

TO:



454-459 SQUADRONS ASSOCIATION
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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APRIL 2014 BULLETIN

COMBINED 454/459 SQUADRONS ASSOC. REUNION

SENDER:
Mrs. Penny Griffiths
Honorary Secretary
454-459 Squadrons Association RAAF
C/- 53 Harold Street
Matraville NSW 2036
Australia

PAGE/S	CONTENTS
2-3	2014 Anzac Day March/Luncheon [Sydney]
4	Absent Comrades
4-9	Tributes
10-15	Contributions
Flyer	<i>Return Slip & Comments & Suggestions</i>

In compiling this bulletin The 454-459 Squadrons Association are grateful for being able to research the late Professor Leon Kane-Maguire's book "Desert Scorpions - A History of 459 Squadron 1942-1945"

Leader: FLGOFF John 'Doover' MacMahon – 454 Squadron

Assemble:
10.15 am Elizabeth Street – Banner and flag raised.
10.30 am Marchers form up. Surviving Vets in front rank.
Spacing normal – avoid gaps – divide at Cenotaph.
Disperse - Elizabeth Street.

On the 15th May, 2013, just 20 days after Anzac Day, Flight Lieutenant John McKenzie passed away. We are all very grateful for the years that John put in continuing to keep the ties strong amongst both 454 and 459 Squadrons, members, families and friends. Our thoughts go out to his wife Marjorie and family.

Plea to family members of Vets –Unfortunately this year we are very short of Vets marching – so I am sending out an urgent plea for all family members who can please get behind us in our endeavour to keep these Squadrons going and join us in this March and attend our Anzac Day Reunion. **Children 12 and over can march** accompanied by an adult.

PLEASE HELP US BY ATTENDING THE MARCH AND REUNION to keep the memories of our fathers, grandfathers, brothers and uncles alive on this very important day.

Our venue remains the same as last year "The NSW Leagues Club" details are once again on the following page. There is adequate seating and bar facilities, and lunch will be hot/cold cocktail food, which provides great variety (8 choices) - children under 12 are half price. If possible return subs and meal monies together with how many will be attending.

The location is advantageous as it is close to the Anzac March, so our foot sore Vets can make their way to our Private Function Room on the 1st floor in no time. **We need at least 30 attendees and children are allowed** as it's a 'private' booking. Have your *cash ready* for easy payment.

Please support us in this endeavour, if you don't want to/or can't make the March, please join us at our Luncheon to catch up with old mates, family and friends of deceased members.

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE VENUE

- ➔ Register and obtain name tag and if applicable a food voucher – see below ** at the Committee table.
- ➔ 12.45 pm – Toast absent friends, tributes, notices.
- ➔ 1.00 – 2.00 pm – Luncheon.
- ➔ 4.00 pm – Function concludes.

NSW LEAGUES CLUB

Level 1 Function Room
165 Phillip Street & 72 Elizabeth Street, Sydney NSW 2000

Phone: (02) 9232 2611

Email: admin@nswleagues.com.au

Web : <http://www.nswleagues.com.au>

Transport Options

Railway

City Rail stations located close by at Martin Place and St James.
Easy walking distance to Town Hall & Wynyard.

Buses

Sydney Buses run along Elizabeth Street to Eastern Suburbs & Circular Quay and easy walking distance to George Street

Taxi Services

Taxi services are generally available on Elizabeth Street or Phillip Street - Taxi Phone available in the Phillip Street Foyer

Parking & Rates

No onsite Club Parking Available however, located next door at 60 Elizabeth Street is the "Secure Parking Station".

**** ALL MEMBERS, THEIR WIVES AND WIDOWS OF EX-PERSONNEL WILL BE PROVIDED WITH FREE MEALS AND FREE DRINKS THIS ANZAC DAY. Please see Penny to obtain tickets.**

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership fees remain the same @ AUD \$12.50 and we wish to thank overseas members for forwarding on cheques in Australian dollars.



