



JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

C/- Rob Wilkinson
36 Finch Ave.
East Ryde
NSW 2113

Year 57

No 230

NOVEMBER 2007

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**** Post communications for Squadron Secretary to David Longhurst (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to John Gibbins (address above)**

**** Have you notified Rob Wilkinson if you prefer to receive your newsletter by email?
Are there others in your family who would like to receive a copy by e-mail ?
Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.**

**** REUNION – 9-13 MARCH 2008 NEWCASTLE – see enclosed details**

Wendy Whitem-Trunz (daughter of Jim Whitem) writes:

“A number of the next generation 458ers had contact for the first time during the 60 year reunion in Canberra, and have maintained links since then. Some are serving on state committees. A question has been raised regarding how we can best keep the 458 tradition alive in years to come. If this is important to you, please send your suggestions and ideas to Wendy Whitem-Trunz (wendy@pfsuccess.com.au (or by mail c/- the Editor) and we can update you on progress in the next newsletter. How about coming to the March reunion ?”

VALE

With sadness, we record the passing of the following members and family of 458.

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|--|
| Bill Addinall | NSW | Died 31 Oct. 2007 – our condolences go to Mavis and family |
| Joyce Austin | SA | Widow of Herbert “Nick” Bertram. Grandson, also Nick, is keen to continue receiving newsletters and also find out more about the Squadron, and look through some photos. |
| Les Boyer | VIC | see VIC Flight report |
| “Mo” Borne | UK | see UK Flight report |
| Jack Ellis | VIC | see VIC Flight report |
| Henry Etherton | WA | see WA Flight report |
| Arch Fell | NZ | Passed away suddenly on Monday April 23. Arch’s daughter, Elrose, said <i>“the family had enjoyed a lovely day together on the day before, and for that they are all very thankful.”</i> Elrose, and Arch’s widow, Glad, are keen to continue receiving the Squadron News. Arch had always kept up a diary of his life and his son Grant has taken an extract from his 'book' and published it under the name “Letter from the Cockpit”. If you’d like a copy, please contact the Editor. |
| “Bill” Heeley | UK | see UK Flight report |
| Tess Jollow | NSW | Widow of Arthur, died in Sydney on 5 Nov. Our condolences go out to all members of the family. |
| Norman Skinner | NSW | Norm’s daughter, Fay Lalor, writes as follows:
<i>“Norman Skinner enlisted in the AIF November 1939 and transferred to the RAAF 24th June 1940. He served with various Squadrons before joining the Mather’s crew of the 458 Squadron as front gunner in Wellingtons. Norman Skinner 402209 was discharged February 28, 1945 with the rank of Flying Officer Air Gunner. After a short illness Norman passed away in Concord Hospital SEP. 11th 2007.</i>

<i>Norman is survived by his loving wife Eileen, after 66 ½ years marriage, and children Ann, Bernard, Fay and Colin, 11 Grandchildren and 10 Great Grandchildren.</i> |
| Violet Thompsett | UK | Widow of Sid Thompsett. See UK Flight report |

WANTED KNOWN - does anyone know of SNUFFY SIMS

I've had a request from Sherri Bailey (daughter of Norm "Lofty" Trewartha), who asks-
"Does anyone remember a guy from England, who came to stay with our family on several occasions. His name was Snuffy Sims – Snuffy being a nick-name of course".

FLIGHT REPORTS**Canada Flight** by Bryan Quinlan

This month's report is a departure from the usual "health report" and features a memorable or unusual 458-related experience, similar to an earlier personal story by Sid Winchester, this one authored by our Canadian V.P. Tom Lindsay. Tom served on 458 as a RCAF-trained radar technician in 1944-45 during its time at Cagliari, Sardinia, Foggia and Rosignano in Italy and finally at Gibraltar. He says it is a story that he has very seldom related to anyone but it is one that you discipline-hating Aussies should appreciate. The story could well be entitled "Take this Job and Shove-it!" Here it is in Tom's own words:

