



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, or circle of friends, who would like to receive a copy by e-mail ?*

*Please advise the Editor – see address and e-mail details above.*

## VALE

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

<b>Gilbert Davies</b>	<b>UK</b>	see UK Flight report
<b>Rosa Moy</b>	<b>UK</b>	“ “ “
<b>Pip Nieman</b>	<b>NZ</b>	see NZ Flight report
<b>Ron Verity</b>	<b>NZ</b>	“ “ “

*This report just received from our roving reporter Pru Lawson, privileged to be part of a memorable ceremony held recently in London, following soon after the Bowral Reunion. Ed.*

### **THE DEDICATION OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE WWII SQUADRON PLAQUES**

**held at St Clement Danes Church, The Strand, London  
Thursday, 26 March, 2009**

London did not disappoint us with its choice of weather on this special day – grey, drizzling and windy! Over 120 people associated with all the eleven squadrons were present at this wonderful little church, filled with the history of the RAF and the RAAF. There were only 28 men present in total and no Squadron had more than four members present. 458 Squadron was lucky enough to have four proud men there. Some Squadrons were not represented. Bill McFadden and my father, John Ringwood, represented the Australian members and Leon Armstrong and Jack Christianson stood proud for the British boys.

The Squadrons were all marshalled together at the front of the church and families and guests were all on the left side. Dignitaries present on the day were Air Commodore Steve Martin, Head of Australian Defence Staff, London who addressed everyone present, the Deputy Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal Geoffrey Brown, Air Force Adviser – London, Group Captain Peter Norford and Assistant Air Force Advisor – London, Wing Commander John Ibbotson and the Australian High Commissioner. Unfortunately, our London correspondent, Keith Wilkinson, could not be present on the day due to work commitments.

A brief history of each Squadron, having their plaque dedicated, was read to the congregation and those attending from each Squadron on the day were acknowledged by name. The actual dedication of the plaques was seen by only the Squadron members and the VIP guests.

Afterwards, a lunch was held at Australia House where guests and VIP's mingled freely. The event was covered by the ABC London, Channels 9, 7 and 10 and I believe copies of these recordings should be made available soon.

It was a privilege to represent the families of the Australian 458 Squadron, unable to attend this service, and is a memory I will always treasure. Our thanks should go to Peter Alexander and Colin Fereday, who took over the challenge of having the 458 plaque accepted, after Peter's death.

Pru Lawson  
2<sup>nd</sup> Generation 458'er

SEE PHOTO ON PAGE 8.

For those wishing to check out a few more photos of the dedication at St Clement Danes, you can click on the following web-site and you will see them as you page down.

<http://www.454-459squadrons.org.au/News.htm>

## **REUNION - MARCH 2009 by David Longhurst**

Well, the “Final Re-Union of 458 Squadron” might have been held in Canberra in 2006, but “Final” doesn’t mean last! So, the show must go on with more curtain calls than Dame Nellie Melba. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and most recent “Post Final 458 Re-union” was held in Bowral at Berida Manor between Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009.

If the name Bowral sounds vaguely familiar, it was to there, after a bomb exploded outside the Hilton Hotel in Sydney during the Regional Heads of Government Meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> Feb 1978, (resulting in three deaths, from what might be seen as the first act of terrorism on Australian soil) that the leaders were airlifted by helicopters, with many of them being accommodated at Berida Manor, after landing on the golf course opposite.

Just over 31 years later, a similarly prestigious group of leaders from 458 Squadron were similarly accommodated there. The similarity doesn’t end there as some of those assembled had previously had a close association with bombs (as well as torpedos).

The group assembled on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March for few drinks and dinner. Monday involved a trip to Fitzroy Falls and Kangaroo Valley. We also learned that Sydney’s water supply depends, in part, on water catchments in the southern highlands. Tuesday’s highlight was the “Illawarra Fly” which is a fantastically designed structure that allows even those in wheelchairs to view both the local flora from tree-top level as well as dramatic views of the Illawarra coastline.

The Reunion Dinner was held at Berida Manor with a number of highlights. In particular we are very thankful for the short talk by Rick McCarthy, a Vietnam Veteran who volunteered to assist “Father Riley’s “Kids off the Streets” immediately after the tsunami hit Bandar Aceh. He was consequently involved in constructing an orphanage to accommodate some of the thousands of children orphaned by this disaster.

On Wednesday we visited the Bradman Museum, a fantastic venue and well worth the visit even for non-cricket tragics. We then proceeded to Mittagong RSL for lunch and where a wreath was laid in remembrance of all 458 members who are no longer with us, in company with the Club’s Executive. The dinner that evening, at the Bowral Golf Club, topped of a magnificent few days of perfect weather and great company in a beautiful location.