ABSENT COMRADES

It is with regret that we have been notified of the passing of the undermentioned members:

Date	Member	State	Sqdn	Advised by
09.09.13	John Talbot	VIC	459	His daughter Jill Newey
15.05.13	John W.B. McKenzie	NSW	459	His wife Marjorie
April 13	Stephen S. Brown	TAS	459	
21.02.13	James Baber	UK	454	Tim Baber
06.10.12	Alex Fitzsimmons	NSW	459	His wife
20.07.12	Jack Stainton	NSW	454	His wife Pat
18.06.12	Claude 'Tony' Martin	NSW	459	His son Malcolm
16.05.12	Donald Gillies	NSW	454	Ruth Smith
24.04.12	Kenneth Osborne	ACT	454	His wife Helen
08.01.12	Roy Mahoney	QLD	459	His daughter Beth

We say farewell to old friends and comrades, and extend our deepest sympathy to their families in their loss.

LEST WE FORGET

TRIBUTES

Flight Lieutenant John William B. McKenzie - Service No. 411032 – RAAF 458 Squadron – 31 March 1941 to 21 February 1946



John McKenzie leading the Anzac Day March 2012

Navigators who served with 459 Squadron were generally trained as observer/navigators [or Nav(B)x. Under the Empire Air Training Scheme they received training not only in navigation but also in bombing and air gunnery. Followed by 2 months initial training - 3 months at Air Observers School studying fundamental navigation theory, as well as receiving airborne training in areas such as map reading. This was followed by 2 months at Bombing and Gunnery School (BAGS) and they completed their training with a month's course in aerial astronavigation at Air Navigation School.

A typical experience was that of John McKenzie who was to join 459 Squadron as a Nav(B) in September 1942. He commenced his training on 31 March 1941 at No 2 ITS Bradfield Park, NSW (in No 13 Course). His group was to remain there for an additional month while awaiting shipping to Canada where they received their navigator/observer training. They left Sydney on 17 July 1941 for Auckland, New Zealand, where they transhipped to Halifax, Canada, via the Panama Canal. From Halifax they travelled by train to Malton, Ontario, where they began training at No 1 Air Observers School on 16 August.

John's group then moved to No 1 BAGS at Jarvis, Ontario, where their bombing and gunnery training was carried out in ancient Fairey Battles. Two trainees would squeeze into the rear of the long, narrow cockpit, where they would take turns to use the bombsight that was installed over a large aperture in the floor. The sight of this gaping hole was somewhat disconcerting. But there were other ways a trainee might accidentally exit a Fairey Battle, as John McKenzie recalls:

"There was not a lot of room as we both had to wear our chest parachutes. We also had a steel G-string hooked to our parachute harnesses, attaching us to the aircraft. This proved to be very fortunate on one occasion when our pilot, who was probably thoroughly bored, slow rolled the aircraft. But for the G-strings, we would have fallen out of the open cockpit! We were both very shaken by the experience.

Another unpleasant feature of the Fairey Battles for the trainee navs in the rear was the tendency of the engines to leak glycol. This would waft back over us poor chaps after entering through the bomb-aiming hole in the floor." John then moved to Canada's eastern seaboard where he began his astronavigation training on 21 December 1941 at the No 2 Air Navigation School, Penfield Ridge, New Brunswick.

As it turned out John was not to use astro-navigation at any time during his operation flying with 459 Squadron in the Mediterranean: John said *"We only flew operationally at a maximum of 3,000 feet, and one could navigate by dead reckoning – taking running fixes and making drift measurements on smoke or flame floats [by day or night, respectively]"*. John was promoted off-course, graduating as a Pilot Officer.



