

CIRCULAR

458 SQUADRON NEWS



THE EDITOR.

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SINCE OUR LAST ISSUE.....

RETURN TO HOLME-ON-SPALDING MOOR.

458 Squadron formed as an operational squadron in England in September, 1941, at an R.A.F. Station newly created in the farmlands of the bare Yorkshire moors. There, under the driving efficiency of our first C.O., W/Cdr. Norman Mulholland, we quickly became operational and took our part in the bombing raids on German Europe. In the cold and snow of a northern winter we coped with the problems of servicing and starting Wellington aircraft, and the difficulty of pin-pointing targets blanketed by cloud and foul weather. From Holme-on-Spalding Moor we had our 48 hours and seven days leaves in York, London and Edinburgh. From Holme we marched (or flew) out on our way to the Middle East, early next year. At, or near, Holme-on-Spalding Moor we also left some of our comrades who would fly no more. There they still lie. Others lie somewhere in Europe.

Now, 16 years after, comes the story of the return of a party of 458 Squadron to Holme-on-Spalding Moor Station (now occupied by the American Air Force), there to plant a Tree in memory of Fallen Comrades. The party was led by our second C.O., W/Cdr. L.L. Johnston who took over command of 458 there, after Norm Mulholland was shot down near Malta. Knowing how particularly interested members who served at Holme will be, we are delighted to be able to publish an account written by the U.K. Secretary, Sid Thompsett.

NORTHERN JOURNEY.

by

Sid. Thompsett.

It was on the 1st. December, at 7.0 p.m. that a few of us caught the train to York where we were met by Johnno Johnston, Howard Gavin, and George Merriman. They took us by cars to a Guest House not far from the station. We then got down to some serious drinking until about 1.0 a.m. The party broke up and we hit the hay, but only until 7.30 a.m. when Mick Mason woke us up and we went for a walk into York in search of a cup of tea, but it was in vain so we made our way back in time for breakfast at 9.0 a.m.

Before I go any further I had better explain one point. You will notice that I mentioned earlier that Howard Gavin was in the party. This came about when I wrote to Australia House asking for a representative at the Tree-Planting ceremony. I had a letter back from the Assistant High Commissioner saying that S/Ldr. Gavin who served on 458 would represent Australia House, that is how it came about.

Now to carry on. At about 10.0. O'clock the party started arriving, and by 10.30 all who had said they would be there had arrived, consisting of L. Johnston, H. Gavin, G. Merriman, Mick Mason, S. Thompsett, L. Armstrong, H. Bishop, Guy Johnston, W. Waite, L. Cook, A. Glover, A. Taylor, together with Mrs. Armstrong. A coach had been ordered to take us to Holme-on-Spalding Moor. Before we went to the drome we went to the local cemetery and laid a posy of flowers on the the graves of those members of 458 who are buried there.

We then proceeded to the Station for the ceremony. At 12 noon we all formed a circle where the tree was being planted. I will not give you the actual ceremony now but will send it out later on. The wording on the bronze plaque that is in front of the tree, mounted on a cement plinth standing about two feet high, reads:

"This Tree Was Planted In Memory Of Those Members Of 458 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron Who
"Gave Their Lives 1941-45."

The tree itself is an acacia standing about eight feet tall. The position of the tree is, as you go in to the camp past the Guard Room, about 30 feet further on.

Northern Journey (cont.) On the left is a piece of grass land: that is where the tree is. The service itself was carried out by the local Vicar, the Rev. J. Hassler. The verse for the Fallen was read by George Merriman, and the unveiling of the plaque was performed by Mrs. Armstrong. It was a very cold day with the wind really biting but none the more for that everything went according to plan. Numerous photos were taken and I am hoping to send some out to Australia along with press cuttings--also a photo taken at our last Reunion.

All of us then went back to York for lunch, and before we went our various ways we all went to York Minster where all the names of those who died in the last war from the York area are in a book enclosed in a glass case. After that we all made our way to the station and got trains to our homes. It is one day in my life I will never forget.

London Reunion. Our reunion on 17th. November was held at the Feathers Hotel, Westminster. Attendance was fairly good, those there were:

L.L. Johnston	S. Thompsett	S. Search	E. Brown	R. Hufton	H. Bishop
G. Goldring	W. Richards	R. Tombs	L. Armstrong	A. Filley	N. Gilbert
M. Mason	R. Springall	H. Hamlet	G. Legon	C. Humbles	B. Wykes
V. Thwaites	B. Havers	W. Anton	G. Merriman.		

