



C/- Rob Wilkinson

JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council

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

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*** 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.

***** WERREY WARRINGTONS & HAPPY NEW YEAR in 2009 *****

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

Bert Garland	QLD	see QLD Flight report
Pat Bartram	SA	see SA Flight report
Ivy Smart	SA	“ “ “
Phyllis Rowan	Canada	see Canada Flight report
Ernie Ireland	Canada	“ “ “
Ken Morris	UK	see UK Flight report
George Brain	NSW	see NSW Flight report
Peter Campbell	NSW	“ “ “
Tom Moore	NSW	“ “ “
Gordon Vale	NSW	“ “ “
Tony Harris	NSW	“ “ “

INSTALLATION of 458 SQUADRON BADGE AT ST CLEMENT DANES

As we go to press, an **SOS** has been received, via Keith Cousins, from Wing Commander Bruce Hudson, confirming that the ceremony to install the Squadron Badge in the floor of St Clement Danes, London, will take place at 1100hrs on **Thursday March 26**, followed by a light luncheon at the Australian High Commission. The liaison officer, at the High Commission in London, is Squadron leader Kylie Green, should anyone wish to make contact. *For more information, contact either our UK Correspondent (Keith Wilkinson), or the Newsletter Editor (Rob Wilkinson). See details on Page 1.*

*On the subject of **St Clement Danes**, and following on from the article in the last newsletter, re **Colin Fereday** and the **St Clement Danes Project**, here's some excerpts taken from an article in the September edition of **AIR FORCE**:*

“There are many retired RAF people who keep the chapel going,” Mr Fereday said. “But, I think I am the only RAAF person involved with the ‘Friends of the Chapel’ (welfare group).”

After training in Australia, Canada and Ireland, Mr Fereday was posted to the Middle East, flying Wellington bombers. “The Squadron spent a few months in Yorkshire but the Wellington was not a good aircraft to be flying over Europe and losses were heavy,” he said.

He joined the squadron in North Africa and he recalled a tragic accident in August, 1944, that took the lives of two of his crew – wirelessman/gunner George Duncan and radar operator Johnny O’Connell. After a mission off Corsica, a bomb remained caught up on a rack, unknown to the crew. When the aircraft landed in Sardinia, the bomb blew up, the aircraft caught fire and two crew were killed.

“I had a steel shield behind me which protected me from the shrapnel but [co-pilot] Jim Croft was hit by shrapnel, that stayed with him for the rest of his life,” Mr Fereday said.

“After the inquiry, an inspection area was installed above the bomb bay with a rod that could be used to dislodge a bomb if one became caught up. This happened more frequently than I realised. I had a crew of six; a fine group of young men who were very happy with each other,” he said.

REUNION - MARCH 2009

3.

Plans are underway for another REUNION, to be held in the NSW Blue Mountains, from March 15 – 18, 2009.

Along similar lines to the previous two, we expect about 30 – 40 people to attend, and hope you might like to be one of them.

Bookings will be made, at a suitable venue, once I can gauge the interest from Squadron members and friends.

I would estimate that the total cost, for four night's accommodation, meals and tours will again be in the vicinity of \$750 per person, based on twin-share accommodation.

If you would like to attend, please contact me and book your spot. We have seen, from the past two years, how much the 458'ers enjoy getting together, and you can be assured of a good time with your mates.

I'm also happy to assist in organising all your travel arrangements – flights, bus or train – to get you to the reunion venue in the Blue Mountains.

I hope to hear from you soon – and to book you in.

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WE HAVE AN AUTHOR IN OUR MIDST

Jim Whitem has been busy putting pen to paper, and published his autobiography in September, "at long last"- he writes. It is called "Veteran and Veterinarian". Jim, and daughter Wendy, celebrated by taking a 28 day cruise to the South Pacific Islands, as far east as Tahiti. The book can be obtained from Jim at 44 Clifton Drive, Port Macquarie 2444, or by calling him on (02) 6583-8311. Price \$30.00. Ed.