"SELDOM DO I MENTION THIS CHAPTER OF MY LIFE TO ANYONE AND IT IS THE ONLY TIME IN MY LIFE THAT I IGNORED AN ORDER FROM A SENIOR AIR FORCE OFFICER. THE OFFICER WAS IN CHARGE OF THE RADAR UNIT TO WHICH I BELONGED WHILE STATIONED AT A LARGE AIRPORT IN NORTH AFRICA - NO NAMES NO PACK DRILL. IT WAS ONE OF THE LARGEST BASES IN THE AREA AND WE HAD A LOT OF DIFFERENT PLANES WITH DIFFERENT RADAR EQUIPMENT TO SERVICE AND I REALLY ENJOYED THIS TYPE OF WORK. THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED WHICH CHANGED EVERYTHING FOR ME WHEN A CORPORAL WHO LOOKED AFTER THE ORDERING OF RADAR PARTS AND EQUIPMENT FROM H.Q. WAS TRANSFERRED TO A DIFFERENT STATION. BECAUSE OF MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE VARIOUS RADAR EQUIPMENT AND REPAIR PARTS NEEDED, I WAS SELECTED TO TAKE HIS PLACE IN ORDERING AND KEEPING TRACK OF ALL PARTS AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRED. IT WAS SUCH A MUNDANE JOB THAT I WAS SOON FED-UP AND WANTED MY OLD JOB BACK AND REQUESTED A TRANSFER BACK TO MY ORIGINAL JOB. UNFORTUNATELY, MY SERGEANT AND THE SUPERIOR OFFICER DECIDED THAT THEY NEEDED TO KEEP ME ON THIS DESK JOB. CONDITIONS DETERIORATED AND BECAME SO BAD I HAD TO DO SOMETHING, AND THIS OPPORTUNITY ARRIVED A FEW WEEKS LATER WITH A NOTICE OF POSTING TO 458 SQUADRON AT ALGHERO, SARDINIA, WHERE MY KNOWLEDGE OF RADAR EQUIPMENT COULD BE UTILIZED FOR USEFUL PURPOSES. HOWEVER, MY OFFICER TOLD ME THAT I COULD NOT GO, AS MY CURRENT WORK WAS MORE IMPORTANT AND THAT HE WOULD INFORM H.Q. TO THAT EFFECT. FRANKLY, THIS OFFICE JOB COULD EASILY HAVE BEEN DONE BY ANY IDIOT, INCLUDING THE SERGEANT, AS IT REQUIRED VERY LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF RADAR.

IT WAS THEN I DECIDED I WOULD GO TO ALGHERO, REGARDLESS OF THE RISK OF DISOBEYING ORDERS AND EARLY THE NEXT MORNING I WENT TO WHERE THE PLANES WERE TAKING OFF AND ASKED IF ANYONE WAS DEPARTING FOR ALGHERO. I STILL HAD A COPY OF MY TRANSFER PAPERS AND BY A GREAT STROKE OF GOOD FORTUNE FOUND ONE THAT WAS DEPARTING FOR ALGHERO SHORTLY AND WAS ALLOWED TO BOARD, AND AWAY WE GO.

NOW THE FUN WAS ABOUT TO START, FOR WHEN I ARRIVED AT ALGHERO I DISCOVERED THAT 458 HAD ALREADY DEPARTED BY SHIP FOR THE NEW BASE AT FOGGIA. I WAS DEVASTATED AS I COULD NOT STAY THERE AND CERTAINLY COULD NOT GO BACK. BUT LUCK WAS STILL ON MY SIDE. I SCRAMBLED AROUND AND FOUND OUT THAT THERE WERE STILL THREE OR FOUR WELLINGTONS AT ALGHERO BEING LOADED WITH TENTS AND OTHER SUPPLIES TO TAKE TO FOGGIA. A DAY OR SO LATER I WAS ON BOARD ONE OF THEM, LAYING ON TOP OF A PILE OF SOGGY TENTS ON MY WAY TO FOGGIA.

AFTER LANDING AND UNLOADING I WAS ASSIGNED A TENT AND ON MOVING IN DISCOVERED, TO MY GOOD FORTUNE, TO HAVE ONLY THREE TENT MATES, AN AUSSIE, A BRIT AND ANOTHER CANADIAN. THE LATTER WAS ERNIE IRELAND AND WAS THE START OF A LONG AND WONDERFUL FRIENDSHIP. WE SURE HAD SOME GOOD TIMES TOGETHER IN NAPLES AND ROME AND OUR FRIENDSHIP CONTINUES TO THIS DAY. WE STILL STAY IN TOUCH AS ERNIE LIVES IN CRANBROOK IN THE INTERIOR OF B.C. SO THAT IS HOW I BECAME A MEMBER OF 458 AND CONTINUED WITH THE SQUADRON UNTIL THE END OF THE EUROPEAN WAR”.