The cockpit team – [L] Murray Evans [Pilot] and John McKenzie [Navigator] – on the right – 'flying the West African Ferry Route'

Following the fall of France in 1940, RAF Ferry Command had developed an alternative **West African** route to deliver aircraft to the Middle East. Day 1, 18 July 1942, Portreath to Gibraltar. John McKenzie wrote in his diary *"Take off 0700. The fuselage jam packed with spares. The cabin and bomb bay auxiliary petrol tanks. 300 only rounds of ammunition. Steep cliffs at Portreath and burned out Wellington at end of runway. Slow strip from heavy clothing to full tropical gear en-route. Both motors cutting [over] Bay of Biscay. Vigilant watch for patrolling Ju 88's and Luftwaffe Arado float planes. Sighting of Cape Finisterre. Don [Radio] reporting Germans answering RAFQDF calls. Magnificent weather and favourable winds. Because of prevailing winds flying time 5 hours and 50 minutes... Briefing that night.."*

Pilot [Flying Officer] Stephen Sidney Brown – Service No. 428067 – 459 RAAF Squadron – 9 October 1942 to 14 December 1945

Pilot Stephen Brown RAAF history is that he served as Guard at Colac GRS 4.11.42 - 7.12.42. He then trained at Somers (Vic) 7.12.42 - 3.3.43. He went on to flying training at *Western Junction (Tas) - 3.3.43 - 6.5.43 - to embarkation, Sydney. He then trained at Brantford (Ontario) 13.6.43 - 15.10.43 - obtained wings - graduating Sgt.Pilot. Trained at Sommerside (Prince Edward Island - Canada) - 28.10.43 - 19.12.43 - Graduated to GRS Pilot. Steve then embarked Halifax 30.1.44 to Brighton (England) 1.2.44 embarked Liverpool 16.3.44 to Port Said (ME) 25.3.44. Trained at OTU Gianaclis (Egypt) 5.6.44 to 28.7.44 and graduated to Hudsons and Baltimores - joined 459 Squadron 11.8.44.

* Steve Brown had a very unnerving experience with his Instructor during his elementary flying training in No 7 EFTS at Western Junction, near Launceston Tasmania during March 1943 – in his own words:- *"He took us on a caper which many trainees at Western Junction remember as being highly illegal. Somewhere nearby there were two poplar trees, obviously closer together than the wingspan of a Tiger Moth. The Instructor would fly the aircraft straight at the trees at about half their height. At the last moment, and when the student thought their last moment had come, the Instructor would throw the aircraft into a 90 degree turn and zoom through with the lower wingtip very close to the ground."*



Steve Brown on the right

Flying Officer John Talbot – Wireless Operator – Air Gunner – Service No. 416234 – 459 RAAF Squadron - 24 April, 1941 to 27 Sept, 1945 – His crew – F/Off R. McDonald - RAAF; F/Lt J. Sharpe - RAAF; F/Sgt J Foster, RAF – 9 March 44 – Mersa Matruh – Ventura MkV JS926

To Bob McDonald and his crew must go the prize for the most completed (and unpleasant) route devised by any 459 Squadron aircrew to get from England to the Middle East. His Navigator, John Talbot, has described their extraordinary journey as follows. "We boarded the troopship Strathmore at Liverpool – twenty Australians and some 5,000 British troops – and sailed into the teeth of an Atlantic gale. The ship pitched and rolled and most of the Brits were as sick as dogs. We Aussies had to hose the ship out. We left the Strathmore at Freetown, Sierra Leone, where we stayed three days before embarking on a Norwegian hellship, the Hailee. We were accommodated in the holds where it was unbearably hot. Our appetites were not improved by watching the crew, dripping with sweat, stir our food in 44 gallon drums on the deck.

It took a week on this hellship to get to Takoradi on the Gold Coast. There, we were put ashore at a very pleasant RAF base to recuperate for 3 days. Billed close to a good sandy beach, the aircrews were able to swim daily, canoeing and fishing in the ocean were also easily available. Local native servants could be engaged for a pittance; with very little training they became highly efficient in performing the routine chores of laundry, ironing, and so on, important in the steamy West African climate.