The most asked question on Thursday morning was when and where is the next one to be? All I tell you at this stage is that it is a work in progress.

*You can see some Reunion photos on the enclosed flyer. Ed.*

## **FLIGHT REPORTS**

### **N.S.W. Flight by Eric Munkman**

How fortunate were those 458's who gathered at Bowral for the reunion. We had a great time and our young organisers were always on hand to help us over the hurdles and to make sure we were always heading in the right direction. Thank you boys and girls! I will leave it to David Longhurst to give you a first hand report (see Reunion report).

ANZAC DAY. We will assemble in Elizabeth Street, 50 metres south of King Street – look for the banner – at 10.15am. After the March we will be joining the R.A.F. Escape Assoc. for lunch at the Royal Exchange of Sydney Club (corner of Bridge and Gresham Streets). Cost for lunch will be \$45 per head, and this can be paid by cheque, made payable to Suzy Russ, or by cash on the day. We need to know numbers before 14th April so please advise Eric Munkman on 9972-0641 if you will be attending, this is most important. Wheelchairs will be available if required – PLEASE ADVISE NOW so we can book one for you accordingly.

## **South Australia Flight      by Pat Cribb**

Words cannot express our shock at the horror of the bushfires, the deaths and destruction suffered by so many. We are all so terribly saddened. We think of you, our Victorian and New South Wales mates, and those affected in northern Queensland with the floods. Our deepest sympathy.

It is increasingly hard for some of our old friends to attend functions, and we missed many at our Christmas lunch on Dec 7, namely Bert Ravenscroft, Joan & Brian Woodhead, Verna Riseley, Monica Thom, Syd Bartram, Mattie Baker and Isla Shepherd. We wish you much improved health in 2009.

The RAAF Memorial Service will be held at the Adelaide Airport on the Sunday prior to Anzac Day, April 19, at 10.30am for 11.00am.

Our next get-together will be on Anzac Day, April 25, with lunch after the March. The venue is the Hackney Hotel, 95 Hackney Road, Hackney, where we have secured a private function room. Hope to see many of you there.

## **New Zealand flight      by Kevin George**

Sadly, I report the death of Ron Verity, in Christchurch, on 16 January, aged 96 years. Our condolences to his wife Mary, and family.

Also, Chris Nieman reported the death of his mother Pip (wife of Fred), who passed away on 13 January, in Takaka. Chris adds *“Although frail, she remained mobile until the last two weeks, and was always positive and cracking jokes right up to the last day. Mother was eighty eight and has had a very full and varied life, having survived the blitz in Hull and subsequently following her husband Fred around at various postings during the War.*

*Please pass on my best wishes to all in the 458 Squadron Association and thank them for keeping in touch. Pip was always interested in what was going on within the Association”*

Happy to report that I'm back in the air again – and thoroughly enjoying it – with a recreational pilots licence.

## **Victoria Flight      by Roland Orchard and Jane Foster**

The hangar door is definitely open, and there is a rumble from the Wellington down at Victoria Flight. Veteran's families will be marching on Anzac Day in Melbourne, and are keen to keep the Victorian branch flying. Look out for the 458 Banner and picture of the Wellington as we all stage for the March in Flinders Street, near Swanston Street. 458 marchers are due to go at about 11a.m. The tradition will carry on with after-Anzac-March refreshments at the Melbourne Bowling Club, 138 Union Street, Windsor. We hope **all 458 Sqd.Vic.Flight members/widows/honorary members** can make it as we, the descendants, are really looking forward to meeting you all. We would like to discuss how you see the future of Vic. Flight and your thoughts on how we should carry on with Victoria Flight, and the memory of 458 Squadron RAAF. Understandably, great efforts will have to be made to attend for some of you, but, I think, once you are there, it will be worth it, where we can participate in friendly chats, reminiscences and overall fellowship. Please ring Roland Orchard for details on 03 97396531.

*Thanks to Roland (son of the late Gordon Orchard ) and to Jane (daughter of the late Ron Eggers) for mustering the troops in Victoria. Ed.*

## Canada Flight

by Bryan Quinlan

By the time this appears in print the big event in March involving the dedication of the 458 badge at St. Clement Danes church in London will have been completed, and will have become a well-deserved and enduring part of history. It would have been a very rewarding experience to attend the ceremony and, hopefully, a number of Australian 458 Squadron members were able to make the trip and swell the ranks of UK Flight members in attendance. Unfortunately, age and infirmities ruled out representation from our small membership but you can be sure we were there in spirit on 26 March. Congratulations on this most deserving recognition. We are hoping to hear that a video record of the event will be available.

