

TO:



**454-459 SQUADRONS ASSOCIATION
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE**

Penny Griffiths, Hon. Secretary,
53 Harold Street, Matraville, NSW, 2 036, Australia -- Phone: (02) 9661 7170
e-mail : thesecretary@454-459squadrons.org.au
Web site: www.454-459squadrons.org.au

APRIL 2009 BULLETIN

COMBINED 454/459 SQUADRONS ASSOC. REUNION

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SENDER:

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

ANZAC DAY MARCH – SATURDAY 25TH APRIL 2009

Leader: FLT John McKenzie
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.

We have been informed by the RAAF Association that this year the march is to be confined to veterans only, with carers if necessary.

Relatives of deceased veterans may march in a special group after the Veterans. March Marshals will direct relatives to the assembly point. Medals to be worn on right breast.

It is also possible for relatives to be the Squadron Banner Bearers, only 4 in number allowed. If interested please send your names to Penny asap, first in best dressed.

We have available a limited number of wheelchairs and have ordered a vehicle (6 people). This year we have guaranteed the vehicle will be for our use only.

So we hope to see you all at the March or the Luncheon. 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.

REUNION LUNCHEON

Commercial Travellers Club, Level 2 Bistro
- MLC Centre, Martin Place, Sydney

- ➔ 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.

*** 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.*

The CTA Club opens at 11.00 am – CHILDREN under the age of 18 years cannot be admitted, so just turn up as in the past and enjoy! Our many thanks go to the Club for the generosity.

Parking: 19-29 Martin Place - entry via King Street
Hours: 8 am – 4pm – Cost: \$10 [public holiday rate].

Trains: Martin Place is the closest station to the MLC Centre. However St James, Wynyard and Town Hall are also within easy walking distance.

Buses: Castlereagh St (right outside the MLC Centre) and Elizabeth Street.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

These have been set at [Aust] \$12.50, subject to review after this year's financial results are known. Currently it is understood to be an awkward amount, but it is based on percentages and other considerations.

ABSENT COMRADES

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



| Date | Member | State | Sqdn | Notified By |
|------------|-----------------|--------|------|----------------|
| 25 Jul 08 | George Lalor | Canada | 459 | R. Singleton |
| Dec 2008 | Tom Hancock | UK | 459 | B. Rostron |
| Dec 2008 | Patrick Unwin | Sydney | 459 | T. Steigerwalt |
| 18.03.2009 | David Etheridge | UK | 454 | B. Rostron |

*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 George Lalor, WAG – 459 –[Canada]



Ross Singleton, Navigator (Canada) 459 wrote in an email to our Hon. Secretary in 2006 that he was crewed with George Lalor and he mentioned the following; “Our Squadron Headquarters was near Tobruk, Libya. It consisted of a large number of tents in the desert about two miles from the Mediterranean. As part of Coastal Command we flew over the ocean, mostly at night on anti-submarine and shipping patrols. George Lalor, a Canadian who lives close to me in Winnipeg became our second WAG. George was one of 5 Canadian WAG'S sent to 459 from Alexandria. Three were killed during their first week on the Squadron on training exercises. Pat Gallagher from Winnipeg was the fifth. “

Flight Lieutenant Tom Hancock, WAG – 459 - [RAF]



To honor Tom’s memory we feel it appropriate to quote a wartime experience he wrote as follows: “Now we were expected to join 459 and the Hudson would be our aircraft, (not a bit of it), flew it to an M.U. in Jordan, (as it was during the retreat many stations were moving out of the Canal Zone).

One incident will always remain in my memory. Four young Australian boys occupied the tent next to ours, they had a wind up gramophone and were always playing a song “Grandma’s Parcel” I had only heard through them.

One day they were coming in to land, made a bad landing, crashed and blew up, the crew was cremated. We were persuaded not to visit such happenings. On occasions when we were asked to remember those who gave their lives in war, I always think of them!”