For some reason we were then split up. I was put on a Sabena Airlines Ju 52 which flew me to Lagos, Nigeria. They decided that I should then spend 2 weeks at the Ikeja fighter strip some 20 miles in to the jungle. After being reunited with my crew, we were put on a train for a 48 hour journey to Kano in the centre of Nigeria. There, the final leg of their sea, rail and air odyssey to Egypt began as passengers in a Hudson that staged through various desert airfields to Khartoum" - their aircraft was commandeered to join a search for a missing aircraft. The following day - aircraft returned - they took off for RAF LG224 in Cairo where the aircraft was delivered and John was taken to RAF Almaza Transit Camp. Here he learned that HMT Strathmore, the ship on which they had embarked in the UK had arrived in Suez the day after. In John's words "it showed the futility of the trans-African shortcut!" and the complete crew did arrive on 459.



L-R; McDonald, Talbot & Chambers in front of a Hudson



Talbot in West Africa with local native servant

Prior to the war John Talbot was a trainee with Shell and he rejoined the company upon his return to Australia. He spent the next 30 years with Shell, until retiring in 1975.

**Flight Sergeant John David Jones, RAF 1266748, of Clifynydd, Wales
– Wireless Operator/Air Gunner – with RAAF 459 – [Roll of Honour]**

The 454-459 Squadrons Association recently heard from Mr Andrew Thomas the Grandson of F/Sgt John Jones he provided a number of photos relating to the time that his Grandfather flew with the RAAF 459 Squadron. Andrew is also keen to hear from relatives from this accident – contact Penny Griffiths if you would like to be in touch.

The following men flew with F/Sgt Jones on the 3rd February, 1944 – the day of the plane accident:

Crew – Pilot Officer William **Lupton**, RAAF 409159 of Fairfield, Victoria, Australia; Flying Officer Philip Geoffrey **Lee**, RAF 129482– Navigator - of Sheffield, England; Flight Sergeant Geoffrey Windibank **Fretwell**, RAF 1358319 – Wireless Operator/Air Gunner; Leading Aircraftman George **Campbell** (Radar Mechanic), RCAF R168048, of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

The Fatal Accident : On the 3rd February, Pilot Officer William Lupton and crew lost their lives on a radar training flight in the newly arrived Ventura 'S' FP 543. To assist in the use of the ASD radar, Lupton had taken with him, as well as his standard crew, one of the Squadron radar technicians, Leading Aircraftman George Campbell. They took off from Gambut at 8.40 am, but when they had not returned after the aircraft's limit of endurance, two other Squadron Venturas and a B-25 from the nearby USAAF unit began a search. Wreckage of the missing aircraft was eventually sighted by one of the Venturas piloted by Flying Officer Lindsay Caldwell. The broken remains were strewn on a beach near a wrecked ship at Cape Azzaz, some 30 miles north-east of Gambut. (See picture below)



The CO, Wing Commander Peter Henderson, immediately took off in another Ventura to inspect the crash scene. A search party, including the Medical Officer, Flight Lieutenant Duncan Henderson, set out the same night but could not locate the wreck. The following morning, the search party set out again and reached the crash site at midday. All five members of the crew were found to be dead, with multiple fractures and the aircraft was a total wreck.

Flight Lieutenant Stephen Blumenthal, the Engineering Officer of No 235 Wing, who was also with the search party, found part of the mast of the wrecked ship near the aircraft whose port mainplane had been cut off just outboard of the port engine nacelle. As he details in the subsequent Court of Enquiry:

“From the evidence, it is my opinion that the aircraft approached the wreck from an easterly direction, struck the mast with its port mainplane at high speed and carried on in a straight line before striking the ground and breaking up at a point approximately 250 yards from the wreck. I am satisfied there was no technical fault contributing to the accident.”

That view was corroborated by a member of No 47 Squadron RAF who had witnessed the crash from a distance while mounting guard on a crashed aircraft from his own squadron:

“I heard an aircraft to the east and watched it through a pair of binoculars. It was flying low and disappeared behind sand hills between me and the sea. It reappeared and continued along the horizon towards a wreck which is on the beach and about 10 miles from where I was. After passing over the wreck I saw what appeared to be a white shape coming from the tail of the aircraft and immediately afterwards the aircraft disappeared from view. I did not see it again and came to the conclusion that it had crashed.”

