

CIRCULAR

458 SQUADRON NEWS



The EDITOR.

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TO THE NATIONAL CAPITAL. 458 IN CANBERRA.

A Squadron party, from the New South Wales Flight, has spent a week-end in Canberra. The excursion was planned as the second N.S.W. Country Reunion, in succession to the very highly enjoyed Orange Reunion held last year. The Committee felt a little bashful in using the word 'Country' about the Australian Capital but no one in Canberra appeared to feel offended.

The Reunion was held on the weekend in October preceding the long weekend for which Canberra hotels were booked out. 458 stayed at the Ainsley-Rex Hotel, and was very comfortable. Leaving on Friday and after a drive of about five hours from Sydney, metropolitan members arrived about 5.0.p.m. They were met and welcomed by 458ers living in Canberra, including Col Fereday, Harry Galvin, Bill Hamilton and Keith Austin. A very substantial amount of beer was put away--of course--during the evening. They noted incidentally that hotels in Canberra seem to be doing a much bigger bar trade than many Sydney hotels are currently achieving. The large "New Australian" element in Canberra was also noticeable.

On Saturday morning, the party had a look round the City area and the residential suburbs and visited Canberra members homes. The party now consisted of the following: Alf. Hammond and his family; Eric Munkman and his family; Sam Barlow, Fred Strom, Noel Spurling, Peter Alexander, Bob Bruce, Bob Lyndon accompanied by Pat, Bob Smith and his wife Ross and Pat Burgess from Newcastle, Len Adams from Gundagai. Harry and Nita Baines came over from Cowra later. Canberra is growing fast. It is a scattered 'Garden' city made attractive by being planted with a multitude of trees. Parliament House, the War Memorial, the growing National University are prominent and impressive. New bungalows are peopling the fast-spreading residential suburbs. Near the Civic shopping area, which is growing too and is attractive, several multi-storey large blocks of flats are going up. This writer did not like their design but they will cope with a multitude of housing problems. It was fine sunny, crisp-cool, weather. After a drive around, we sat in the sun and had some drinks in the open-air Beer Garden at the Ainsley-Rex.

After lunch the organised programme began. We had a quick tour round the national War Museum were very impressed with it, though noticing that the R.A.A.F. exhibits were relatively small and references to 458 Squadron non-existent. We might try to do something about that. From there to the American War Monument, a lofty thin metal column, surmounted by the American Eagle. It appeared to be of aluminium. Thence to Parliament House where the Party saw the House of Representatives and the Senate chambers and were treated to the patter of the Parliamentary attendant.

Then to the Australian National University, where Bill Hamilton is the Bursar. Bill gave us a most interesting tour in the John Curtin School of Medicine and in the School of Physics. We had a close look at the two atom-smashing machines, one in being the other being constructed.

That evening there was a dinner-dance at the hotel. An attractive small floor, a large and cheerful party of Squadron friends added up to an enjoyable evening.

On Sunday, the 458 party drove out to the Cotter Dam. Here the Cotter river is dammed to provide the city's water supply. There is a water spillway from the high dam down to the continuing river which flows through a wooded picnic area.

Here the Canberra 458ers and their wives had organised a barbecue. Steaks, sausages and chops were cooked and eaten in great quantities. The barbecue was the high point and culmination of the Reunion which, itself, as someone commented represented --like earlier Country Reunions, one of the best things 458 has to offer its members.

And so, with warmest thanks to 458ers of the A.C.T., homewards by car. We shall meet together again.

NICK BERTRAM'S PASSING IN GLIDER CRASH.

His Squadron contemporaries and the many 458ers who met him during the last five All-States Reunions, all of which he attended, will be deeply affected to learn of his death in a Glider crash near Murray Bridge in South Australia.

Nick served in the United Kingdom and the Middle East with the Squadron. He flew with 'Dizzy' Dean as an Air Gunner. After leaving 458 he remustered as a pilot.

In peacetime he had an Engineering business near Adelaide. He leaves a widow and a young son. 458's deep sympathy to them.

Ron Badger writes:

Nick was a very popular member of the S.A. Flight Committee and had the experience of attending All-States Reunions in every capital city.

Prewar, he was a successful speedway rider and rode with a coolness which impressed all who knew him.

Of quiet disposition but with a keen sense of humour Nick, after the war formed his own Engineering works and by hard work made it a successful venture.

He built a really beautiful caravan for the family to get away on weekends to relax. He also took up glider flying at a newly formed Glub at Murray Bridge which he enjoyed to the full becoming a capable glider pilot exercising the same cool unflurried manner of his earlier speedway days.