There were also quite a number of wives as well, making quite a jolly gathering. The evening went off very well, plenty of drinks, plenty of food. Music was supplied by a record player. Mick Mason brought along a tape recorder and during the evening we all put a message on the tape. Mick has since edited it, putting in an introduction and in the very near future he will be sending it to the Squadron Secretary so that it can be played in Australia. It's our first effort but not the last. A jolly evening concluded with Steve Search playing Lagos Lagoon, but only two verses got sung--lights were promptly put out.

Cheerio for now.

Q FLIGHT NEWS.

by

Jim Holliday.

Visit to R.A.A.F. Station, Amberley. The visit to Amberley on Sunday 26th. November was considered unanimously by those who attended as the best thing that "Q" Flight has done to date.

Group Captain Douglas and Wing Commander Rundle, O.C. and S.A.O. respectively, Amberley, very courteously received us over a cup of morning tea and cakes. After that we were conducted by the Senior Warrant Officer into every nook and cranny of the Station.

The sights, smells and sounds brought on nostalgia to all of us. It was a grand day. We climbed into aircraft, pulled switches, pushed pedals, gripped wheels, sat in seats, and, by the gleam in their eyes, a couple of ex-pilots almost took off.

Amberley is the biggest R.A.A.F. Station in the Commonwealth. There are still some Lincolns for transport and air-sea rescue work; but these were quickly taken in to get to the Vampires, Meteors and Canberras.

It was a hot day. In the hangar of No. 10 Canberra Jet Squadron it was 103°. How we wished for the shady Mediterranean. It was in this hangar that we encountered Armourer Corporal Eric Casey, an Irishman who was at Holme-on-Spalding Moor. Cpl. Casey was restrained only by main force from showing how an Ejector seat was blown out of a Canberra.

We set out from the hangars to the swimming pool but the heat of the day waylaid us at the Sergeants Mess where we found it much easier to cool our insides than our outsides.

We hope to arrange a further visit to Amberley and trust the representation will be greater. "Tweetie" Bird, who came about 150 miles from Lake Cootharaba to make the visit says he is going to come again next time.

Christmas Social, 1st. December.

Once again our Xmas Social was a grand success. There was good music, good supper, good refreshments, and 120 people! The last party left at 2.55 a.m.

Wives and sweethearts, particularly, insisted that there must be another next Xmas and, if possible, in early mid-winter. The Committee are working on this.

Coming Events.

Plans are in hand to celebrate our Anzac Day in the usual manner and to arrange for a large party to visit Sydney. Probably there will be a Social about the middle of May and a golf day in June.

COMING TO SYDNEY FOR THE ANZAC ALL-STATES REUNION ? Notify your accommodation needs to the N.S.W. Secretary, Box 5289, G.P.O., Sydney. For hotel accommodation, deposit £2, please!

Christmas Social. The Christmas Party held at the Air Force Club on Friday 14th. December lasted way into the small hours of Saturday and was rated by most of those who attended as the most enjoyable function of its kind yet held. It is indeed nice, and even flattering to know that everyone had such a good time. Sam Barlow won a raffle--- the prize being a bottle of wine and an extremely nice Christmas cake. Those present included Kemp and Joan Beach, George and Peg Unitt, Graeme and Dulcie Coombes, Alf and Enid Hammond, Stuart and Iris Ricketts, Bert and Marie Reynolds, "Bluey" and Molly Milner, Don and Bev. Bitmead, Bob and Pat Millar, Brian and Dot Lord, Dorothy and Eric Munkman, Sid and Mrs. Bowen, Elmo Haigh, Yvonne Crompton, Bluey Spurling, Frank Hickey, Mick Hallahan, Cy. Irwin, Allan Walker, Fred Strom and Edna Johnston, and, of course, Sam and Maisie. It was especially nice to see Yvonne Crompton and we also gave a warm welcome to Bert Reynolds and his wife Marie.

Return of the Prodigal. We hail with joy and enthusiasm the return to the ranks of Freddie Strom. Fred, always a keen squadron man, has spent the last couple of years teaching in the country but is now back in the city again and we know we are going to see a lot of him. He made his reappearance, quite unexpectedly, at the Christmas Social and we were never more pleased to see him.

Dick Watson from Djakarta. Though we only had a few hours with him before he joined his plane returning to Djakarta, we were delighted to see Dick. He had dinner with us at the Wentworth. Those who came were Graeme Coombes, Don Bitmead, Col. Campbell, Peter Alexander, Ray Davies, George Unitt, Allan Walker and Sam Barlow (We enjoyed the Champagne tremendously, Sam). Dick is Manager of the Sun Insurance Co., in Djakarta. He hopes to see something of Keith Cousins there. Dick is looking well and seems to find life very comfortable in Djakarta.