Tom advised that there were no disciplinary repercussions from his bold and resourceful self-posting and disobedience of orders, however, his Air Force records did not catch up with him until he finally returned to Canada.

Best wishes and early Christmas greetings to all from Canada.

UK flight by Keith Wilkinson

It's my sad task to report the loss of more members of the UK 458 "family".

The funeral of former 458 pilot Maurice "Mo" Borne took place on what would have been his 91st birthday. Mo was an active, charming, charismatic and humorous member right to the end. He was a familiar figure at squadron reunions and had been looking forward to this year's in Cumbria. Two years ago, he had attended the reunion in Alghero, Sardinia, and thoroughly enjoyed being tossed about on top of a tourist boat on the unseasonably rough Mediterranean.

Mo was well known as a member of the Goldfish Club - a wartime pilot who had crashed into the sea, and who survived for days with his crew in a dinghy before being rescued.

In the pouring rain, St Christopher's church near his home in Brislington was packed with family and friends for the funeral. Representing the squadron were: former pilot Jack Christianson, an inseparable pal of Mo's during and ever since the war; former pilot and UK vice-president Leon Armstrong; and myself (my dad flew once with Mo and was responsible for the unauthorised drawing of a Wellington on the front of his Flying Log Book).

There was a standard bearer from the Royal British Legion and at the South Bristol Crematorium, a bugler sounded the Last Post. The Rev Noel Hawkins described Mo as "a wonderful man, a real gentleman, a very kind and generous man." He said: "He adored flying - loved it."

The funeral has also taken place of former 458 wop/air gunner William "Bill" Heeley, aged 86, who suddenly collapsed and died at home, despite the best efforts of paramedics to revive him.

Bill has been buried at St John's Church in Washingborough - again, with the presence of a standard bearer, and to the moving sound of Elgar's Nimrod. His widow, Hilary, 84, tells me: "He chose Empire Day to depart with a massive heart attack - no illness apart from the after-effects of a stroke a few years ago".

Bill and Hilary had been married since 1944 - the year after he was very badly burned when the squadron Wellington he was in crashed. His best man - another survivor of the crash - had pulled him from the flames of the burning aeroplane.

Despite his injuries, Bill had continued his airforce career after the war, becoming a Wing Commander and an Air Electronics Officer. His pride and joy was the Vulcan bomber, and donations at the funeral were to help the fund to restore one of these great aircraft in Leicestershire.

Another loss to the squadron is that of Violet Thompsett, who died after contracting a chest infection, aged 83. Mrs Thompsett was married to a 458-er, the late Sid Thompsett, also a wop/AG. The couple had attended many reunions back to the 1950s and 60s, and had met many Australian members on visits to London. Their daughter Jean Stewart, who married an RAF airman, writes: "I was pleased to read in the Newsletter that Leon Armstrong is still on 'missions'. I remember him and Harry Bishop from when I went to a reunion do in the mid-60s. I can also remember dad laying the squadron wreath at the Cenotaph on Anzac Day."

The UK Flight's annual reunion took place in October on the edge of the English Lake District. Up to 15 of us attended at the Graythwaite Manor Hotel in the picturesque coastal resort of Grange-over-Sands, which overlooks Morecambe Bay.

The 458 veterans who took part were: Leon Armstrong, Jack Christianson, Ron Moy and Don Stocks. They were accompanied by family and friends. On the Saturday there was a sunny day out on the Lakeside and Haverthwaite steam railway, followed by a boat trip on the beautiful Lake Windermere from Lakeside to Ambleside. On the Sunday, there were trips to the RAF Millom museum on the Cumbrian coast, and to the country house and gardens of Holker Hall.

The UK reunions have traditionally taken place in Stratford-on-Avon. At the Grange reunion dinner, there was some discussion on the subject – where next? The two current suggestions for next year are: Stratford again, or York – from where we could visit the old squadron base of Holme-on-Spalding-Moor. Any thoughts and suggestions on this would be most welcome.

Queensland Flight by Evelyn Lewis

Checking the list of 458 members, there are 19 only, and all not very well. Bert Garland has been in Canossa Hospital for some weeks, undergoing care, and it was discovered that he had lung cancer. Bert also has back trouble, and has had some very serious falls. He's back home now, with night time nursing, but if there are any more falls, it's back to hospital.