NEWS FROM WENDY WHITEM-TRUNZ, in Canberra

On Sunday November 30, members of RAAFA dedicated a new propeller monument to symbolise the RAAF's heritage and operational links with the national capital, at the RAAF Memorial Grove. The propeller is easily visible from the Federal Highway when driving into Canberra.

This four blade HS748 (Dowty-Rotol) propeller was obtained from the flight training school in Sale, and until the mid 1970s was on the Prime Minister's VIP plane.

During the ceremony, Colin Fereday was once again recognised for his magnificent contribution to establishing and maintaining the Grove over many years. The propeller weighs about one ton, and is mounted on another ton of steel supporting structure, and then on a concrete slab which contains more steel inside than is above. The project took over three years to complete. After the ceremony, Col and Wendy Whitem-Trunz went for a Sunday drive, and lunched at a very popular local restaurant in Gunning.

See photographs in the next edition. Ed.

Queensland Flight by Evelyn Lewis

This issue is to advise the passing of our Member and past President **Bert Garland** on September 9. Bert had been very ill for a long time. He always wanted to hear of all the news and how people were. He phoned me not long before he passed on and said, "Evelyn, you phone everyone, but no-one phones to see or hear how you are, so here I am". A memorial was held for Bert at Canossa, and, as per his request, Bert's body was donated to the University. Isla sends thanks to members and friends she has heard from.

Once again, Xmas is not far away and as usual, some of us leave things to be done at the last minute. I for one these days, much slower, still have physio weekly, doctors to see and so on. I have lots of help, from many caring people.

Same old story - lack of news, it would be good to hear of another mini reunion. I keep in touch with the ones I'm able to contact, especially widows who love to chat, and are interested.

Congratulations to Colin Fereday on his Squadron Award, so well deserved.

Compliments of the coming season, and good cheer.

South Australia Flight by Pat Cribb

We must thank the NSW Committee for continuing to collate the many reports to form the 458 newsletter. We very much appreciate your efforts.

Sadly we report the death of **Pat**, wife of Syd **Bartram**, whose funeral was on October 1. They were always supporters of S.A Flight activities, and regularly attended interstate 458 reunions over the years, making many friends at those. Our sympathy goes to Syd and family.

On October 8, I attended the funeral for **Ivy Smart**, friend of Kevin Tait. We will miss her, too, at our functions. How sad, losing two good friends.

We wish all the following travellers the best of good times and safe returns. Michelle Rowe and husband, Tony, will be in the U.K. for Christmas: Rick and Di Michell are also away soon.

Glen Forgan rang me an hour before he and his wife left for the airport to take a holiday cruise throughout Europe. Luckily he had just heard on the radio, listening to the ABC's "Macca All Over", a program when they spoke about his uncle, Wally Forgan, a 458 pilot, and his crew, who were recently honoured with a ceremony in France attended by the Mayor and Military personnel. It was at the site where their Wimpy crashed in 1941 near Scherberg. Members here will remember, at our 2006 Anzac Day lunch, we were able to see the damaged signet ring found in a paddock by Airline France when investigating wartime crashes, thereby confirming where they had died. The ring was personally brought to Mt. Gambier, S.A., from France, and presented to Wally's brother Robert, and family.

Our last get-together was a success at the Kensington Hotel on July 6. We meet for Christmas lunch on December 7, at the Feathers Hotel, Glynburn Rd., Burnside (a change of venue) and look forward to that occasion. We're expecting about 15 to attend.

From Col Hutchinson, President, Rick Michell, Treasurer, and myself A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, and may 2009 (heavens, where has the year gone?) treat you all well.

Canada Flight

by Bryan Quinlan

Unfortunately, this report will mainly deal with the sad news of losses in the Canadian ex-458 contingent. Since the July report I have received news from Tom **Rowan** on the loss of his wife **Phyllis** following an extended period of declining health, and more recently a phone call from **Ernie Ireland**'s daughter, advising of her Dad's passing, ending a lengthy period of declining health. We extend our deepest sympathies to Tom and all the respective family members.