Sergeant Patrick Stanislaus ‘Onions’ Unwin – 459 Squadron – Service No. 22218 – [15.4.40 – 19.-2.1946]

Flight Lieutenant John McKenzie (459) remembers ‘Onions’ as a wonderful character on the 459 crew and here’s one of the funny stories he recalled. “As I remember I was talking to our Padre Fred McKay when in breezed Sergeant Unwin who said– ‘Good day Fred – how are ya you old bleep bleep! – what the heck are you doing for a crust these days?’ To which the Padre replied ‘Tending to my flock Onions, just tending my flock.’”

Warrant Officer David Etheridge, WAG – 454 – [RAF] Service No. 1801413



We remember that David visited Australia and attended the 2006 Anzac Day celebrations at the Rocks with his granddaughter Jessica. David brought along a lot of great photos and we all enjoyed hearing some of his wartime experiences. David Etheridge recalled the smash of FW793:G “Glamorous Greta” which after night operations landed and overshot the runway landing on its back.

David recalled that the last thing he remembered was waking up hanging upside down by his lap strap but all in one piece, and he quickly exited the plane through the back hatch. Once outside he realized the plane was gushing fuel from the wing tanks. Pilot and Nav. were still trapped inside but with considerable help from the South Africans whose camp the plane had just missed, both were freed in time.

PLAQUE DEDICATION CEREMONY – LONDON

On the 26th March this year Association members were invited via Pete Norford, Group Captain, Air Force Advisor – London, Australian High Commission to attend a dedication of RAAF plaques for 454, 459 and nine other squadrons at St Clement Danes Church (RAF Chapel) London. The badges join other Australian squadrons that flew in the European, Middle East and African theatres and are in recognition of the outstanding service and sacrifice made by those men and women.

In attendance were CDAF AVM Geoff Brown - Head of the Australian Defence Staff and Australian Defence Adviser to the UK, AIRCDRE Steve Martin represented the RAAF, while RAF CHAP Adrian Gatrill conducted the service. Also present were 20 RAAF personnel currently serving in the UK, and several UK VIPs including the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, AVM Tim Anderson and the Marshall of the RAF, Sir Michael Beetham. Following the ceremony guests were then invited to Australia House for a function to celebrate the occasion.



*ST CLEMENT DANE
CHURCH – LONDON
26TH MARCH 2009*



ABOVE : Group Captain Pete Norford addresses the Vets



The Robinson family gathers around the badges at St Clement Danes – the children of 454 [RAF] Sergeant Rex “Robbie” Robinson, L-R; Ian, Jim , and Jeremy Robinson and their sister Mary Guiraute



L-R – Derek Buxton, Janet Longhurst, Tom Hodgson,
Jack Stainton , Bill Longhurst,
Jill Lord (daughter of George Gray [454])

BELOW: The signage in the foyer of Australia House



MEMORIES OF THE BIG DAY [via email to Penny]

Bryan Rostron – 459 (our Association’s UK Rep.) - [RAF] - “The ceremony went extremely well and the powers-that-be did the squadrons proud. They were there in force, the Australian High Commissioner and an awful lot of gold braid as well. Jill [Lord] will no doubt fill you in on the details but there were 27 veterans in total of which four were from our squadrons. Tom Hodgson and myself from 459 and Jack Stainton and Ken Rimmer from 454. For the actual dedication we had to stand at the back of the church together with other 23 veterans, representing 11 squadrons in total, so we weren't outnumbered! The actual plaques are very impressive and are carved out of Welsh slate and are embedded in the floor of the church. It was very nice to meet Jill and to be able to put a name to a face. She did a great job in representing the Aussie end of the Association and was able to collect a lot of literature which I am sure you will be able to use. For my part, it was great to meet people I have been writing to for years and never met - Dorothy Wood and Margaret Pirie amongst others.”