The crew had been briefed on the previous evening at No 235 Wing, Gambut. No part of their brief involved flying below 2,000 feet. It seems that they were apparently attempting to practice a low-level attack on the wreck. Prior to the accident, Pilot Officer Lupton had only flown three and a half hours solo on Ventura aircraft with the Squadron. The remains of the crew were brought back to Gambut and buried with full military honours at Acroma on 6 February 1944.

ROYAL AIR FORCE

OFFICER OR AIRMAN — REPORT ON ACCIDENTAL OR SELF-INFLICTED INJURIES OR IMMEDIATE DEATH THEREFROM

(N.B.—To be rendered in accordance with the Instructions on Pages 3 and 4)

1. Surname **JONES.** Christian Names (in full) **John David.**
 Rank **F/sgt.** Number **1266748** Unit **459 Squadron, RAAF.**
 Date and time of accident **1220 hrs. 3.2.44** Place of accident **Cape Azas.**

2. Short Statement by injured person of the circumstances of the injury (see Instruction 6)
 If an aircraft accident state the type and number of the aircraft.
 Signed statements of witnesses, or of persons to whom the injured person may have mentioned his injury, to be attached (see Instruction 7).

N/A.

(This N.C.O. was a member of the crew of Ventura aircraft which crashed at Cape Azas at 1220 hours on 3.2.44. All members of the crew were killed)

(a) Description of injuries—
*Multiple injuries including fractured skull
 Immediate death.*

(b) Are the injuries serious or of such a nature that they might be the exciting cause of disability later?

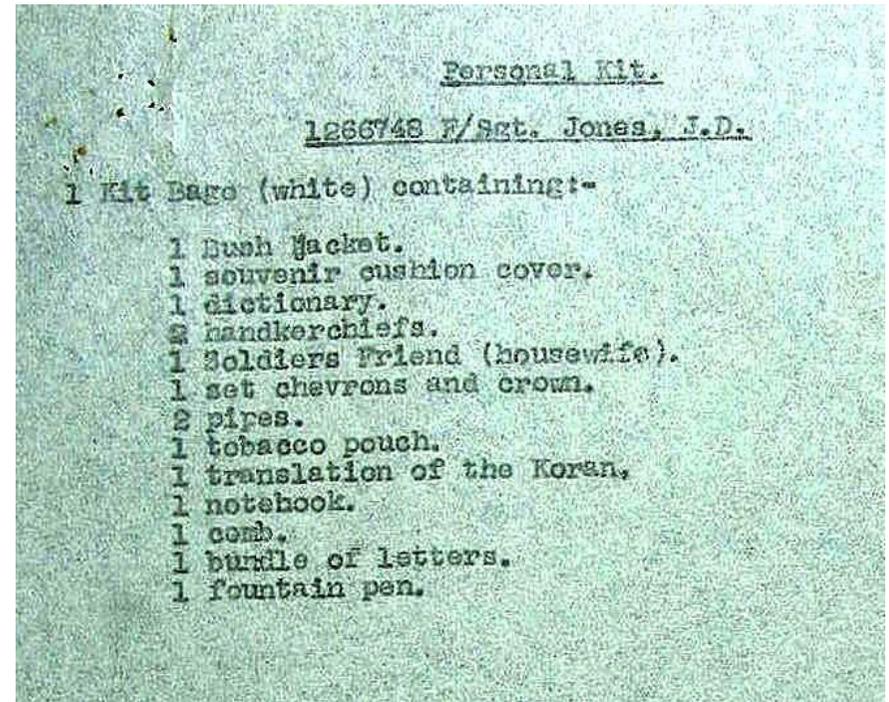
N/A

(c) Whether (i) admitted to hospital or (ii) provided with medical comforts (see Instruction 12).

No.

Date **3.2.44** Signature of Medical Officer *D. L. Lennan* F/Lt.

