues across the Tasman, those from Canada, South Africa, and the United Kingdom, and even those scattered far and wide. May we second and successive generations collectively offer our sincere

and deepest thankyou to all you servicemen and servicewomen who have given what you could, when you could through personal struggles & adversity to free us from the scourge of injustices & abhorrent treatment of human beings in war.

A personal interest in stars and space has led to a study of the early days of rocket development (which for the early pioneers essentially meant the dream of mankind travelling into space and, with unrestrained minds, voyages to the stars). Such an endeavour has uncovered yet another remarkable coincidence with Dad's wartime experience in the U.K., in September 1944. Dad had arrived in England on 19 or 20 August, 1944, having flown as crew in a B24 Liberator to a RAF base in Lyneham, via Gibraltar, having departed Maison Blanche, Algeria ten hours earlier. He had finished his two tours and was heading back to the U.K. for well-earned rest and recuperation before then embarking on a return trip to Australian shores. When I was much younger, he relived the moment where he was shaving in the bathroom of a temporary billet in metropolitan London. Out of the corner of his eye through the window, he noticed something flash from the sky to earth, an object falling in the mid to far distance. My recollection of this event is that Dad said it was the first V2 rocket launched by the Nazis on London. According to sources, this ballistic missile attack first hit on 8 September 1944 at 6.43 pm in Chiswick, west London.

It was Hitler's hope that this new weapon would turn the tide of the war back in Germany's favour, but as we know the end of Germany's Third Reich was already well advanced and inevitable. This late addition to Germany's weaponry takes on a further dimension when we consider and speculate what course the war might have taken had the madman shown interest or been convinced five years earlier, on March 23, 1939. Hitler, for whatever reason was disinterested in the rockets he was being shown that day at the army's rocket program south of Berlin. He may have decided that the rockets were not going to be ready for combat soon enough, or even never ready, so consequently any heightened funding went out the window. We can be thankful that this tyrant's lack of foresight played in the Allies favour.

March 23, 1939 was Werner von Braun's (the German rocket scientist) twenty-seventh birthday, and although his involvement with the Nazis is an unsettling period of his life, he did help the USA get into space and to the moon, as chief designer of the Saturn V rocket.