

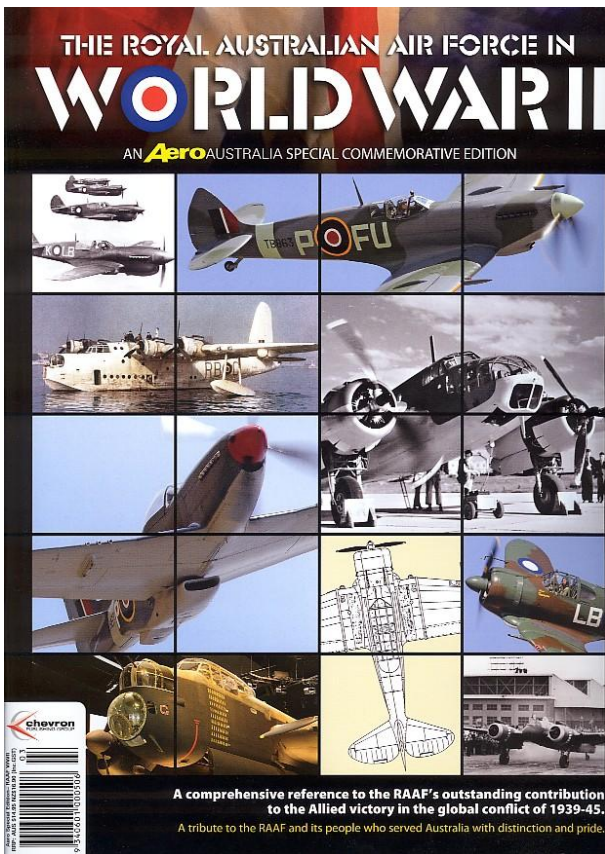
# BOOK REVIEW OF WELLINGTON AIRCRAFT AND OF 458 SQUADRON MENTIONS THERE IN:

By Neil Flentje April, 2013

## **Aero Australia Special Commemorative Edition *The Royal Australian Air Force in WWII***

It mentions 458 Squadron on 2 pages as shown below, pages 65 and 114. 458 Squadron was part of the EATS Empire Air Training Scheme and although classed as an RAAF Squadron flew as part of the RAF, for that reason Wellington Bomber's were never classed (or purchased ) as RAAF Aircraft and not featured in this magazine. Most other RAAF Squadrons get a decent write-up though.

The magazine is still available from the website [www.mymagazines.com.au](http://www.mymagazines.com.au)



## AUSTRALIAN SQUADRONS 'OVER THERE'

SQN	AREA/S OF OPERATION	AIRCRAFT
3	Egypt, North Africa, Sicily, Italy	Gauntlet, Gladiator, Hurricane, Tomahawk, Kittyhawk, Mustang
10	Britain, Mediterranean	Sunderland
450	North Africa, Sicily, Italy	Hurricane, Kittyhawk
451	North Africa, Corsica, Britain, Europe	Hurricane, Spitfire
452	Britain (to Australia 1942)	Spitfire
453	Britain	Spitfire
454	Egypt, Italy	Blenheim, Baltimore
455	Britain	Hampden, Beaufighter
456	Britain	Beaufighter, Mosquito
457	Britain (to Australia 1942)	Spitfire
458	Britain, North Africa	Wellington
459	Egypt, Palestine	Blenheim, Hudson, Ventura
460	Britain	Wellington, Halifax, Lancaster
461	Britain	Sunderland
462	North Africa, Britain	Halifax
463	Britain	Lancaster
464	Britain, Europe	Ventura, Mosquito
466	Britain	Wellington, Halifax
467	Britain	Lancaster