Tom served as a W/AG with 458 at Malta, Blida and Protville with the Withecomb crew, and completed his tour with the Douglas crew. Tom and Phyllis were married for 67 years. On a lighter note, he related the story early in those 67 years when Phyllis was in hospital awaiting the arrival of their first child, and she received a visit from the local priest who asked her where her husband was. When she responded that he had been overseas for three years, he gave her a disgusted look and turned on his heel and abruptly departed. She had omitted to include the fact that Tom had been home the year previous on the standard one month's leave, after completion of a tour. Tom will turn 90 next month and is still active in curling and community activities.

It was only in the last edition of the Newsletter that Ernie's story appeared about answering the call of nature and discovering he was in the middle of an old German minefield, and it is of some comfort that he would be able to see his story in print before he died. He derived a great deal of pleasure from the Newsletter and in reminiscing about his time as a Radar Tech Air with 458 at Bone, Sardinia, Foggia and Le Valon. Despite his health problems in the last few years, Ernie has always remained cheerful and upbeat and his periodic friendly calls and hard to decipher writing will be sadly missed. Family was all-important to Ernie, and it was obvious that the feeling was reciprocated by family members who will certainly have difficulty in coming to terms with his absence.

I will end on a couple of positive items, the first an enjoyable telephone call from old friend Colin Fereday, who kindly undertook to send me a print of the now approved and registered 458 crest, which arrived shortly after and is very much admired and appreciated. Thanks Col.

The second relates to the successful completion and dedication of the monument at the site of the old Flying Boat Station and first Air Force/RCAF presence in B.C, located at Jericho Beach in Vancouver and now developed as parkland. One of the highlights was the opening three-seaplane fly-past, including a Twin Otter, a Beaver and a Grumman Goose flying boat, the latter one of the types which flew from Jericho during WWII.

From all of the seven remaining Canadian ex-458ers we wish you all a bright and cheerful Merry Christmas and all the best for 2009.

Victoria Flight

No report received

APPEAL FROM ERIC MUNKMAN [PUBLISHER]

"Come on Victorian Flight, don't let the hangar doors shut - surely there must be someone there to pick up the banner of scribe, maybe a male member, lady or younger one. Queensland and South Australia have ladies doing a fine job. Anybody interested please contact Harry Ashworth 03 59866604.

Membership is falling, squadron veterans here are climbing into their eighties, and the UK is melting down into the ever growing wintry glumness of global recession. But all this failed to halt the long tradition - the unstoppable UK Flight annual reunion.

Thirteen of us met for a delightful dinner on a rainy, windswept night in The Bard's historic town of Stratford-on-Avon. Under the wooden beams of the Falcon Hotel, we toasted The Queen, the Parent Unit, and absent friends - in particular Norman Duke, Mo Borne and Rosa Moy - Ron Moy's wife, who was unable to attend as she was still in hospital after a long period of illness.

458 veterans at the reunion were: Jack Christianson (the pilot who got my rear-gunner dad out of a few scrapes), Leon Armstrong, Don Stocks and his former crew mate Ron Moy. The rest of us were family and friends. As ever, Leon - fresh from his energetic tours around the British coast by both ship and aeroplane - was the life and soul of the party. Leon can be relied upon to give us much merriment on these splendid occasions - having told the breakfast staff at a previous hotel that they were like Fawley Towers when they turned up with his kippers and porridge at the same moment.

As the wine flowed under the silver candelabras, there were a few good yarns being told while we tucked in to our plum tomato and pear soup, our medallions of salmon, and our rich chocolate mousse with marinated pineapple and peppermint cream. Don and Roy remembered the day someone set fire to the scrub at Alghero beach to flush out all the snakes, and then fired guns at sharks. Blummin' Eck! And there was me thinking the enemy was the Jerries!