Above — the Report of Accidental Death — F/Sgt. Jones



Above - The Personal Kit of F/Sgt. Jones



Above — The funeral of F/Sgt. John David Jones — service conducted by Rev. A.R. Fountain

SQUADRON BAGS A U-BOAT

Last year “**Wings**” - Spring 2013 Magazine ran a story “Australian Flyers in the Invasion of Sicily” – wherein it covered the amazing story of the Squadrons’ first solo U-boat kill. However for our bulletin we will cover this story from Prof. L. Kane-Maguire’s book.



Above - The successful aircrew a week after their attack on U-97
L-R: F/O Brian Cobcroft, F/Sgt Eric Purcell,
F/Sgt David Barnard, & Sgt Leslie Crisp

Just after midday on 16 June 1943, Sergeant David Barnard and his crew had taken off from Lydda, Palestine, in Hudson ‘T’ FH311 to participate in a combined naval-air hunt for a submarine that had torpedoed and sunk the

9,000-ton tanker *Athelmonarch* in the Haifa area the previous day. However, they could not locate the naval vessels at the position given in their briefing, which was fortuitous, as the Squadron Operations Record Book relates:

F/Sgt Barnard climbed to 3,000 feet to take advantage of 4/10th cloud cover and commenced an independent patrol. At 1437 hrs in position 32-degrees 56’N 34-degrees 00’E a submarine was sighted on the surface about four miles away on a course of 330-degrees at eight knots. The aircraft immediately dived and delivered an attack with four dept charges up the track, one depth charge making a direct hit, two near misses and one 40 to 50 feet ahead. The submarine immediately circled hard to port members of the crew who had been caught sunbaking on the deck dived overboard and less than five minutes later the U-boat sank stern first, the bow projecting sharply out of the water. Later, 21 survivors were picked up. Unfortunately for the aircraft, the dept charge which made a direct hit caused a tremendous explosion which threw the Hudson 400 feet up in the air, severely bent and damaged the mainplane’s, fuselage and tailplane. In view of this, F/Sgt Barnard remained on the scene only long enough to take photographs, he then returned to Lydda, where he made an excellent landing although the aircraft was so damaged that it was subsequently placed in Category 2 [beyond repair]. Before departing the scene of the sinking, the crew of FH311 dropped their crew dinghy for the survivors in the water, a brave act considering the condition of their aircraft. However, two hours later they arrived safely back at Lydda after a sortie of three and a half hours. It was only their third operation with No 459 Squadron. The submarine was U-97, in 2½ years of active service it had sunk 16 Allied ships. The attack was described as “a classic attack emphasising the value of surprise brought about by good hunting methods in a well camouflaged aircraft and followed by immediate action”.

Right : The damaged plane, notice the upturned wing tips



PLEASE COMPLETE THIS RETURN SLIP NOW

454 & 459 ANZAC DAY REUNION

FRIDAY, 25TH APRIL 2014

COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS

Website feedback welcome

<http://www.454-459squadrons.org.au/contactus.html>

Member's Name:	Squadron:
Address <i>[if changed]</i> :	
Phone:	Email:
<i>If you are a relative or friend:</i>	
Full Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	Email:

Vets only to complete the following:

Attending Luncheon	YES	NO	Circle Response
Marching	YES	NO	
Attending March (transport required)	YES	NO	

If needed please bring your carer – relatives welcome.

Annual Sub	AUD \$12.50
Anzac Luncheon	AUD \$35.00
Donation	\$
TOTAL:	\$

***Enclosed is my cheque or money order payable to:
"454/459 Squadrons No.2 Account"***

Relatives & friends, if you are not returning this slip, can you please contact Penny with how many will be attending the luncheon – we need 30 attendees (02) 9661 7170? If not paying via cheque or money order, please have the exact money for the luncheon on the day – much appreciated.

PLEASE RETURN THIS RESPONSE SLIP ASAP

whether or not you are attending on 25th April 2014

**Address : Penny Griffiths, Honorary Secretary,
53 Harold Street, Matraville, NSW, 2036, Australia**

*<Advertisement> Rick Capel – Profile Financial Services P/L, Level 8,
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Ph: 9683 6422 or 9683 4658*