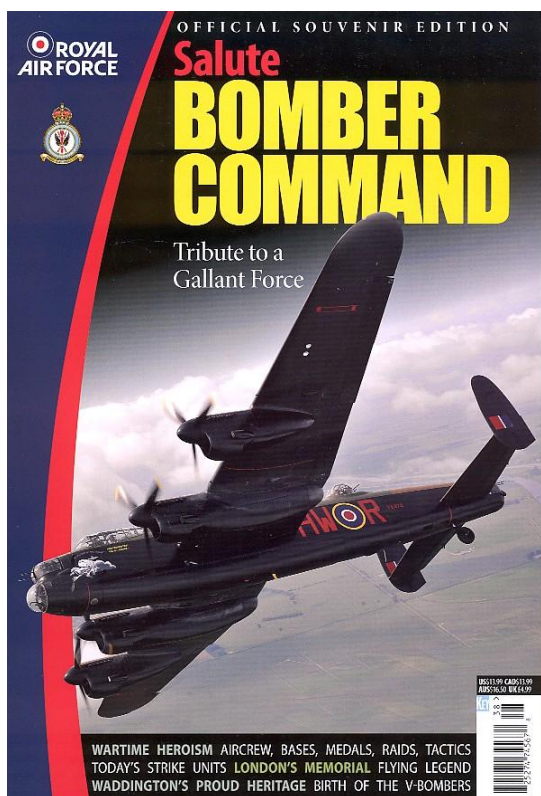


# RAAF WWII Operational Squadrons

SQD CODE/S	MAIN AIRCRAFT	MAIN BASES/OPERATIONS
86 MP	Kittyhawk, Mustang	Dutch New Guinea, Queensland
87 QK	Mosquito (PR), Wirraway	NT, Philippines, Pacific Islands
92 OB	Anson, Beaufighter	Queensland
93 SK	Beaufighter	Qld, Morotai, Borneo
94 MX	Mosquito	NSW
99 UX	Liberator	Queensland, NT
100 QH	Beaufort	NSW, Qld, Victoria, New Guinea
102 BV	Liberator	Queensland
107 JE	Kingfisher	NSW
119 MV	Lodestar, Mitchell (NEI unit)	ACT
120 RR	Kittyhawk (NEI unit)	NSW, Dutch New Guinea
450 OK	Hurricane, Kittyhawk	North Africa, Mediterranean, Italy
451 BQ/NI	Hurricane, Spitfire	North Africa, Mediterranean, Europe, UK
452 QY/UD	Spitfire	UK, NT, Morotai, Borneo
453 TD/FU	Buffalo, Spitfire	Malaya, UK, France
454 —	Blenheim, Baltimore	Egypt, Italy
455 UB	Hampden, Beaufighter	UK, Russia
456 PZ/RX	Defiant, Beaufighter, Mosquito	United Kingdom
457 BP/ZP	Spitfire	UK, NT, Morotai, Borneo
458 SX	Wellington	UK, North Africa, Mediterranean
459 BP	Hudson, Ventura, Blenheim, Baltimore	Egypt, Palestine
460 UV/AR	Wellington, Halifax, Lancaster	United Kingdom
461 UT	Sunderland	United Kingdom
462 Z5	Halifax	Egypt, Tunisia, Cyrenaica, UK
463 PO/JO	Lancaster	United Kingdom
464 SB	Hudson, Ventura, Mosquito	United Kingdom, Europe
466 HD	Wellington, Halifax	United Kingdom
467 PO	Lancaster	United Kingdom
548 TS	Spitfire (RAF unit)	Queensland, NT
549 ZF	Spitfire (RAF unit)	Queensland, NT

*RAF Official Souvenir Edition Salute Bomber Command Tribute to a Gallant Force*

Mentions 458 Squadron on Pages 36-38



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## AUSTRALIAN INAUGURATION

The first RAAF squadron with Wellingtons was 458, which assembled at Holme on Spalding Moor in Yorkshire in late August 1941 within 1 Group with its first two Wellington IVs arriving on the 30th. Under Wg Cdr N G Mullholland DFC 458 mounted its first operation on the night of October 20 bombing the ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp. Only the rear gunner, Sgt Brown, survived of Sgt Hamilton's crew in Z1218 *D-for-Don*.

At the end of November the personnel of 'C' Flight left to form the nucleus of a second RAAF Wellington unit, 460 at Molesworth. Even so, 458 maintained high standards of serviceability which

drew favourable comment 'from above'. Manpower reductions notwithstanding, 458 raided Germany four times in December, three of these being against Düsseldorf. During one of these the irrepressible Flt Lt Saville shot up a Heinkel He 111 over an enemy airfield and then a train of the way home, so ending the year on a high note!

No.458's final raid with Bomber Command came on January 28, 1942 when two Wellingtons attacked Boulogne and returned safely. The unit was then stood down and moved to the Middle East.

The former 458 men in 460 began operations from Brighton, Yorks, soon after on the night of March 12 when five set out for Emden. It was not a great success as only one crew 'believed' that it had hit Emden, two thought they had unleashed over Oldenburg and another bombed an unidentified airfield.