Sel Foote is still very ill – he and Bert caught up with each other at Canossa.

Cyril Murray, up at Buderim, has not been well these past months, and had a serious fall flat on his chest, causing injury to the chest, and serious cuts and abrasions to his head and body. He's a very lucky man to have come through that.

Pater Baillie lives day by day, but still keeps his chin up, and Jean is very sick. They are in nursing homes at Southport.

Harry Dorge had to leave his previous hostel as there was no ongoing care. I managed to contact his son for details of his new address, as the Newsletter was being returned.

Charles Ruthven and Hazel are more or less housebound, as both have been in and out of hospital.

Arthur and May Jones are going along quietly, and are off to Adelaide for their annual pilgrimage.

I had an interesting chat to Keith Austin and his wife, a couple of months ago, and thanked him for the donation that he had sent. He told me that he was with two or three other Squadrons during the war, and still keeps in contact. He sounded hale and hearty for his 94 years.

Our donation to the Gallipoli Research Foundation was well received, and Robynne Milne (the Executive Officer) would like to hear more of the Squadron. In accepting the donation, for medical research being carried out at Greenslopes Private Hospital, she wrote: *“Equipment is arriving in the new Gallipoli Research Centre and research teams are moving in. We currently have two main groups, the first produce targeted immune therapies for cancer patients and the second team conducts research into hepatitis and liver disease. We also collect tissue for prostate cancer research. As we expand, we will add other specialised areas of research”*.

Seasons Greetings are being sent early with this November Newsletter. Best wishes from “Q” Flight to one and all, and may 2008 continue with lots of happiness, health and prosperity. With all our reunions, get-togethers and meetings, wonderful friends have been made.

N.S.W. Flight by Eric Munkman

Norm Skinner passed away on 11 September. Rob Wilkinson, David Longhurst and I attended the funeral. Norm was one of the early aircrew (W.A.G.) on the Squadron, operating out of Holme-on-Spalding-Moor.

Since the last Newsletter, I had a week in hospital suffering with Diverticulitis – sounds terrible, but it is quite common, as I have since found out.

A luncheon was held on 9 November, at the Ambassador Room, Ryde TAFE. About 12 attended and a good time had by all.

As a result of inquiries in our last Newsletter, regarding W/Cdr. Norm Mulholland, I am pleased to say we had informative replies from Keith Campbell (Qld.) and John McKellar. Unfortunately, I didn't receive any information regarding F/Lt. Norm Christie.

As this is our final newsletter for 2007, Dorothy and I wish all members a Merry Christmas and may the New Year be Healthy and Happy for 2008.

It is with regret I report the passing of Mary Scholes. Mary was the widow of Bob. Postwar they were great supporters of the squadron, attending functions and re-unions. Our sympathies are extended to the family.

Canberra report by Wendy Whitem-Trunz

A new sign has been erected at the Hughie Edwards VC Memorial Park - Federal Highway ACT, just north of Canberra. Col Fereday is featured on the sign in recognition of his considerable contribution to the development of the site. Construction has also started on the placement of a Hawker Siddeley HS 748 Propeller, to be dedicated in December.

A ceremony is planned in October 2008 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the dedication of London's St Clement Danes Church to the RAF. Slate badges of eight Australian RAAF squadrons, including 458, will be installed at this ceremony.

Victoria Flight by Neil Dean

Sadly, I report the deaths of Les Boyer from Kyneton, and Jack Ellis from Dromana. I was unable to attend Les's funeral, through circumstances. Those who went to Jack's service were Marjorie and John Bilney, Barbara Pearce and Neil Dean, and there were numerous apologies.

We displayed the Squadron banner, and Neil Dean spoke on behalf of 458. Jack will be sadly missed from our functions – our sympathy goes out to Margaret.

Brighter news – John Bilney is making progress after his operation. Barbara and Roy Pearce both had a stint in hospital and are now making good recoveries. Neil Dean had another turn in hospital, but is okay now.

Joyce Reeves is currently in rehab. after a hip replacement, and is progressing very well.

Our luncheon at the Manningham Club (September) was attended by 10 members. It was great to have the company of two widows – Joanne Hinton and Shirley Granger. Our next function is a luncheon at the Frankston RSL on 26 November.