Sadly, there is another squadron death to report - **Ken Morris**, who left us on August 4, aged 88. He and his wife Kathleen, who died last year, were regulars at squadron reunions until a few years ago when poor health prevented them from travelling.

His daughter Barbara wrote this tribute: "Ken's interest in flying started when he was a teenager and he paid five shillings for a flight with Alan Cobham's Flying Circus. He joined the RAF in 1941 and got his wings in September 1942. Ken was based at Bone, Protville and Ballah and his meticulously kept log books recorded a total of 1,089 hours and 35 minutes of flying time. After the war, Ken worked in insurance until his retirement. He and Kathleen lived in Leeds all their lives and Ken was a loyal member of the Yorkshire County Cricket Club.

"They often went walking in the Yorkshire Dales at the weekend, loved the Scottish coast and countryside and enjoyed cruises around the Black Sea, the Baltic and the Mediterranean. Ken was the Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator until he was 80. He celebrated his 80th birthday with Kathleen and his daughter Barbara, with a visit to the RAF Museum in Hendon and a 'flight' on the London Eye. Ken's funeral was well attended and included the Airmen's Hymn and the poem, High Flight."

Our good Aussie friend Colin Fereday has been in touch about the exciting news (last Squadron Newsletter) regarding the 458 Squadron badge. It's finally to be installed as a slate floor tile at Saint Clement Danes Church in London in March. Some of our members are hoping to be there.

Colin tells me: "I regard this as a very important event for 458 Squadron and the culmination of an ambition of Peter Alexander who worked hard over the years to get the 458 Badge approved. He was not able to manage this during his lifetime but Air Marshal Geoffrey Shepherd picked up the torch and ran on to victory."

Leon Armstrong - our UK president – just about to leave for a Pensacola Veterans' Day at the Union Jack Club near Waterloo – told me: "I *also* want to get the badge in the corridor of the Royal Air Force Club at Piccadilly. The other squadron I served in - 612 - is up there." (the saga continues...)

And more on this in the next Squadron News - we are looking into holding a reunion at Holme on Spalding Moor in 2009. Anyone interested in this? Jack Christianson is looking into this suggestion. We'll keep you posted.

N.S.W. Flight by Eric Munkman

Sadly I report the passing of **George "Curly" Brain**. Curly was a resident of the nursing home, Navorina, for the last 18 months and was taken ill on Friday afternoon, August 22, and passed away peacefully two days later. Laurie Crowley attended the funeral on behalf of the squadron. Our deepest sympathy to Kerry, and all the family.

Kerry writes that George was a very proud member of 458. She adds "Despite the fact that his eyesight was very poor, George still had to 'watch' the football (AFL) every week and enjoyed listening to the matches. He also maintained a very good interest in everything around him, and on Wednesday 20th spoke to the accreditation team, who were in the nursing home, about the home and the services which were offered to residents.

George very much enjoyed keeping up with the Squadron news, and eagerly awaited each edition of the newsletter. I would have to read each item to him, and this was no hardship as since he introduced me to the squadron at the Melbourne Reunion I, too, have been interested.

A service to celebrate George's life was held on Thursday August 28 at the Uniting Church in Deniliquin. It was comforting that so many of George's friends were able to attend and remember him with us. He has been interred with his late wife Beatrice at the Deniliquin Lawn Cemetery".

Peter Campbell died on August 20, aged 94 years. Peter was second pilot to Sgt. McCann, and was a member of the Goldfish Club. Our sympathy to wife, Barbara and his extensive family. Peter served on the committee as President, 1951 -53.

Tom Moore passed away on the October 18. Tom was a great supporter of 458. He served on the committee before moving to Orange but was still very active doing all the art work for the squadron, especially at and for the reunions. Eric "Rinso" Purcill attended his funeral on behalf of the squadron. Our deepest sympathy to Val and family.