Anzac Reunion. This function is now practically upon us and excitement is mounting in N.S.W. as April approaches. In addition to the programme outlined in the previous issue of Squadron News, we report that arrangements have been completed for an excursion on Sydney Harbour for Saturday April 28th--and we advise that Wallacia is the location of the Golf Day and Barbecue. Further details later. A Ladies Auxiliary has been formed, consisting of Peg Unitt, Enid Hammond and Yvonne Crompton, under the Chairmanship of Dorothy Munkman, to handle some aspects of the Reunion arrangements. We are very impressed with the energetic and thorough grasp they are displaying.

All N.S.W. Members will receive a Programme and circular during March giving details of all functions to be held during the Anzac Reunion week. The N.S.W. Committee would appreciate some idea of the probable attendance at each function and members are asked to comply with this request. Any interstate or country member requiring accommodation to be reserved for him for any portion of Anzac Week should please write to the N.S.W. Secretary at once.

ANZAC ALL-STATES REUNION.

Summary of Events.

Wednesday April 24th.	Afternoon.	Welcome to interstate members. H. Q. Hotel Sydney.
	Evening-8.0.p.m.	Wreath laid on Cenotaph-Martin Place.
	8.30	Social reception-members and wives-Air Force Club (3rd.Floor)
Thursday April 25th.	Morning. 10.0.a.m.	Anzac March
	1.0.to 6.0.p.m.	All-States Reunion- South Sydney Police-Boys Club;
	Evening	Private Entertainment.
Friday April 26th.		Free Day
	Evening 8.0-12.0	Anzac Dance---Transport House, Cleveland St. City.
Saturday April 27th	Morning	Sydney Harbour Excursion in Special Launch.
	Morning 9.0.a.m.	Squadron Conference-330, George St. Sydney (5th.Floor)
	Evening	Private Entertainment.
Sunday April 28th.	Morning	Anzac Cup Golf Day and Barbecue-Wallacia.

The Editor acknowledges with thanks Christmas Greetings for the Squadron from these members and their families. Yvonne Crompton, Peter Campbell, Stuart Ricketts, Bill Taylor, John Preston, Ken Mercer, Jim Holliday, Graeme Coombes, Bob Osborne, Ross Burgess, Stan Parker, Allan Walker, Ernie Laming, Jack Baker, Arthur Green, Max Egan, Norm Skinner, Gordon Orchard, Alan Piggott,

Christmas Greetings(cont.) Jack Hobbs, Geoff. Burgess, Sid Thompsett (for members of the U.K. Flight), Mel Priest, Allan McLean, Pete Pettit, Jim Palmer, Eric Munkman.

SQUADRON BALL, Sydney, 1957. A booking has been made for the night of Friday July 26th. at the R.S.L. Ballroom, Elizabeth Street, Sydney. Further details later but we hope you will start planning now.

PERSONAL PARS.

Ken Gunn. We hear from Maurie Slocombe of the Air Force Club that, recently passing through Yass, he saw someone wearing a 458 Lapel badge and found it to be Ken Gunn in Yass on business. Ken is well and wishes to be remembered to his friends; Doug Bennett and his wife, Thamar, are coming down to Sydney from Deniliquin to take part in the events of the Anzac Week. We are looking forward to seeing them again; Geoff. Wright is now permanently stationed in Sydney with Qantas; Pete Pettit is buying a house in Chatswood, Sydney; Wal Clarke is back in Sydney after his trip to Europe; Joe Colclough who is a Tours Officer with Shell in Sydney is still playing cricket regularly.

Bob Davies: Our congratulations to Bob and his wife on the birth of a daughter. Bob is now Archdeacon of Wagga;

Tim McQuaid who lives in Barcaldine, Queensland, has recently bought a Squadron Car Badge; Eric Munkman is playing regular Saturday afternoon cricket in Sydney; Cy. Irwin, another 458 cricketer recently got the big score (100 plus, and not out too we understand) Congratulations to you, Cy.;

F. (Whacker) Wilson, now in Seaforth is an intending Squadron golfer at the next opportunity. He sends his regards to Tom Mitchell and Tom Moore;

Sam Barlow the Squadron Treasurer has had an illness, from which he is recovering well, but which has caused him to be medically forbidden alcohol. Otherwise, Sam continues to prosper and has recently taken delivery of his new Holden car;

Allan Walker the N.S.W. Secretary is another 458er who is suffering from some ill-health. Look after yourself, Allan, and good luck for a quick recuperation;