His Air Force career, his gliding and also his keen loyalty to 458 all speak of his love of flying and the air. His friends are all rather inclined to think that if Nick had to go, he would rather go at his old love of flying than in any other way.

Perhaps one of the best ways of judging a man's standing among his fellowmen is to attend his funeral and the 15 458ers at Nick's were a very small part of the biggest attended funeral I have been to. We shall always remember Nick as a good citizen, a good husband, a good father, a good worker for both his family and the community and lastly as a good 458er.

Stuart Ricketts, who was Nick's contemporary, also writes:

I read the news of Nick Bertrams death in a glider accident on 17.10.59 with the deepest regret.

I knew him for many years, dating back to our training days commencing in April 1940 when we were on course with W.A.G. School, Ballarat, No. I Course. Eventually we met again in the Middle East. 458 had quite a few from that Course on strength. Tote Peace, Woozle Wurr, Jim McKay, Nick Bertram, the late John Scott, and Jim Brown-- and possibly others that I can't think of at this moment.

During the Sydney All-States Reunion I had the pleasure of accomodating Nick at my home, quite a memorable reunion that will stay in the mind for many years to come.

My deepest sympathy goes to his wife and son.

VICTORIAN VIEWS.

from

Bill Carr (36, Harbury St.
Reservoir)

Preparing for the All-States Reunion.

Our activities have had the two main objectives of building Flight strength, and building up our position in preparation for the coming Melbourne All-States Reunion next April. The most recent function was a gathering at Ian Alison's home in late September. Despite a very wet evening, we had a very pleasant time and also managed to add a bit to Squadron funds. Among those attending, with their wives or friends, were Jack Ramsay, Don Johns on, Bill and Mary Carr, Harry Ashworth and Kev Guiney and their wives, John Bilney's wife (John himself was ill), Ron Russell and wife and, of course, Ian and his wife.

Social-Dance and the Annual Ballot.

We held this function somewhat earlier: on Friday, June 26th. The Dance was highly successful. Attendance was in the mid-sixties--not all members, of course. We were able to advance finances by over £40 as a combined result of donations, raffles and "door". Briefly, those members present were: Harry Ashworth, Ian Alison, John Bilney, Eddie Bradshaw, Bill Bailey, Bill Carr, Arthur Green, John Jenkins, Don Johnson, Yank Martin, Jim Munday,

Ron Russell, Bob Sherrah, Mick Singe, Lyle Wurr, Frank Wilson, Tony Stone, In almost all cases they were accompanied by their wives and a small party of friends.

Members were particularly pleased to see Mick Singe and his wife along. Mick is shop-fitting around the suburbs and is not often seen (except for his regular Anzac attendance). Mick was unable to dance, as the result of a "crook leg" as he put it but was able to enjoy the evening nevertheless.

Doug Colquhoun in Contact Again.

Doug Colquhoun has made contact again. He has had quite a rough time. Originally travelling, he had to abandon all work for

Victorian Views (cont.) about two years owing to consistent ill-health. However, over the past five years he has been able to hold down a clerical desk with the Repatriation Dept., and, from appearances he is now well on the way to becoming 'mended'. His son is a leading footballer, playing full back for Williamstown, a leading Association Club. We are grateful to Doug. for his donation of a set of kitchen knives which we raffled, bringing in £10.

Water Colours of the Wellington. Ian Alison, who is a commercial artist, brought along to the Dance an excellent water colour of a Wellington. This now belongs to Harry Ashworth. Ian has offered to do one to be raffled; also, he is prepared to take commissions at £5, if anybody is interested. I have bought one and can say that they are well worth having. Ian will do them either in black or white and with letter identification as required.

Donations from members.

We particularly wish to acknowledge the following, received in response to a request for help in building up Flight funds again: Jack Ramsay £1-0-0; Ken Brown £3-10-0; Doug Colquhoun £10-2-0; Ron Russell and Tony Stone 10/- each; Arthur Green £5-0-0; Cec. Percy 1-5-0; Bob Pollock £2-10-0; Dave Firth £5-0-0; Keith Clymo £1-5-0.

The Victorian Committee.

Ron Russell and Tony Stone were both attending their first Victorian function since moving to Melbourne. We promptly elected them to the Committee which is now the following:

President: Lyle Wurr,
 Senior Vice President: Norm. Cugley,
 Junior Vice President
 and Treasurer: John Jenkins,
 Secretary: Bill Carr,
 Committee: Gordon Orchard, Don Johnson, Jim Munday, Ron Russell,

Bill Bailey, Tony Stone, Ian Alison, Yank Martin, John Bilney, Arthur Green.

