



## **JOURNAL OF THE 458 Squadron Council**

**Year 62 No 242 November 2011**

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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 Roland Orchard 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.*

**\*\*\* Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter are due to the Editor by 30 March 2012. Please feel free to send in your stories or enquires to the Ed. All are welcome.**

## VALE:

It is with great sadness we announce the passing of the following 458 Squadron Veterans and families. All of our thoughts and prayers go out to the families who have lost their loved ones.

**John Ringwood.** See SA flight report.

**(Allan) Erle Hetherington.** See QLD report

**Michele Lorraine Hedgcock.** See SA flight report.

## FLIGHT REPORTS:

### New South Wales Flight report by David Longhurst.

One pleasing aspect of being asked to write my first news from NSW Flight is that I do not have to report any reduction in our numbers. And whilst Don Bitmead, Wal Archbold and Jack Hamilton are not in the best of health I am sure the last thing they want me to do is dwell on their medical conditions, so I won't. Best wishes gentlemen.

My wife Robyn and I recently spent seven weeks in the UK catching up with our daughter Shannon who was at Glasgow University, and turned 21<sup>st</sup> whilst we were there. We didn't get the opportunity to meet up with any of the UK 458 members but we did visit St Clement Danes and were absolutely awe-struck by the magnificent restoration and the fitting tribute it is to all members of the allied forces.

We spent a few days in Manchester on our way north and took the opportunity to visit the Imperial War Museum-North whilst there. There is insufficient room here to describe this unique and iconic building, one which houses some magnificent material. The nature and themes of its displays had a real message of peace, demonstrating just how wasteful, damaging and fruitless war is, yet at the same time displayed the hope and triumph that can rise from such adversity, horror and deprivation.

On entry to the museum there were a number of computer terminals that provided access to a variety of information. Of course my first search was 458 Squadron which generated the following information:

#### **RAF Bomber Command No. 458 Squadron**

Motto: None?

Badge: None authorised? (I intend to write to them in order to rectify the above.)

The entry then contained the following detail which I abbreviated in the mistaken belief that I would be able to obtain access to it via the internet:

No. 458 Squadron first came into existence flying Wellington MkIV and began operations 20/21<sup>st</sup> October 1941.

No. 458 Squadron reported to have been:

“Congratulated almost continuously” for the highest serviceability in any bomber group in the United Kingdom.

- Holme on Spalding Moor Aug '41-Mar '42
- Code Letter 'FU'
- First Op. Mission Oct '41  
10 Wellingtons (2 to Emden and 8 to Antwerp)
- Last Op. Mission with Bomber Command in WW11 28/29 January 42  
2 Wellingtons bombed Boulogne Docks

In May & June 1942 Bomber Command mounted three major raids over Europe which involved 1000 bombers, half of these aircraft were Wellingtons.

So, from the son of a 458er, impressive machines and impressive men!

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

**VALE:**

**John Ringwood.**

**Michele Hedgcock**

It is a time to report misfortune within our long established S.A Flight community. Sadly another of our 458ers has gone – John Ringwood died in mid October. He will be very much missed here, always marching on Anzac Day and interstate members knew him well as he attended most reunions and made many friends throughout the Squadron.

After an operation and weeks in hospital, it is great to see Reg Priest looking much stronger as he recuperates. We wish you well, Reg.

Our "Committee" consists of Colin Hutchinson (President), Rich Michell (Treasurer and sender of notices.) and me, Pat Cribb (Secretary/reporter) We welcome hearing from 458 members with suggestions for get togethers or items for the newsletters. We manage to keep going despite reduced numbers this year.

We meet for lunch to celebrate Christmas on Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup> December at noon at NOTE (back to) The Kensington Hotel, 23 Regent Street, Kensington. I think we may be few in number this time.

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HEALTHY, HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM S.A. FLIGHT TO EVERYONE IN AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS.