Our news, of course, carried the reports of the terrible fires and the loss of life and resulting devastation. Reading about the areas involved raised concerns over the welfare of those of you in N.S.W and I attempted unsuccessfully to contact George and Grace Unitt, and Col Fereday by phone and David and Judy Westgarth via e-mail and certainly hope they were not affected.

I enjoyed the usual Christmas-time contacts, happily surprised by a call and welcome chat with George and Grace and similar sessions with Colin and George Dunbar (UK). Always very rewarding to renew these old friendships.

On the domestic front I also received a call from Tom Rowan from Saskatchewan and a less positive call from Sid and Joyce Winchester's son Chris advising that his parents were both in hospital on Vancouver Island. A recent call to Chris unfortunately revealed that Sid is now in extended care and, sadly, in another world and Joyce, a WWII Navy veteran, has moved into an assisted living centre. Chris and his wife have resolved to retrace Sid's wartime footsteps and have visited Malta, Gibraltar and areas in Europe where Sid was a POW after being shot down at sea on his second tour. In Malta they visited the museum and enquired about 458 operations there in 1943. The Curator showed them the information available and upon hearing about the 458 newsletter said he would be very interested in receiving copies. Chris said he would oblige and I will send Sid's copy to him.

In the last report I included the loss of Canadian 458 member Ernie Ireland but was unable to provide any details. Since that time his daughter Selina has kindly sent me further information advising that he died on 20 October 2008, age 88. Ernie was laid to rest with wife Margaret. Representatives from the Masonic Lodge and the Royal Canadian Legion acted as the Honour Guard. The Order of Service included the very familiar "Irish Blessing" and, as this is being transmitted on St. Patrick's Day, what better way to end this report with an expression of our wishes to all our ex-458 comrades by repeating it here:

*May the road rise up to meet you  
May the wind be always at your back  
May the sun shine warm on your face  
And rains fall softly on your field  
And until we meet again  
May God hold you in the palm of His hand*

On the right, is the last photo I received of Ernie Ireland, in Jan 2008, showing daughter Selina, Ernie and beloved grand-daughter Erin on a birthday occasion



## **UK flight by Keith Wilkinson**

It's been a long time coming. And, sadly, it's an event many of our members did not live long enough to see. But on March 26 at St Clement Danes church in London, squadron history was made. The 458 heraldic plaque badge - for so long not recognised, officially - was dedicated, and laid in the stone floor in perpetuity along with hundreds of others.

Ours was one of 11 Royal Australian Air Force plaques honoured in this way - all bearing their powerful mottos, some in Latin, some in English. Brave and True...Death to the Invader...Nothing is Impossible. And 458's - *Invenimus Et Delemus*, We Find and Destroy. Surmounted, like the others, by the red and gold Tudor crown, 458's features a shining, silver-winged torpedo against an azure sky and a dark, moonlit sea.

The momentous occasion was witnessed by squadron members, friends and relatives. Among those who packed into the crowded church - from the UK, former squadron pilots Jack Christianson and Leon Armstrong, and from Australia - Bill McFadden and John Ringwood. Colin Brain was there - his father was Len Brain, navigator with Wing Commander Mulholland, who was killed whilst flying out to North Africa.

It was a moving service in an appropriate place, built on The Strand by Sir Christopher Wren, destroyed by the Luftwaffe in the Blitz in 1941 and restored by the RAF in 1958. This is the RAF's church in the heart of London and outside stands two statues - Arthur "Bomber" Harris, and Sir Hugh Dowding, of Battle of Britain fame.

There was a reading by Air Commodore Steve Martin, head of the Australian Defence staff in London, on the Ephesian theme of good versus evil. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

There was an address by the Deputy Chief of the Air Force (DCAF), AVM Geoffrey Brown. Squadron histories were read out by Group Captain Peter Norford and Assistant Air Force Adviser, Wing Commander John Ibbotson.

Veterans heard the following prayer: "We pray today for all members of the Australian Defence Forces, past and present; for their commitment, dedication and professionalism through the years. We are proud of their service in the cause of peace and freedom; and in a spirit of grateful thanks we gather together to dedicate these plaques today. We also bring before you O Lord all those who have served on 3, 450, 451, 452, 454, 457, 458, 459, 462, 464, and 466 Squadrons and are with us no longer. "

The plaques were dedicated with the words: "We pray that it may prove to be a sign and symbol of the commitment and pride in service that epitomises the spirit of our Service."

At the end of the service, Advance Australia Fair was sung, and then members were invited to walk over to the Australian High Commission for morning tea (and something a little stronger) in the Downer Room.