Frank Wilson declined to become a regular committeeman but agreed to remain as "Picnic man".

Personal Pars. Victorian personalities are included under the Personalities column. But while we think of it we must add the names of Cec Percy and Gordon Cuthbertson, both with their wives, to the list of those attending the Social-Dance.

Squadron Tree-Planting. Point Cook would seem to be the most likely place for our Memorial Tree. We are looking into this.

Going, Going.....

The second Impression of "We Find and Destroy" which came into our hands in September, is now over three-fifths sold. At the moment of writing, sales are 280 through bookshops and 59 direct to buyers. The sales through the bookshops have been, as between States,

N.S.W. 119; Victoria 60; South Aust. 36; Queensland 28;
 Tasmania 21; West.Aust. 13; Canberra 3.

As far as we know, the only Australian Capital city daily to have published a full review of the book is the Adelaide Advertiser. The Advertiser was very kind, couldn't have been more so, which since we neither exercised nor had the smallest "pull" with them, was gratifying.

The review was headed with a reproduction of the picture of Colonel McKenzie which is one of the book's illustrations and the words "Bomber Squadron's Gallant Exploits" Thereafter (we quote)

"458 Squadron was the product of the famous Empire Air Training Scheme in Canada. Equipped with Wellingtons, it was officially formed on July 10th, 1941. Its personnel was mixed, being composed of Australians, British, a few men from Canada and New Zealand, and some Australians already serving with the R.A.F. These included the first two commanders.

"The squadron made its first raids from a Yorkshire aerodrome--Holme-on-Spalding Moor.

"Moved to the Middle East, the squadron carried the fight to the enemy with outstanding efficiency, courage and success, flying in Palestine, North Africa, Malta, Sardinia, Italy, Southern France, Corsica, Sicily and Gibraltar.

"Under a superb leader, Lt-Col. B. McKenzie, DSO, DFC and bar, 458 Squadron became the terror of enemy shipping, and finally ran out of ships to attack!

"But the Squadron's fame was won at high cost. More than 100 officers and other ranks lost their lives in establishing a great tradition.

"..... (The author) has clearly been to great pains in his research and has told the grand story of his squadron vividly.

"The book is well illustrated with action photographs."--H.D.B.

Among the direct purchasers, who include libraries, A.F.A. branches, R.S.L. branches and Clubs, are the following 458ers:

M. Costello, W. Wilkinson, Geoff. Barrett, J. Miles, F. Barnett, Eric Jewell, Peter Goodwin, G. Wise, Bill Hamilton, F. Mahoney, Aub. Naylor, Dewi Davies, E. Fendick, J. McCann, G. Edmonds, F. Makin, W. Anton, W. Harry, J. R. Timms.

CORNSTALK COMMENTARY.

from

Bob Bruce (Mt. Wilga, Manor Rd.,
Hornsby, N.S.W.)

N.S.W. in Canberra. Comment firstly must be on the wonderful Country Reunion over the weekend 25-27th. September last. Due in no small measure to the Canberra members of the Squadron, Col. Fereday, Bill Hamilton, Keith Austin, and Harry Galvin, the weekend was a tremendous success; plenty of time for individual sight-seeing and then the organised tour high-lighting in an inspection of the National University, was indeed something to be remembered. The barbecue at the Cotter Dam was held in glorious settings, and from there people started homewards.

Sidelights to mention a few. Sam Barlow again running out of petrol, and reckoning he had a lousy crew of navigators. Yes, and Eric Munkman ran out of petrol again too.

Freddy Strom and Blue Spurling's tour of the Civic Centre. What a beauty and no charlies.

Alf Hammond asking Mine Host on Sunday morning if he could have a drink and, on the Publican agreeing, being followed in by some 20 blokes all wanting a hair of the tail.

Harry Baines look of amazement when Sam and party decided to make a slight detour on the way to Canberra--via Cowra-- to persuade him to come along. While Sam persuaded Fred Strom took care of the bar fly.

Cricket. A cricket match was held on 18th. October when the 458 team, getting more rugged as the years roll on, used a heck of a lot of unused muscles in just defeating a team of members from the Kissing Point Social Club. Keith Miller strolled over for a few minutes--goodness knows what he thought of the cricket.

Golf. The President's Cup day was held at Wallacia on 25th. October and the field was small. However they all enjoyed it. Bob Millar played very good golf--89 off the stick (13 strokes better than the next man!) to carry off the Cup and the Day's honours.