### **Excerpt from email to Editor By Tony Rowe, Michele Hedgcock's partner.**

"Michele Lorraine Hedgcock, born 1954, died 5/12/10 aged 56 after 5 years fighting breast cancer. Daughter of Peter Hedgcock, who served with the 458 as tail gunner. Michele made contact with the 458 soon after moving to Adelaide and enthusiastically joined the marches and lunches representing her father. She showed incredible strength and a positive attitude during her five years of suffering during which she did achieve the remaining goals in her life, to visit Switzerland and the Greek Islands. Her main regrets were that she would not see her two much loved daughters get married and see grandchildren."

## **Victoria Flight report by Roland Orchard**

My wife, Janet, and I were fortunate enough to travel to Canada and the UK during August and September of this year. I met up with our Canadian Correspondent Bryan and Joan Quinlan in West Vancouver, Canada, who so generously invited me into their home for morning team (Muffins, fruit salad and coffee were delicious, thanks Joan.) We spent a couple of hours on a glorious sunny morning chatting. Bryan spoke about his fond memories of 458 Squadron and wished everyone the best. Bryan and Joan wished to pass on their best to George and Grace Unitt. Also, thanks to Bryan and Joan's daughter Peggy and grandson Michael for the lift to and from the bus stop at the local shopping Mall. Thanks Bryon and Joan it was an honour and privilege to meet you. (planning another trip, xmas 2013, Bryan)



Joan, myself and Bryan.



Bryan telling me about his OTU in Northern Ireland and nearly coming to grief into the side of a mountain.

After two glorious weeks in Vancouver and the Canadian Rockies, Janet and I ventured on to the UK where we met up with one of our Squadron Vice Presidents, Leon Armstrong (I passed on Bill Flentje's regards to Leon which are whole heartily

reciprocated.) and our UK Correspondent, Keith and Anne Wilkinson. Leon caught the train down from Birmingham to Warwick, where Janet and I had driven up from London to visit Warwick Castle, Stratford upon Avon and Oxford. I picked up Leon from Warwick Station and we headed to the Castle for lunch and a look around. The 3 of us then drove around Warwick taking in the sights and keeping out of the rain. That evening we met up with Keith and Anne at a 15<sup>th</sup> Century pub called ‘The Roebuck’. A great night was had by all with many laughs and comments such as, “that’ll go into the newsletter” or “that better not go into the newsletter” I’m sure Keith will have a few words in his report. Thanks Leon, Keith and Anne. It will be a day we will always have in our hearts. (Jack Christianson – I am sorry we didn’t catch up on this trip and hope you are feeling a lot better.)



Leon and Janet in the Great Hall, Warwick Castle.



Janet, Anne, Leon, Keith and I.

Janet and I also visited St Clement Dane Church and were equally awestruck as was David and Robyn Longhurst. To see the pictures of the bombed out ruin from the war to its magnificence today, you would think they were completely different buildings (except for the tall steeple) We also visited R Robert Wellington at Brooklands Museum and was fortunately allowed to go behind the barrier and crouch up inside the bomb bay. My first experience with a Wellington and it sent shivers down my spine trying to imagine my Dad in the cockpit.



Me and the Wimpy-Brooklands Museum.



Interior of St Clement Danes Church.

### **UK Flight report by Keith Wilkinson**

The UK Flight went ahead with its annual re-union – thus keeping alive the tradition, albeit in ever declining numbers.

At short notice, 458’s Jack Christianson, who celebrates his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday next year, arranged for a small gathering at The Chimney House Hotel near Sandbach in Cheshire. Jack and his wife Audrey made the round-trip of more than 400 miles in their car to be there, and stopped over in Stratford-on-Avon, the town which has long been linked with our re-unions. I picked up our UK vice-president, Leon Armstrong, who is 90, at his home in Birmingham and drove him to Cheshire with my wife Anne.

Don Stocks – now believed to be the last survivor of his 458 crew - travelled down from Cumbria with Ann and David. It was a fairly convenient location, Cheshire being roughly in the middle of the country.