Noel Boyer, son of the late Les (who died on 28 SEP) sent us the following "reflections" on his Dad.

"Les enlisted on SEP 1940 and was discharged AUG 1945. He was a Fitter 11A. Pride of place in the kitchen was a large, detailed map of his journeys throughout Africa and Europe with 458. In the lounge room was a mounted frame, enclosing his shining medals.

Throughout his life in the transport industry, every one of his trucks always had the metal "458 Squadron" badge as a fixture on the front. Les was a proud man, whose service to his country was very dear to him. He often talked of his war years, and mentioned many of his mates including "Flash" Baton, Norm Cugley, "Skeeter" and Colonel McKenzie. Les once told how he prayed "to whoever", as he was underneath a truck in the desert, with his face in the sand, as a German fighter strafed the airfield. He took an interest in each country visited, and had a special affinity for the people of Egypt. Les' wife, who died in an accident in 1986, was also a RAAF member. They had six children.

Dad/Les – sleep peacefully "Old Warrior"."

New Zealand flight by Kevin George

The NZ Flight is now down to three survivors – Ron Verity of Christchurch, Jack Pryde of Wairoa, Hawkes Bay, and myself.

Ron and I were Squadron captains, and Jack served on two RAF coastal command squadrons, flying Wellingtons from Gibraltar and Italy. Ron and Jack are both aged about 94, and are some 9 years older than I am.

We are all in comparatively good health, except that Ron suffers some memory loss. We are too much separated by distance, but keep in touch by phone.

South Australia Flight by Pat Cribb.

The mid-year lunch on July 5, at our usual haunt, the Kensington Hotel, was a success with twenty present. We look forward to our Christmas lunch and A.G.M. from 11am on Dec. 2, at the same hotel – easy parking and no steps to negotiate, which suits so many of us these days.

Good news from Jim Perry, now recovered from treatment, with a caring daughter living nearby to keep an eye on him.

Joan Dickson had a spell in hospital, but pleased to hear from her that she is well and out and about again.

Regretfully we report the passing of Joan Austin (former wife of 458er Nick Bertram, who died post-war in an accident).

Read with real interest the articles in the Adelaide newspapers of the new cellardoor, Taranga, McLaren Vale, opened recently by the Oliver family in the old stone-worker's cottage. Settled by their ancestors in 1841, the property has continued for 166 years into the hands of the sixth generation of Olivers. Bert Oliver, away with 458, planted new vineyards on his return from the war, and they now produce prizewinning wines. We wish the Olivers great success with their enterprise. Expect many of us will be heading for a tasting etc. soon to Taranga, Seaview Road, McLaren Vale – 08 8323 8498.

To Queensland Flight, I was very sorry to hear from her family that Peg Cuthbertson had passed away in June. We have been close personal friends with Gordon and Peg over the years as Bill, my husband, shared a tent for 3.5 years in the Middle East with Gordon and Tom Burgess. They formed a strong bond, and Bill was best man at their wedding in 1946.

We send Christmas Greetings to everyone and a Happy New Year in 2008.

Western Australia Flight by Ted Jewell

Henry Etherton passed away on 31 July, after a sudden heart attack at home. He died en route to the hospital. All our sympathy to Vera and family.

On October 17 we had a luncheon at Bob and Dot Bresland's home in Wembly. Squadron members are now very few - myself, Joan Clues, Vera Etherton, Margaret Gannaway. There were 11 people altogether, mainly associate members. We all had a great day.

We wonder how much longer we will be able to carry on as we are. Jack Cobb says he cannot get out these days. We've not heard from Les Lockart or Stan Hopewell in years. Nobby Nobbs still lives here in Mandurah, and we keep in touch during the year. Cob Corten lives in Busselton about 200K from Perth. He called in to see Joan Clues in Perth some time ago. Joan told me that Jim Palmer lives in a nursing home with Lucy in Kojonup. We have not heard from Bill Kelleher for some time. I am the only one around at the time being, but have not been the best for some time.

Joan Clues is organising our Xmas lunch at Miss Mauds restaurant in Perth. She has booked 20 people in for lunch, and I hope we can fill all the seats, mainly friends and family.

I recently received a letter from a Steve Abraham who said his father, Gerald, was in 458 Squadron in the Middle East, Malta, Gibraltar. Does anyone remember Gerald ? Steve's phone number is 03-97961258 and he would be glad of a call.