The Invenimus Club and its Competition. Due to the printer's delays and consequential late despatch of books this competition was not as good a financial success as in previous years. However it wasn't too bad. Congratulations to the winners who were:--
1st. V. Stewart.....sold by F. Strom
2nd. J.P. Welsh.....A. Hammond
3rd. Mrs. Bryant.....Henry Bryant.

Social Picnic day at Mt. Wilga

The grounds of the Rehabilitation Centre at Hornsby were the centre of another Social day. 458ers and their families played tennis, and bowls and picniced. There was a keg. The evening finished in Bob and Betty Bruce's flat where the girls put on supper and we drank a few more.

Christmas Social. Planning is to have a Social-Dance at Christmas at the Air Force Club on the evening of December 16th. You will be notified.

Snow Atherton passes through Snow, who has sold his property in North Queensland recently drove down to Sydney with his family and embarked on an Orient liner for a Pacific cruise. Some of us saw him though not as many as wanted to. However he is going to send us a cable when the ship is nearing Sydney on its return and we will organise something then. December is the month.

Christmas Greetings to you.

To 458 members and their families wherever they may be ---a very merry Christmas and the best of everything in 1960 from the N.S.W. Flight. Apart from the Social evening, 458ers are invited to have a quiet Christmas drink together in the Air Force Club, 330, George Street, on Friday December 18th from 5.0 on.

THE CROWATER STONE

from

Bill Taylor (26, Pirie St.
Adelaide).

The Annual Picnic. We are again going to National Park, Belair, for our Annual Children's Picnic on 8th. November 1959, when Father "Flash" Thomas Christmas will preside over the Toy Department. These annual events are very popular and every year our numbers increase.

455 Squadron Plants a Memorial Tree. Several members of 458 Squadron attended the Tree Planting Ceremony of 455 Squadron, which now makes the fourth Tree to be planted near the West Beach Airport Kingsford Smith Memorial. This area will become a Squadron Corner, as about a dozen trees have been planted and may be taken over by other Squadrons.

Those who Passed by. We have been fortunate in seeing the following people in Adelaide:- Eric Lloyd; Norman Harris (a friend of Colonel McKenzie), Arthur Green, Jack Aitken, Jim Perry and Ian Showell, all of whom stopped in to say "Hullo"

Nick Bertram. The whole Squadron will be sorry to hear of the untimely death of Nick Bertram who was recently killed in a glider accident. There is little doubt that Nick's death was due to some other cause than his flying, as the aircraft performed strange evolutions. It appears that Nick was probably ill in the air. Wreaths were laid by 458 Squadron (S.A. Flight) and 458 Squadron Council. Nick's passing leaves a gap in the Squadron which can never be filled. The Squadron carried out the last Honours at the Funeral.

Mr. NORMAN HARRIS, M.L.C.

458 in most Flights has recently had the pleasure of meeting and entertaining Mr. Norman Harris, M.L.C., Minister without Portfolio (in charge of Security), from Kenya. Mr. Harris was in Australia for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference in Canberra. He is an ex-R.A.F. man and a great personal friend of Bruce McKenzie (who is also a Kenya Minister). In Sydney, the N.S.W. President and Vice President, and the Editor had dinner with him and, with the Squadron Treasurer, Eric Munkman, spent a pleasant evening with him in the Air Force Club. He gave us the latest McKenziana. It was a pleasure to meet him.

VALE, GEOFFREY COLDHAM !

The News deeply regrets to announce the passing of another 458er. Geoffrey Coldham of Molesworth, Victoria. He was 54 and died after a relatively short illness.

Geoff. enlisted in the R.A.A.F. in 1940 and came to 458. After the war he purchased a property at Molesworth where he entered wholeheartedly into district affairs. He was Secretary of the Molesworth Fire Brigade (giving the land on which to house the Brigade's motor unit) and Secretary and Trustee of the Molesworth Recreation Reserve. He was a member of the Yea branch of the Graziers Association and the Yea sub-branch of the Returned Soldiers League.

After a Funeral Service at St. John's Church, Toorak, conducted by Dean Roscoe Wilson, the funeral, at Brighton Cemetery, was conducted under the offices of an R.A.A.F. Padre, S/Ldr. Mee. Our sympathy to his widow and two sons.

Mrs. Coldham writes: Basil Wheatley used to send Geoff. the Squadron News which he enjoyed so much. We came to Molesworth in 1945. Geoff. was in hospital with a malignant tumour of the brain, having had it for 15 years or more according to 3 leading neuro-surgeons. He gave no sign of anything abnormal until a few months before his death and then only by loss of memory and getting upset about small things going wrong on the property. The week before he died Basil came to the hospital with the Squadron History for him to read but he was too ill. Geoff knew Jim Munday well. Only clearing out his desk I came across a copy of "Lagos Lagoon".