Our eight-strong group had lunch at the hotel’s restaurant on October 15<sup>th</sup>, a nice sunny day. Leon proposed a toast to the parent squadron. Apart from that it was a very informal occasion. It was felt that just by being there we had kept things going for

another year – and the hope is, we will carry on the 458 tradition in the UK for as long as possible in the years ahead. Location and date suggestions and any relatives of 458-ers – new blood – are always welcome. In the meantime our merry Band of Brothers soldiers on.

After the lunch, I took Leon for a trip around the massive Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope, just a few miles down the road. While we were there, we watched it turn round on its railway track. This is a truly spectacular place which has been at the forefront of astronomical research in Britain.

On September 20<sup>th</sup>, my wife and I – with Leon – had the pleasure of meeting our new Newsletter editor Roland Orchard and his wife Janet during their recent visit to the UK. We found it somewhat amusing that Roland had managed to get himself (a person from very sunny Oz) a bit of sunburn on his tour to the northern hemisphere – although it must be said this was when he nipped over to significantly hotter Portugal. Leon had accompanied Roland and Janet on a visit to Warwick Castle – one of the key places all overseas visitors like to see. As another group of Aussie visitors once told me: “We like to see castles. We don’t see many castles in Australia!”

For dinner and a beer, we all met up at The Roebuck at Warwick, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, the oldest pub in town. It was pouring down outside, but there was a fire of coal and logs on the inside – and the lamb was delicious.

On a totally different theme – I am sure many 458-ers will be interested in progress being made on the Wellington Bomber which is being restored at the RAF Museum, Cosford, and Shropshire. It’s the Wimpy that used to be on show at RAF Hendon on the outskirts of London.

I recently had the rare privilege of an escorted tour of the aircraft and the hangar it’s in. And on a second visit, I took my four year old grandson. He was able to look right into the cockpit – you could still strongly smell the leather on the pilot’s seat. And I told him this was the type of aircraft his Great Granddad used to fly in with the Squadron. Just before going out to see the Wimpy, I showed him some amazing footage which has appeared on YouTube. It’s computer animated pictures of Wellingtons dropping bombs and also being attacked by German aircraft. Parts of it are incredibly realistic and, for those of you with computers, here’s a link to the video:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjZ8kwQr1so&feature=related>

The real-life Wellington is being stripped down to its structure. The Irish linen is being gently removed using scalpels, ready for new linen to be fitted. Virtually all the equipment inside the plane has been taken out. The wings, propellers, engines, tail section have all been removed. The people in charge of this mammoth restoration say they have set themselves four years but it could well take quite a bit longer. After my visit, a number of VIPs were also invited in to take a look, including Mary Stopes-Roe, daughter of Barnes Wallis, designer of the Wellington’s geodetic structure; and Wellington pilot Ronald Cooper, aged 90.

Despite the work that’s taking place at Cosford the Wellington will never fly again. Neither will the other example of a Wellington at Brooklands in the south of England which I also recently spent quite a long time exploring with special permission from the restorers down there. Former 458 navigator Norman Duke (my predecessor as squadron scribe) was very much involved with that aircraft as a volunteer. Never have I met anyone with such knowledge of Wellingtons as Norman. He seemed to know exactly what every single piece was there for. A remarkable man who once flew with Squadron legend Bruce McKenzie. Luckily for us, some of Norman’s wisdom was



handed on to younger generations who are carrying on with the task of restoration, a slow and very expensive procedure.



Wellington Restoration at RAF Cosford UK



L to R: Jack Christianson, Leon Armstrong, Don Stocks

### **New Zealand Flight report by Kevin George**

I (Editor) spoke to Kevin on the phone and he reports that he is in good health and enjoying life on his 4 acre property in Kaikohe. He and his wife have just celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary last September. (Congratulations to you both.) Kevin reminisced about how he was a commercial pilot in NZ after the war but the powers that be grounded him due to a very debatable diagnosis of supposed failing eyesight. He retains his restricted pilots licence to this day although hasn't flown for about a year. Kevin is still in contact with Jack Pryde from Hawke Bay. Jack is 96 and did not serve with 458 Squadron but flew Wellingtons in the ME. Kevin would also like to send his best to all 458ers and wish them compliments of the season.