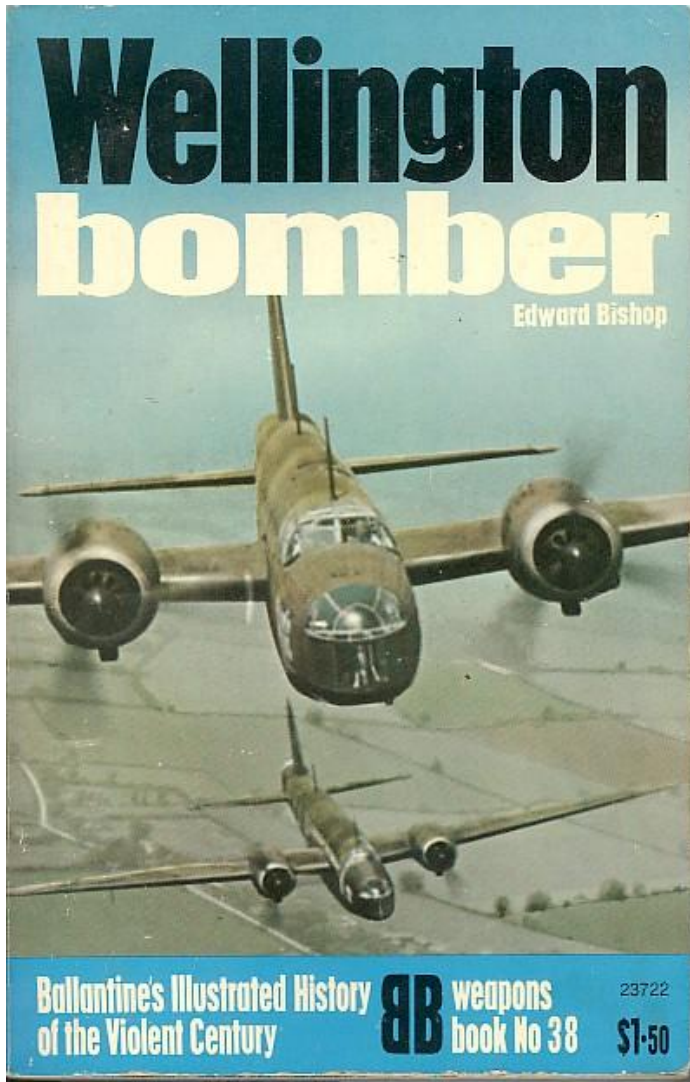
On the 25th Sqn Ldr Gilbert at the controls of Z1392 'UV-G' made the first of 460's many visits to the Ruhr when the target was Essen. He reported: "bursts seen in the aiming point area. Aircraft holed by flak. Weather excellent over target. Thin smoke screen." No.460 continued to fly Mk.IVs through the summer until re-equipping fully with Lancasters in September.

Here are some books that I have found related to 458 Squadron and the Vickers Wellington bomber and have been able to purchase recently while searching the Internet.

Two of these books are currently available, *Wellington Squadrons in Focus* and *Out of the Italian Night*, the other books may or may not be available but may come up for sale from time to time as second-hand books.