Geoff was so proud of 458.

PERSONAL PARAGRAPHS.

GORDON ORCHARD has our congratulations on the birth of his third daughter (Deborah Jane). He has a printing business in Melbourne which keeps him very busy. Bill Carr writes that Gordon still shews no sign of the March of Time.

STAN TARCZYNSKI is still with the Melbourne AGE. We understand he is understudying the Circulation Manager of that organisation;

KEITH CLYNO who is tailoring in Melbourne asks to be remembered to the boys;

HUTTON ARMSTRONG is Sales Manager for a Melbourne Real Estate firm. He lives at Canterbury with his family. He has a boy of 10 and a girl of 7½. He was formerly in the Office Equipment business. He wants to be remembered;

DIZZY DEAN is expected down from the Gilbert and Ellice Islands.
KIEN BROWN has his own Block at Katunga and would skip the milking if one of the boys would drop in;

JACK "TITCH" RAMSAY is with the P.M.G.'s Department where we understand he is doing very well;

BILL CARR, the Victorian Secretary is with Kodaks in Melbourne. Sends good wishes to Pete Campbell and Lofty Chalmers;

REG. PRIEST is father of a new son;

IAN SHOWELL'S eldest boy, on the other hand, will be 21 on 31st October;

TOM PHILLIS has been appointed to an education post in Darwin, Northern Territory, and would like any 458ers in the area to contact him;

KEN RUSSELL is in London with his family;

HARRY WISE who is still in the R.A.F. returned to the United Kingdom in April;

BRIAN WOODHEAD and his wife Joan, have had a very pleasant trip to Japan;

BILL HAMILTON who was one of the original 458ers and went overseas with the original squadron party as one of the N.C.O.s is now Bursar of the Australian National University in Canberra. After leaving 458 he spent some years during the war in England. After the war he spent some further years in China before moving to Canberra.

THE BRITISH BULLETIN

from

Sid Thompsett (369, Downham Way
Bromley, Kent)

We were glad to receive a Squadron Pennant as well as a tape recording from Australia. I must say I thought the Pennant was very good though I would have liked to see the Squadron emblem on both sides.

Ken Russell in London. Ken Russell is now with us for a short spell. He is relieving the Manager at the London office of the Adelaide Steamship Company. Leo Armstrong phoned me to say he was over here, so I arranged a welcome for him. Seven of us managed to make it and we had a very enjoyable evening. There were Leo Armstrong, Harry Bishop, Sid Thompsett, Eric Brown, Mick Mason, Dick Tombs, and, of course, Ken Russell. Ken said it was like the All-States Reunion at Adelaide. When we were making our ways home Ken had to catch the last train from St. Pancras at 11.30 and at 11.15 we were still at Trafalgar Square. Mick thereupon took Ken in his car and I have heard from Ken telling me that he made the last train (only just) with Mick literally taking him right up to the train in his car. Ken is hoping to be here for our Reunion in November.

The 458 History. I have heard from everyone who purchased a copy, and they all say how very pleased they are with it. One comment I must pass on. It goes:-
 "What a grand achievement on the part of Peter Alexander. Indeed, I think we must hand it to the Aussies for their unselfish enthusiasm shown at their Reunions and the like."
 I felt I had to mention that one.

Various. I had a very nice letter from Jim Holliday thanking the U.K. Flight for their telegram at the last All-States Reunion. Thank you, Jim.

Bill Prater (beg pardon, W/O Prater) has been posted to Cyprus for a 2½ year spell.

Hoping you are all in the best of health.

CORRESPONDENCE: Letters to the Editor and others.

From W/O Bill Prater, R.A.F. Ayios Nikolaos, B.F.P.O. 53.

Dear Pete, The arrival of 458's book prompts me to write at long last. I've always wanted to know what 458 did prior to my becoming part of the "organisation". It made very good reading and left me feeling very proud of having served with you all.

I joined 458, complete with R.A.F. Issue topee at Alghero (burying the topee next day) as a spare W. Op A.G. I was soon crowded up with Crusher (or was it Crasher) Jones, R.A.A.F. until he went home, and then with Harry Smith, R.A.F.

I shan't forget my first op. as rear gunner. I couldn't make out what the "floating red balls" were until the Nav. yelled "Dive, Skipper! There's b.....flak just behind us!"

I was on the Falconara Detachment, becoming good friends with Curly Brain, Don Anderson, and Eric Jewell of Jack Aitken's crew, who I flew with occasionally. In fact,