### **Canada Flight report by Bryan Quinlan**

The August report included Tom Rowan's pending sight-seeing flight in a restored WWII B-25 Mitchell and I will cover his adventure into the wild blue later in the report.

The status our other ex-458ers includes a mixture of positive and negative situations. Dick Sladen's daughter Jay Lowry advised that her Dad has stabilized and he is now quite comfortable and content in his Care Centre. On her visits she reads books to him which he enjoys and does take interest on day to day topics. News on Bert Markland was less positive as wife Gladys advised that he had three recent falls, a result of his Parkinson's affliction. Tom Lindsay's news was also on the minus side as he has experienced a flare up of his gout condition which impacted his usual walks with his walker at the local shopping centre. Jack Reynolds indicated nothing special to report other than now proof reading a new edition of his second tour Squadron RNZAF 489 which will include the pre Beaufighter days when the Squadron was flying Hampdens.

The highlights of the summer for us was an afternoon visit by Roland Orchard during he and wife Janet's visit to her brother in Vancouver. They toured scenic spots in BC's interior and as far as Jasper and Banff, Alberta and attended a large family wedding on their return to Vancouver. Roland subsequently advised on how much they enjoyed their first experience in Canada so much so they are planning another trip in the next few years. We would welcome another visit as it was notable to me we immediately established a comfort level of interests and friendship while reviewing photos and stories of my time on 458 at Malta and Protville, Tunisia. This review included a little story about my old pal George Unitt and Roland said he planned a trip to visit George and Grace upon his return to Oz\* and, of course, I asked that he wish them our very best and to all those that Joan and I know, if he got the chance. Other

than that I had my first knee surgery at the end of September and rehab is going extremely well leading to my hope of a second knee operation in 2012 and possible goal of golfing in the summer.

Now to Tom Rowan's adventure flying from the Saskatoon Airport, the former WWII No.4 SFTS. (Which happens to be the station where I received my wings in a Cessna Cranes in 1941.) Tom related that it seemed a long way from the apron to the runway and as he could not see out thought they had already taken off, so he stood up to look out the astrodome and was immediately instructed by the pilot to sit down and re-fasten his seatbelt ready for take-off.

Once airborne and probably aware of Tom's wartime situation, he was given the OK to crawl up into the nose fully surrounded by flexi-glass (see photo) and presumably the bomb aimer's position with a great view of the landscape below. He had a headset on but could not find a plug in so had no communication with the pilot. After 30 minute flight and whether on purpose or forgotten he remained in the nose and had a real close up view of the landing. (thankfully not a belly landing) Truly a memorable experience for Tom and a great gift from his family.



\*Alas Bryan, I have not had the pleasure or opportunity to visit George and Grace yet and would love to meet the Unitt's. I know that Jane Foster (and husband Eric), daughter of 458er Ron Eggers, have visited George and Grace on a number of occasions. NB. article on George's Great-Nephew. (Editor)

### **WA Flight report by Ted Jewell**

Very little news for now, from the west. On the 11<sup>th</sup> December, we are having our yearly Xmas luncheon at Bob and Dot Bresland's home. Everyone brings a plate of food, and whatever drinks they want - there seems to be very few drinkers these days. There should be around 12 people coming.

I have just had my 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in October, with a large family gathering. I was one of the youngest in the Squadron, and had my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in Egypt in 1942.

Vera Etherton has had a spell in hospital, with a bad skin rash, that is very hard to get rid of. I hope Vera is feeling a lot better now.

I have often wondered what has become of Stan Smith. Is he still around? I haven't seen him since the Squadron days, when we were tent mates.