After waiting more than 60 years for this recognition of the squadron badge, Leon Armstrong almost missed the entire thing. He'd asked his squadron colleague Jack Christianson to meet him at the doorway to the church, but in the event arrived just as things started - having been struck for an hour on a train due to a signal failure, ironically in Coventry - another tragic target of The Blitz. Leon and Bill McFadden are continuing their efforts to get the RAF Club in London to follow St Clement Danes's example - by getting them to display the 458 crest in their hallowed corridors.

Leon said: "I was so pleased I got there, just in time. When I got off the train, I had to dash to get a bloody taxi! But it was a very impressive service. We were very well received."

Jack Christianson said he was surprised to see so many squadrons, so well represented. It was, he said, important for the squadrons to be remembered in a way that would ensure that their names and deeds could be preserved for ever.

In a church that lives on, serenely and majestically, after the devastation of war - here is a united symbol of British and Commonwealth heroism in the face of tyranny.

We are very sad to report two more losses to the squadron "family" here in the UK.

Rosa Moy, wife of air crew veteran Ron Moy, lost her long fight against illness. Despite her health problems, Rosa cheerfully attended squadron reunions and even travelled to Corsica when veterans returned to Alghero for the anniversary of their service there.

We have also learned of the death, some time ago, of rear gunner Gilbert Davies, who flew with Sgt Munday. I spoke to him a few years ago when he told me: "I was very lucky - and I thank God for it."

He was known to his Aussie crewmates as "The Orange Man". They gave him the nickname because, as a health and fitness fanatic, he was a lifelong tee-totaller. Whereas, he remembers: "The others liked two or three beers after we landed, but I just drank orange juice."

### **Queensland Flight by Evelyn Lewis**

The BOMBER COMMAND DAY Memorial Service will be held in Canberra on 31 May, in the AWM Garden. Members interested in attending should contact Mr Keith Campbell OAM, phone (02) 9489-3250.

ANZAC DAY Eric Kelly has indicated he will be taking part in the March on Anzac Day, and his son and Kath will escort him. Peter Jones has apologised he will not be there, as he and his wife will be in Italy. Any members wanting transport for the March, please contact the Anzac Day Committee, or myself.

NSW had a most successful reunion, enjoyed by thirty odd members and friends. I was very disappointed that, owing to illness, I could not go. So was Hettie Murray, who had a hip operation. I'm unable to contact Hettie, and hope to do so soon, Our best wishes Hettie, and hope all is well.

### **Western Australia Flight by Ted Jewell**

Sorry, there's not much to report. Currently, I'm laid up with a detached retina, and will be for another 5-6 weeks. I was glad to hear that Bill Kelliher, and his son Bob, made it to the Reunion in Bowral.

### ***Do you have any old 458 Newsletters stashed away?***

Wendy Whitem-Trunz is collecting all of the 458 Newsletters so that she can convert them to an electronic format for archiving and historical purposes. The Bitmeads have provided their considerable set to begin this process. The following numbered (& especially early) newsletters are currently missing: #2 - 47, 52-54, 59, 62, 63, 65, 66, 68, 134, and 217. Wendy is also requesting, from the various technically inclined editors, their final electronic versions as far back from present as possible. Please contact Eric Munkman if you can help with paper copies and Wendy directly with electronic files. Any queries – call Wendy on 0411-848111.

## RAAF 88th Birthday Celebrations

Col Fereday escorted Wendy Whitem-Trunz to the RAAF 88th Birthday Celebration service at RAAF Memorial Grove on 31st March. Journalists who interviewed him after the ceremony noted that Col is 4 years older than the Australian Air Force. Colin also chatted at length with Deputy Chief of Air Force, Air Vice-Marshal Geoff Brown, AM, AVM, who had just arrived back from the London St Clements Danes 400 series squadron plaque dedication ceremony. In the evening, they attended a cocktail party at the Australian War Memorial, where they viewed the new exhibit *Over the Front: the Great War in the Air* – telling the story of military flight and aerial combat in the First World War. Colin was very excited to meet a young lady who had worked as a carer for Wing Commander Peter Berry DFC, the pilot of R- Robert Wellington bomber N2980 that flew into Loch Ness on New Year's Eve in 1940, while on a training flight, and which has been recovered and restored for Brooklands Museum.

Here is a photo of Col in front of the new propeller that was recently erected and dedicated at RAAF Memorial Grove in the ACT. Colin's considerable contribution to building and maintaining this Memorial Grove was publicly recognised during the ceremony.



Colin with the HS748 (Dowty-Rotol) propeller erected at RAAF Memorial Grove, Canberra ACT



Colin Fereday talking with Deputy CAF at the RAAF 88th Birthday celebration, Memorial Grove Canberra.

## Pictures from London - St Clements Danes Ceremony



Jack Christianson, Leon Armstrong, Bill McFadden & John Ringwood in London



Our 458 Plaque