454 Plaque



459 Plaque

MEMORIES OF THE BIG DAY [Cont.d]

Tom Hodgson – 459 UK [RAF] – “It was a very successful day and the weather was kind, we started from Billericay to Liverpool Street and then on the underground to Temple Station. It was a long drag uphill to Aldwych and I had to stop several times to get my breath but before entering the church Bill (Longhurst) and I put our medals on then went in. There was lots of Vets from all the Aussie Sqdns. all proudly wearing their medals all trying to recognise their mates after 67 years. I did find Bryan Rostron and we had a long chat and sat together talking for some time and exchanged photos. I met a charming lady who asked me if I was Tom the Pom and it turned out to be George Gray’s daughter Jill and after another long chat and get together we all had our photos taken which as I said will pass on to Bill. It was a great service in the church and the history of all 11 RAAF squadrons was read out by G/ Captain P Norford and another Sqdn. Leader who both looked Fab in their uniforms and gold braid.

After some time we all went into Australia House for the running Buffet where tea, coffee, wine and Champers flowed freely, more speeches, more chats and more photos and after a very satisfying nosh up we said our goodbyes and made our way home. Bryan Rostron and I were the only two bods on 459 and there was a lot of Aussie families came over who were doing the trip on Friday to the Hendon Museum and a trip to Biggin Hill on Saturday.

The words of one family member who attended:

***“Well done all you Aussie squadrons...
at last you have all been recognized for
your support during WW2!”***

There will be more stories and photos on this special event in our next Bulletin.



Question - from Karen Perks - 16 Nov 2008

I wonder if anyone can tell me anything about my uncle, Pilot Officer Colin William Walker - 403291 - 454, he was killed in Action on 3 December 1943 - does anyone have any photographs from that period, or any reminiscences concerning him? Many Thanks"



NOTICE BOARD

Baltimore Model

In this issue we feature another model plane - this one has been built by Chris McGrath the Grandson of Flight Lieutenant Ross Woodhead of the 454 Sqdn.



*RAAF Baltimore Mk.111
(Photo compliments of Norm Gilham)*

Squadron Silk Blazer Badges – 454 & 459 Squadrons

Penny our Secretary advises that she still has a few of the hand embroidered wire and silk blazer badges of your squadron for A\$12 each including postage. If you are interested you will need to place your orders asap, and you can make your cheques out to “454/459 Squadrons No. 2 Account”. Don’t miss out! Penny’s mailing details are in the letterhead.

UPDATE - BOOKS ON THE HISTORIES OF SQUADRONS

Professor Leon Kane-Maguire (Dessert Scorpions – 459) – copies can still be obtained through the War Book Shop Sydney on (02) 9543 6771 warbookshop@bigpond.com . A/C Mark Lax (Alamein to the Alps – 454) has advised that all copies have been ‘sold’ and he has provided a link on our website’s home page that will allow you to upload a copy of his book for free provided it is for private use and is not used for commercial purposes.

COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS RETURN SLIP NOW !

**454 & 459 2009 ANZAC DAY REUNIONS
SATURDAY, 25TH APRIL 2009**

Member's Name:.....
Service No:..... **Sqn:**.....
Assoc. Name:**Representing:**.....**Sqn:**.....
Address:.....
Phone No......**Email:**.....

Vets only to complete the following:

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|------------------------|
| Attending Luncheon | YES | NO | Circle Response |
| Marching | YES | NO | |
| Attending March (wheelchair required) | YES | NO | |
| Attending March (transport required) | YES | NO | |
| To Ride with a carer | YES | NO | |

If needed please bring your carer – relatives welcome.

*Our bulletin is late this time round due to the London Ceremony -if necessary please **contact Penny** by phone regarding attendance & requirements for Anzac Day. Please do forward on this Annual Sub Slip as per previous years. **Thank you***

| | | |
|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Annual Sub | \$ | 12.50 |
| Donation | \$ | |
| TOTAL: | \$ | |

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

PLEASE RETURN THIS RESPONSE SLIP ASAP
 whether or not you are attending on 25th April 2009
 - or elsewhere.

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