We had a Sunday lunch earlier in the year, but, even though our members are very few these days, everyone had a great day. Squadron members were Bill Kelliher, his son Bob, Ted Jewell, Joan Clues, daughter Vicky. Vera Etherton could not make it, as she was in hospital. Margaret Gannaway was also in hospital, and unable to be there. I guess we are all slowly fading away.

Best wishes for Xmas and New Year for all Squadron members and families.

### **QLD Flight:**

**VALE - Erle Hetherington. (QLD) Notified by Rosemary Harte (Erle's Carer) and Bob Dengaard.**

It would be remiss of me (Ed.) not to say a few words about SGT.(Allan) Erle Hetherington service number 22042, born 7 June 1912 in Gympie QLD. Passed away in his 99<sup>th</sup> year in Cairns, QLD, 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2011.

Although it does not state exactly how long Erle was with the Squadron (I'm sure those who knew him would know) he does feature prominently in the Squadron History, 2002 Edition. Apparently well known with his 'Zundapp' motorcycle and side car. It seems Erle was one of Colonel McKenzie's ground crew and is depicted on his Zundapp in the diorama constructed by Jock McGowen, page 272. (Anyone with more knowledge of Erle please contact the Editor.)

Condolences to Erle's family and friends.

This is also a plea to any Queenslanders who served with 458 Squadron or sons/daughters or grandsons/granddaughters who would like to keep in contact with the Squadron news. Personally I think it is the least we can do to uphold the memory of those whom are not with us and also to remember what these men did for us - the 2<sup>nd</sup> and subsequent generationers - all those years ago. Please contact the Editor if you have any interest in what your father/grandfather did during WWII (Contact details for Editor on page 1)

### **STOP the PRESS**

**458 Squadron Website:EXCITING NEWS - Green Light for Take Off!**

The NEW Website is off to a flying start! We received approval from the Department of Veterans Affairs for our grant request! The planning phase is well underway with the building phase to commence soon. We will employ the services of Potent Web, who designed the impressive website for B24 Australia, see [www.b24australia.org.au](http://www.b24australia.org.au)

Our website name selected is [www.458raafsquadron.org](http://www.458raafsquadron.org) Let us know what you think!

(Some examples of currently operating RAAF squadron websites are: [www.454-459squadrons.org.au](http://www.454-459squadrons.org.au), [www.3squadron.org.au](http://www.3squadron.org.au), [www.450squadron.org.au](http://www.450squadron.org.au), [www.462squadron.com](http://www.462squadron.com), [www.467463raafsquadrons.com](http://www.467463raafsquadrons.com) )

Also, the 'recruiting' call is going out to all Flights : who would like to be your Flight's website representative?..... You will look after things like posting your upcoming commemorative events and activities, photos, etc. to your Flight's own web pages, at the Website. This person can be a Veteran or 2<sup>nd</sup> generation 458-er or even a grandchild ☺ All training of how to add info, photos, etc. to the website will be provided.

Please forward all your ideas – **we would love any input for the website**, feedback and website rep nominations to the Newsletter Editor, Roland Orchard (see page 1 for contact details). THANK YOU! Also please take note of the last article of this Newsletter.

Jeremy Orchard (Victoria Flight Secretary/Treasurer)



**Article via email from George Unitt's nephew, John Unitt.**

My uncle, GEORGE UNITT / Flight Lieut, # 411412, attended Duntroon for our son, LEE's graduation from Officer Training March 2011.

He proved to be a very popular on the nite (attended by some 200 dignantaries, including the Deputy Chief of the Army) & shared some of his experience & stories of his postings between April 1941-Jan 1946 with the Commandant of Duntroon, Brigadier David Lurs. George & wife Grace made the trip across from Batemans Bay to be there which @ age 92, was a tremendous effort & appreciated by our whole family who attended.

If you would like any more info please feel free to contact me. He would be thrilled to be included in your n/letter.

Kind Regards

**John Unitt**



Grace, Lee and George Unitt.



George and Duntroon Commandant Lurs.