Dud McKay now in Northern Queensland is considering New Guinea as a sphere of operations; Kemp Beach, with his wife Joan, recently entertained a number of N.S.W. Squadron members at a Christmas Party at their Stanmore home; a party their guests very much enjoyed;

Selwyn (Massa) Foote is back again at Ipswich, Queensland. He has temporarily forsaken the building game for the butchering business;

Bernie McLoughlin is now fully recovered from his sudden and serious illness, which necessitated many blood transfusions. Seen by Q-Flight members over Xmas at Queensland's fabulous South Coast, he looked remarkably well, but bemoaned the Doctor's strict instructions to forsake cigarettes and alcohol;

Tony Stone was transferred, practically at a moment's notice, by his employers, Vacuum Oil, from Brisbane to Tasmania where he is Acting Sales Manager. Looks like being permanent. Everyone from Q Flight joins in wishing him well, as do Squadron members in other States;

Eric (Tweetie) Bird looks just the same as of yore except for a finger joint or two missing, which is a sure sign of the sawmiller. He tells us his sawmilling business at Lake Cootharab, Queensland, is prospering, and urges all to migrate to the salubrious surroundings of his stamping ground;

Gordon Postle is a probable who might get to Sydney for the All-States Reunion if someone doesn't want to sell a Hotel. Attempts to attend previous Reunions have always been frustrated by somebody wanting to buy or sell a hotel. It is no secret that Gordon is probably the biggest Hotel Broker in Queensland. He also does a stout job in negotiating and manhandling all the beer for Q Flight functions;

Eric Lloyd, M.L.A. (Member of Parliament, to you foreigners!) is particularly pleased about two things: occupying a brand new house, and the greatly improved health of one of his sons;

Bert (Judy) Garland sends his regards to Ian Higlett and in this he is joined by Jim Holliday;

Keith Campbell who is with Fauldings in Brisbane is always on the scent of something;

Jim Plunkett up at Cairns, north Queensland, is very active with the Returned Soldiers League and now comes word that he is Secretary of the local Lifesaving Association;

Jack Lewis is now permanently situated in Brisbane with Grazcos, and is teaching Woolclassing at Brisbane Technical College;

Jack Riseley has returned from Adelaide to Perth.

Bill Honan is currently spending some weeks in Sydney with his wife and children.

(Pete Pettit qualified as a Dentist, in Sydney, after the War and then went to London. He practiced his profession there, took a prominent part in forming the U.K. Flight, married a South Australian girl, became father of a small girl named Wendy--and has recently, after six years overseas, returned to live in Sydney. We asked him to comment on the changes he noticed. Incidentally, another 458er from overseas, Dick Watson, recently spent some furlough here, and we hope to publish a similar article by him in a future issue. It will be interesting to see if Dick's impressions are the same as Pete Pettit's.) Pete says:

Hullo, Mates !

Pete Alexander has asked me to say a few words about Aussie as I have rediscovered her after six years in the Old Dart. Changes there have been in plenty, some of which, like the N.S.W. Licensing hours (till 10.0 p.m.) deserve universal acclaim. Others, like the rise in the cost of living, would have been much better left as they were.

The first thing which struck this returning wanderer was that so many people were speaking "Orstraylyn", but the second thing was that so many others were not. We seem to have opened our gates wide indeed and in the process turned our cities into second editions of Soho or at least Earl's Court. There are as many versions of "Fez Pliz" and "Late Final Extra !" as there are countries in Europe and the stranger may be forgiven for wondering who owns this country anyhow ! However I note that most of the new arrivals are being taken in hand just as soon as they can say "bloody" and have the Union Rules explained in great detail. This ensures, of course, that no one will work too hard and that we shall all live in blissful full employment a little longer.

Perth and Adelaide both seem to have been able to retain their country town atmosphere, in spite of new suburbs and considerable industrial development. Perth introduced us to its crayfish and Adelaide to its "Drive-Ins" both of which duly impressed. Melbourne of course has had the Olympics and done a good job too. Their new swimming pool is a marvel of modern design and construction--though Sydney bids fair to outdo it again with a new Opera House. There seems to be a spirit of architectural enterprise in the air.

Sydney seems to have had the greatest changes, but perhaps only because I knew it better than the other cities. The number of new houses constructed since I left is quite astounding though this, unfortunately, has not made it any easier to get one, as I am now finding out.

Some of the old bush walks and picnic spots have entirely disappeared in suburbia and whole new vistas of houses have replaced some delightful Harbour views.

The transport system is worse than I can remember. The Holden has completely swamped the car market and incidentally shewn up the lack of foresight of those who planned the road system, if any. Trying to cross the Harbour Bridge at a peak hour is worse than any traffic snarl London can turn on, and that is saying something.