***Wellington Bomber* by Edward Bishop (1974)**

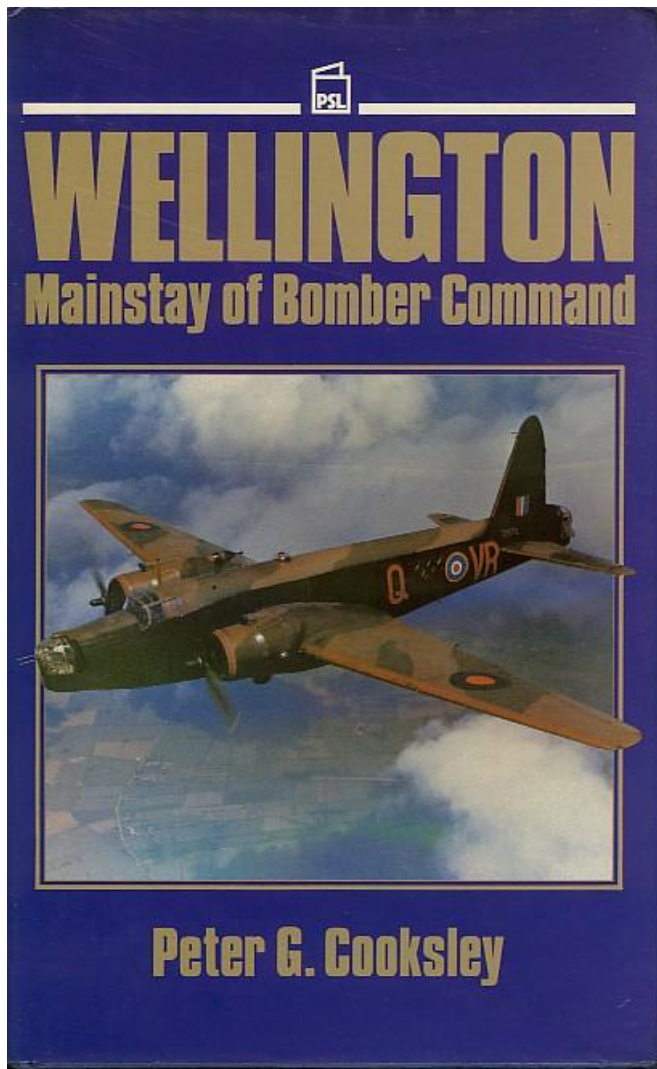
No mention of 458 Squadron as far as I can tell, but tells the story of the Wellington its development and various stories by crews of their missions and narrow escapes.





***Wellington Mainstay of Bomber Command* by Peter G Cooksley (1987)**

There is at least one mention of 458 Squadron and possibly others but the actual squadron name is not always mentioned in stories documented in the book. This book relates some of the many missions the Wimpy flew and various crews experiences, interesting to us but no doubt scary for the crews that experienced them.



cleaned and tested in the workshops, while internal wiring was being looked over on the actual airframe.\*

The Wellington wiring system was peculiar to the type and was known as the 'loom' method. On paper it was good, but in practice it was not easy to maintain, since it called for a number of internal junction boxes where the ten loom wires were inter-connected. Certainly the system had the advantage that a damaged section of wiring could be quickly replaced but, since the boxes were put in as the aircraft was built, they were often inaccessible. For example, if a loom had been nicked by shrapnel, it was sometimes necessary to begin at the front of the machine and work through to the rear to trace the short-circuit. This could mean days of groping among the copper braids which had a tendency to break if not properly soldered. Such repairs were a real bugbear for the electricians who also had to carry out the daily inspections, as well as those required after every forty flying hours, and major overhauls every 360 hours. Then there were the duties of running the accumulator charging rooms, manning the pair of 3 kW Chance lights on the aerodrome, laying out telephone cables for the control cabin and the 6 W Glim lamps that went with it beside the runway, and possibly making the final connections of sea mines, if these were being carried. Quite apart from all this, early 1942 also saw Wellingtons being specially wired so that they could carry and drop poison gas, although this facility was never used. Being an electrician was certainly not a rest cure!

\* \* \*

During the early days of the war, Wellington crews had found night navigation a problem, as peace-time training had concentrated on map reading, wind direction and force, coupled with plotting. Radio aids were available, but were scorned by some navigators who would boast of being able to tell a pilot to break cloud at a pre-determined time with complete certainty that the aerodrome would be underneath. Indeed there were cases of senior navigators being so scornful of radio aids that bearings passed by wireless operators were ignored, and pilots could well end up 100 miles off course with Snowdon unexpectedly appearing below!

It was quite a performance for the front gunner of a Wellington to get to and from his position encumbered by his flying clothing

\*The vital work of cleaning the sparking plugs for the Wimpy's motors was, on the other hand, entirely the responsibility of WAAF's, in No 458 Squadron at least. By January 1942, when the squadron had ceased to be a bomber unit, the girls must have dealt with thousands of plugs.

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Lakenheath.

Another unit familiar with the formation-keeping lights was the RAAF's 458 Squadron which arrived direct from Australia and became operational at Holme-on-Spalding Moor, South Yorkshire in November 1941. Here the lamps, remembered as 'small purple lenses', were the electricians' responsibility, together with all the other electrics in a Wimpy. Wellingtons boasted a prodigious amount of electrical equipment: the navigation and formation lights, interior illumination, plus that for the turrets and gun sights, the landing lamps, pitot head heater, the intercom system, bomb gear for sixteen racks and bombsight, undercarriage warning light, fuel and temperature gauges, plus the flotation gear and such larger items as the generators, starter motors and airscrew motors, all of which would be taken off the aircraft, stripped,

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*Wellington in action Aircraft No. 76* by **Ron McKay** publisher Squadron/Signal publications, inc.