**“A Memory of W/C R.MacKay DFC” by Hal Coffill**

One supposes, and I think rightly that all Commanding Officers of war time squadrons were fairly fearless characters, well supplied with daring and some imagination.

Rob MacKay, a boy from Bourke, NSW, who took command of 458 Squadron while we were in Alghero, seemed to me to fit this description.

I flew with him as 2<sup>nd</sup> dickie on eleven occasions from Alghero and Foggia before becoming tour expired. He was good to fly with, very placid and he never bitched or pulled rank.

I remember one night in August, 1944, flying out from Alghero in either ‘D’ for Disaster or ‘O’ for Orange on an armed shipping recco loaded with eleven two hundred and fifty pounders, our patrol area was, according to my log book, from Viareggio to Genoa.

The rest of the crew were Fred Swinfield (navigator), Gus Charlwood, George Bradd and Davies, an English lad whose name has slipped my mind, the WAGs.

It was a clam, dark night and we were sneaking along, tucked in closer to the coast than usual and two hundred feet up relying on Davies on the radar to warn of any shipping. After having a spell on the padded battery box up front, the Boss emerged, refreshed and apparently invigorated, checked on our position and took over. I scouted around, found some sandwiches and tea and examined the repast.

The tea was OK but the sandwiches were to say the least, bloody awful – greasy margarine and bully beef. (I felt so sorry for our cooks, who had to take the blame for the lack of edible tucker.

I said to the Boss. “J\*%/#, look a this stuff! We ought to give it to the Germans and let them choke on it!”

The CO said nothing, turned hard to starboard and *flew straight into Genoa Harbour!* Like the rest of the crew, the defenders of Genoa’s harbour were apparently taken by surprise too and their flak was light stuff and scattered. The darkness and our low altitude were in our favour. All I could see were vague shapes of dockside buildings, ship’s masts reaching about the same height as us and of course the flak. I suppose George Bradd in the rear turret fired off a few shots, I don’t remember. We made one grand circuit and departed the same way we arrived. A light flak right on the entrance of the breakwater farewelled us but we suffered no hurt.

The Master flew on with nothing said.

I said. “J\*\*\*^\$%^\*! I DIDN’T WANT TO HAND DELIVER THE BLOODY SANDWICHES – WHY DIDN’T YOU TELL US?”

The only answer I received was, “Now then Hal, temper, temper.”

**(402527 Wing Commander Robert Charles Mackay, DFC. OC 458 Sqdn. 1/07/44 – 09/06/45)  
Hal Coffill – October 2011.**

*Hal would also like to know what became of Rob MacKay. Last he had seen of Rob was in London. Looking on the Internet, the date of his death (Any replies, please contact Editor.)*

**ATTEN.....SHUN!!!!!!!!**

**458ers.** Can anyone put names to these faces? Captain is John Douglas. James Douglas, John’s son, would like to know who the other members of his crew are.



**Article by Mike Netherway.**

*(Given the photo of John Douglas' crew and the question of who's who I've reprinted this interesting article first appeared in November 2003 of the 458 Journal.-Ed)*

Dad (Len Netherway) was trained as a pilot under the Empire Air Training Scheme at Victor Harbour, Parafield and Bradfield Park before embarking for Canada where he trained with Group 55, gaining his "Wings" on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1942.

He joined the squadron in April 1943 and operated for a short time out of Protville, before co-piloting John "Dougie" Douglas on the fateful flight on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1943. At around 4:15 am, as Dougie banked MP713 to attack a destroyer off the coast of Sardinia the a/c crashed and sank at once, leaving burning fuel all over the sea. Dad and Dougie (and maybe Sgt. Cec Ryan) exited via the overhead hatch and Sgts "Sailor" Wheatley and W McClellan from further back in the a/c. There was however, no sign of the rear gunner, Sgt Herbert Konzie, a Canadian from Manitoba.