Also, sad news from Amanda Vale-Boyle, reporting the passing of her 'Grandpa' **Gordon Vale**, alias the "Black Panther" on November 15, aged 93 years. Gordon came to the Squadron as W/O Disciplinarian, later in the Middle East was commissioned, and returned as Adjutant. Dorothy and I attended his funeral service. Sincere sympathy goes out to all his family.

Also, Jim Whitem reports "**Tony Harris**, a 458 skipper in 1944-5, died on November 24. The funeral was held on Friday 28. Bill Flentje, one of Tony's surviving crew members, called me with the news. He reminded me that he and Dud Mackay, of Queensland, are now the only survivors. The crew also included Bob Bruce, of Squadron Council fame. Our thoughts are with Gwen, Tony's widow".

John Ringwood and Peg Hull (widow of Bill) have been in touch to thank those responsible for the Newsletter. It does involve a lot of work, you could say "it's a labour of love". I would like to make special mention of Rob Wilkinson for his part. John mentioned he had been in touch with Eric Jewell; he has been suffering poor health and poor hearing.

The last meeting of the NSW Committee held on the October 15, 2008, was meeting No. 458 – and that prompted the question “When was the first?” It was on April 20, 1949, and held at 330 George Street, Sydney, at 7.30pm. Those present were **Ralph Bailey** (chair), Sam Barlow, Peter Alexander, Alan Piggott, Alf Hammond and Peter Pettit. Of those present on that day, only Ralph is still with us.

Peter Alexander’s daughter, Julie, has been in touch to say that Peter’s ashes have finally been scattered in Scotland. His daughter, Melanie, travelled to Beinn an Oir, on the Isle of Jura, to lay Peter at his final resting place as per his request. We will all be comforted knowing that he is where he always wanted to be.

Congratulations

To Chris Baker (grandson of Jack) on recently being passed out in the RAAF as a pilot flying Hornets, stationed at Williamtown, NSW. Incidentally, that was where 458 was formed.

To Alex Wilkinson, Captain of the Central Coast Mariners, (son of Rob and grandson of Bill), who was selected in the Socceroos 35 man squad for the FIFA World Cup Asian qualifier against Qatar.

Well done boys. Carry on the good work.

To all the members & friends, we wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

John Gibbins reports on the Sydney Luncheon - November 2008.

Fifteen members gathered for lunch at the Terrace Restaurant at the Ryde School of Catering on Monday November 3.

Our usual abode was closed for major renovations, and, on this occasion, we were waited on by permanent paid staff. The meal was cooked by trainee chefs, and was again of a very high quality. Those who attended were Don, Beverly and Peter Bitmead, Keith and Cassie Cousins, Vic and John Gibbins, David and Robyn Longhurst, Eric and Dorothy Munkman, Pat Millar, Bob and Dorothy Smith and Doug Stevens (Escaping Society).

Anyone wishing to attend the next function, wanting to have a good meal and a good time, should contact either Eric Munkman (9972 0641) or David Longhurst (9810 4416).

Western Australia Flight by Ted Jewell

Where has this year gone, here we are with Xmas just around the corner. W.A Flight normally go to Miss Maud’s in Perth, but so few are able to go there that we cancelled the lunch. We are now going to Bob and Dot’s home at City Beach for a Xmas get together, we hope to have about 14 come along, members will bring along the food for lunch. We feel that we want to keep in touch with a few functions during the year. I haven’t caught up with any one over the winter, but I am a fair distance from Perth.

We had a great day on October 12, again at Bob and Dot’s home - they are both wonderful associate members. We had about 12 people come along, everyone had an extra good day. Members were Bill Kelliher and son Bob. I was there with my friend Veronica (Ronnie) the ladies were Joan Clues, Vera Etherton, Margaret Gannaway and the others were friends and associate members.

I have just had a phone call from Eric Munkman advising the passing of Gordon Vale (the Black Panther). I am sure he has chased us all up some time over the years, when in the squadron. Merry Xmas to all.