A couple of mentions of 458 in this book. And it has photos of virtually every Wellington version that was produced.

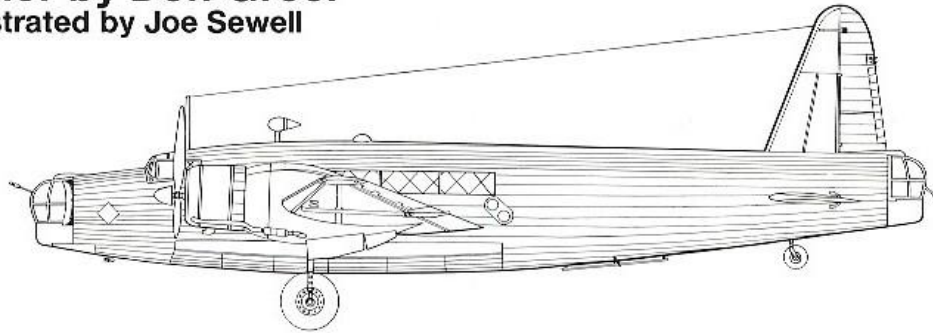




# WELLINGTON

## in action

By Ron Mackay  
Color by Don Greer  
Illustrated by Joe Sewell



Aircraft Number 76



squadron/signal publications, inc.

(Below Right) BB466 of No 458 (RAAF) Squadron was another Mk 1C converted to GR Mk VIII specifications. Seen at Shandur in North Africa during 1943 it carries the standard Bomber Command color scheme and Type C1 roundels are carried.



# WELLINGTON Mk IV

The Wellington Mk IV was to prove unique among the many Wellington variants put into operational service in that it was powered by engines of non-British origin. Shortly after War was declared plans were made for installing American manufactured Pratt and Whitney Twin Wasp engines. However, it was not until the following February that the neutral United States government gave the necessary permission for the P&W Twin Wasp engine to be made available to Vickers — this came at a time when the Air Ministry was actively considering the abandonment of the project. However, an overall shortage of aero engines created a quick change of heart on the Air Ministry's part.

A Chester built Wellington IC (R1220) was selected as the test-bed for the 1050 hp R-1830-S3C4-C Twin Wasps engines, making its maiden flight from Chester in December of 1940. Hamilton Standard propellers were initially carried but because of their excessive noise they were soon replaced with Curtiss electric propellers. Despite an unfortunate crash-landing of the prototype at Weybridge during its landing approach, which was later traced to carburetor failure, several Wellington Mk IVs were forwarded to Boscombe Down for general testing. One ship among these test aircraft was equipped with Lindholme Air Sea Rescue gear.

Although succeeding the Mk III in development and service the Mk IV was essentially similar to the Mk IC including the FN5 and FN10 two-gun turrets, although the FN5 turret was replaced on some aircraft by the FN20 four gun turret. The fuselage windows appear to have been blanked over on the few photographic examples of the Mark IV, however, beam gun windows were carried. Performance was essentially similar to the Mk III with the notable exception of top speed which was rated at 299 mph, some 44 mph than the Mk III.

Full scale production quickly began with squadron deliveries being made during August of 1941 to No 300, 301 (Polish), and No 458 (Australian) Squadrons, with No 142 and No 460 (Australian) Squadrons re-equipping in October and November respectively. A late-comer to Wellington Mk IV usage was 305 (Polish) Squadron in August of 1942. An unusual use of the Mk IV Wimpy was indulged in by No 544 (PR) Squadron, which operated a small number of specially equipped photographic reconnaissance Mk IVs on night photographic experiments over Britain. These experimental photo recon Wellingtons were replaced by Mosquitoes during early 1943.

While some engine starting problems were encountered, the aircraft provided good service to its six main squadrons. The two Australian squadrons relinquished their Mk IVs during 1942 as did 142 Squadron, while the three Polish Squadrons converted — or in the case of 301 Squadron disbanded — between January and May of 1943. In all, some 220 Wellington Mk IVs were built at the Chester plant.

## *Wellington Squadrons in Focus* by Paul Freer and Simon Parry (2009)

A book about all the Allied Squadrons that flew Wellingtons in WWII including a mention of 458.