After capture Dad and Dougie were taken to Rome for interrogation before being sent on 28<sup>th</sup> September to the POW camp at Bologna where they met up with Bill Fordyce, also of 458 who'd "gone in the bag" over a year earlier. However, the stay was only short as Italy capitulated and custody of the prisoners was taken over by the Germans on 9<sup>th</sup> September. Sgts McClellan and Wheatley escaped from Camp 54 at Fara Sabina early in August and were liberated by the advancing Canadians on 2<sup>nd</sup> November (see "Wings" 31 Oct 1944). Dad, Dougie and Bill were transported by cattle truck to Strasburg and then on to Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan.

Dad had a fine tenor voice and sang First Tenor in the camp choir's Christmas 1944 concert in the Camp Theatre (the theatre's underfloor space had been greatly reduced by the amount of tunnel sand excavated for the "Great Escape", earlier that year) and also carried out sand dumping and "stooge duty", as did many POWs assisting in the escape. Dougie was running the "Foodacca" co-op which provided the "Kriegies" with a diversity of food and goods. He continued in the RAF after the war and died in England in 2002.

The POWs were expelled from the camp on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 1945 in front of the Russian advance. They marched overland, hauling roughly made sleds made from chairs, beds or whatever across the winter landscape. A number were killed in strafing attacks by allied a/c and Dad ruefully commented many years later on his astonishing faith in the ability of a 6 inch birch tree trunk stopping a 20mm cannon shell. After many stops and starts and 76 days on the road, they were finally liberated by British forces on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

He was discharged on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1945 and returned to his wife, Mavis, at Quantong (outside Horsham, Victoria) where he'd grown up. They raised 4 children over the years, but Mum died in 1984 and he married Reabie Maxwell in 1989. He and Reabie lived for a short time in Melbourne before moving to Tallangatta, where they lived for about 10 years before moving to Yeppoon early in 2001. He is survived by Reabie and his 4 children.

**Mike Netherway. Mulambin Beach, Qld.**

**Editorial Note:**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rob Wilkinson for his role as Editor of this publication over the past several years. I have big shoes to fill and hope I can do at least half as good a job as he has done. Thank-you Rob, from all of the 458 Family.

**A special message to our Veterans.**

It is my and many 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> generation members hope to carry on this newsletter and website for many years to come. I have made a personal commitment to carry on with and promote 458 Squadron in any capacity for the rest of my natural.

From those of us who want to keep the memory of the Squadron alive, we would like your help. All Veterans who do not have a computer and have family members with computer and internet connection, we would ask you to tell them about the up and coming 458 Squadron web-site. The site is being built as we speak and we are hoping it will be up and going on the internet by ANZAC Day 2012. We are committed to building a top quality web-site in honour of the Squadron members who fought for their countries.

I know of, and have met a few members (not all) who would question why we would bother starting a web site. Maybe some may question our motives behind starting a web-site. Is it worth it? Or, “what’s in it for us?” ‘The war has been over for 66 years, why keep re-hashing something as miserable and terrible as war!’

My reply; those of us who did not or have not experience the horrors, heart-ache, anguish, fear, hatred of such a devastating war cannot begin to understand what you, the veterans, went through. Most of us did grow up in the shadow of your experiences, however. We want to acknowledge that you did go through this great turmoil and upheaval. Most of you returned home and some did not. We can never forget those who served and more importantly we will definitely never forget those who fell. They sacrificed their lives in a war that had to be won. In my opinion, if ever there was such a war that had to be waged, World War Two was one such war.

**Air Commodore Sir Hughie Edwards VC, KCMG, CB, DSO, OBE, DFC** said  
“Your Squadron (458) had a most illustrious record in WWII and its strong sense of comradeship and *esprit de corps* has been made apparent by the fact that your quarterly paper 458 Squadron News has been kept alive for twenty five years. (Now 62 years) This is a tribute to the feeling inculcated in you during those desperate days of the War.”

**The 458 Squadron Journal will continue to be published. The 458 Squadron Web-Site shall be the 21<sup>st</sup> Century extension of The Journal.**

*Editor’s contact details page. 1. All comments welcome.*