One answer to the problem seems to have been an exodus of business to the North side of the Harbour, but this doesn't obviate the need for at least one additional Bridge. Similar road and traffic problems are being created in the other cities.

Prosperity seems to be in the air and everyone seems to own a car, fridge, and washing machine, if not a house at the beach. Which, I suppose, accounts for the fact that the finance companies are offering a mere 6½% to anyone with a bit of spare cash. The "bit of spare cash" is not what it was either. Where once one cracked a fiddle-did it is now necessary to part up with a Lady Godiva.

We have been blessed with glorious television in the more progressive cities and our drinking hours are now enlivened with American canned-cowboys and Indians taking pot-shots at each other, punctuated by corny commercials. What price the "Six O'clock Rush" ?

However it is the things about this great country which have not changed which continue to make it the best of the lot. The kindness of its people, its hospitality and the company of old comrades not forgotten which followed me from Perth to Sydney through an ever-widening stream of Swan, West End and Melbourne Bitter to Toohey's New---not a bad drop either, thanks very much.

After years of wondering how many weathers the day will bring, sunshine from a cloudless sky, the smell of the Gums after rain, and the blue Pacific rolling onto Sydney beaches are just some of the things we take for granted but which make it good to be back.

CORRESPONDENCE:From W.D.Baird, Whale Beach Road, Whale Beach, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

It might interest you to know that I had a card from Peter Eastcott (Bruce McKenzie's crew) from Canada. I had not heard of or from him since we left Malta. In his letter he tells me he still has 2 pairs of black socks with W.D.B. on them! We shared a tent at Protville. I would like to have my kindest regards sent to Butch Power, W.A., if that can be arranged.

A Merry Christmas and all the best in 1957 to all members.

yours sincerely,

W.D.Baird,

Late Adj.

From Ernie Laming, R.A.A.F., Woomera.

Dear Pete,

.....I am seriously thinking of getting to the West for Anzac Day. No doubt they have a day there.....Things look bad in the M.E.again.

Best wishes,

Ern.

From Dud McKay, Hunter Street, Freshwater, North Queensland.

Dear Allan,

Enid usually nags me for some time before Christmas about sending cards but this year she must have been too easy as I didn't get any away. However, late though it may be for Christmas--and I hope it was a very merry one--I am in time for the New Year and I (or rather we) wish you all the best in health and all things that are good throughout, not only the year to come, but in the many years to come.

We are all in the best of health including the latest girl (now six months) who is the loveliest little one of the lot--I think we feel the same about each one as they become the baby. Sometimes makes us feel like making it a basketball team, but guess we'd better not.

Often wish I could meet some of you by just travelling a few miles, and then it could be a regular thing; but that may come again. Looks as though I have a piece of country outside Windsor so we may yet find ourselves back there. Then again we seem to be such roamers that we may find ourselves in New Guinea. The New Year will decide..

Once again our very best wishes,

En. and Dud.

VISTA AT RICHMOND--Department of Odd Endings.

Seen recently at R.A.A.F. Station, Richmond. Sam Barlow and Allan Walker in the Sergeants', or was it the Officers', Mess drinking----Orangeade.

SQUADRON CHRISTMAS DINNER in VICTORIA.

458 in Victoria held its usual Christmas Dinner for members during December at the Hardware Club, scene of previous Squadron functions.

It had been necessary to alter the date at relatively short notice which interfered with some members ability to be present; however those who made it had, as always, a good time. Dick Watson, in Melbourne on furlough from Java, was able to attend and meet some of his old Squadron friends.

SQUADRON COMMANDERS OF 458.

There were, of course, five of them. Two R.A.F., Two R.A.A.F., one S.A.A.F. But the two R.A.F. C.O.s were Australians in the R.A.F., and the South African was at least as acceptable to the Australians as if he had been in the R.A.A.F.

Norman Mulholland was the first. At this distance in time things come back to the memory in episodes and vignettes rather than as pictures in the round; it is 16 years since Mulholland got 458 going at its first operational Station, Holne-on-Spalding Moor. But the vignettes are still revealing enough. We recall his war-damaged face--resulting from a serious prang before he came to 458. But after it he had resumed flying at the earliest possible opportunity. We recall the feeling of urgency and drive he was able to evoke through the forming Squadron in all its sections. Discipline had something to do with it too. There was no 'nucking around' permitted. Talking of episodes as well as of discipline--an episode comes back to us as we type. We were in the Hangar where an aircraft was being serviced. Norman Mulholland came in