# WELLINGTON

## SQUADRONS



**IN FOCUS**



A PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUM OF THE UNITS THAT WENT TO WAR  
IN THE VICKERS-ARMSTRONGS WELLINGTON

PAUL FREER   SIMON PARRY

# 458

## SQUADRON

(Australian)  
Bomber Command  
Aug 41 to Mar 42

Code Letters  
MD

Middle East  
Sept 42 to June 45

### Operational bases:

Holme on Spalding Moor  
8/41 - 3/42

Shallufa 9/42 - 3/43

LG91 3/43 - 6/43

Protville 6/43 - 10/43

Bone 10/43 5/44

Alghero 5/44 - 9/44

Foggia 9/44 - 1/45

Gibraltar 1/45 - 6/45

Disbanded

### Points of Interest

Originally formed as a bomber unit with No.1 Group at Holme on Spalding Moor in August 1941, the squadron's stay with Bomber Command was short-lived, transferring to the Middle East in January 1942. On arrival in Malta during transit, the unit's personnel were absorbed into other units and the squadron did not reform properly until September 1942, when it began operations in the torpedo bomber and general reconnaissance roles.



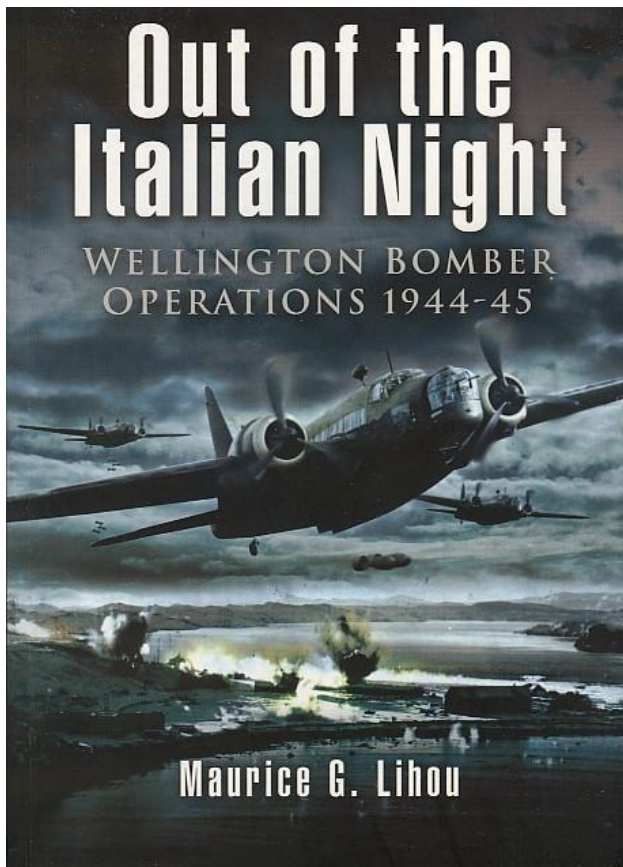
Wellington MkXIII of 458 Squadron warming-up its engines at Gambut, 1943. This aircraft displays yet another variation on the standard camouflage scheme, this type with the wave pattern extended to the outer leading edge of the wings.



### *Out of the Italian Night* Wellington Bomber Operations 1944-45 by Maurice G. Lihou. (2007)

No mention of 458 in this book but the author was a wellington pilot that did 2 tours with RAF 37 and 40 Squadrons based mainly in Foggia Italy, a base that 458 used for some time although further research reveals there were many airfields spreadout at Foggia. It gives you an idea of the sparse living conditions and a feel of flying operations in a Wellington on bombing missions to Yugoslavia and other parts of Europe.





That's all for now.

Please contact me if you need any further information or scans in better detail. I will be only to happy to assist you.

Neil Flentje son of 458 Squadron Veteran Bill Flentje (W.M. Flentje) [nflentje@impulse.net.au](mailto:nflentje@impulse.net.au) See also:

#### **458 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force RAAF Lapel Pin Badge and Cufflinks and Pocket Watch**



The supplier is [www.giftshop.uk.com](http://www.giftshop.uk.com) and currently available on ebay (Feb 2013)

To find on eBay just type in 458 Squadron you never know what else you will find!!!

A blurb from the ebay advertisement...

"We aim to make every RAAF squadron, station and branch in the form of lapel pins, cufflinks, pocket watches, tie-pins, key-fobs, golf ball markers and flip top lighters, as well as a selection of engraved items. If what you require is not listed, please do not hesitate to inquire."