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

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Penny Griffiths, Hon. Secretary,  
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**APRIL 2013 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**

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## ANZAC DAY MARCH – THURSDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2013

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**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.

At the time of publishing this bulletin our Anzac March Leader from previous years FLT John McKenzie, (459 Squadron) was in Hospital, we hope he has a speedy recovery and that he will be well enough to attend our Luncheon this year.

**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 the March and attend our Anzac Day Reunion. Children **12 and over can march**.

**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. We have a wheelchair available on the day contact Penny and she'll organise it – no fee required.

Our venue remains the same as last year "The NSW Leagues Club" details are once again on the following page. The location is advantageous as it is close to the March so our foot sore Vets can make their way to our Private Function Room on the 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

There is adequate seating and bar facilities, and lunch will be hot/cold cocktail food, which provides great variety (8 choices) at \$35 a head and children under 12 are half price. If possible return subs and meal monies together with how many will be attending.

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.

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## 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](mailto: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.

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## ABSENT COMRADES

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

Date	Member	State	Sqdn	Advised by
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
08.12.11	Ronald Munnich	QLD	459	His daughter Linda
28.07.11	Peter Kennedy	NSW	454	His son David

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

*LEST WE FORGET*

## TRIBUTES

### **Warrant Officer Peter Sutherland Kennedy - Service No. 413609 – RAAF 454 Squadron – 5 Aug 43 to 21 Sep 43 -**

21 September 1943 Sergeant Peter Kennedy and crew flying long-range Baltimore FA575:S on an Aegean reconnaissance, failed to return. Conjecture in the Squadron was there was too little practice low flying and they had hit the sea. Others felt it was engine trouble and they diverted to Turkey or even Crete? The following night, after a light was reported flashing from the sea south of Scarpanto Island, an extensive search for them was carried out by the Air-Sea Rescue flight, but with no success. In fact Kennedy and crew had been hit by anti-aircraft fire, causing the port engine to cut. The aircraft hit the sea, bounced, turned sideways and came to a halt and then it rapidly sank.

Ex-POW Peter Kennedy was later to recall, "we were flying below 100ft when gunfire led to a ditching as an engine lost power. Our crew consisted of myself as Pilot, Flight Sergeant Noel Fisher as WOP and turret gunner who was killed; Sergeant Jack Ganly, WOP/AG and Navigator/Bomb aimer

*Sergeant Alvin Liebich. We climbed into the aircraft's inflatable dinghy, which floated up from the sunken aircraft and subsequently were taken ashore by Greek villagers in a small boat.*

*When Jack and I pulled Alvin into the dinghy, we found that he had suffered deep scalp wounds about 8 inches long and also a badly lacerated and crushed chest (I think broken ribs). He was in such pain that I injected him with 2 morphine ampoules from the dinghy's medical kit.*

*After reaching shore at the village of Diafani [on Karpathos Island, also called Scarpanto], our wounds were treated by a Greek doctor who placed 32 stitches in Alvin's head wounds and bandaged his chest. There was no hospital available.*

*We were arrested and imprisoned by the Germans in a small concrete floored hall in Pigadia. Alvin became so weak from his wounds and particularly from his chest, he could not reach his toes. [We] were obliged to tie shoelaces around his socks to prevent the cockroaches getting to his feet during the night.*

*Subsequently they were flown to Piraeus Harbour then transported by train to Salonika and eventually to Dulag Luft, near Frankfurt Germany. Alvin had only minor medical attention during the trip, but eventually recovered after suffering chest problems for the next 2 years. Dulag Luft was the German POW holding camp where initial interrogations were held. Here they found their final destination was to be Stalag IVB at Muhlberg, where they spent the rest of the war." [Information from Mark Lax's book - "Alamein to the Alps – pages 73-74]*

### **Flight Lieutenant Ronald Henry [Fritz] Munnich - Service No. 425038 RAAF 459 Squadron – [Baltimores Mk V & Mk IV]**

In 1941 Ron joined the airforce and he completed his initial training in Australia and then was posted to Canada to finalise his training.

Ron was posted with the 459 Squadron to Egypt and spent his time there flying with various teams and in various planes as a machine gun operator and Morse code operator. He spent his recreation time visiting the magnificent tourist spots in Egypt.



He was lucky enough to be in London when peace in Europe was declared and if one looks very closely at the cinefilm in Trafalgar Square when Winston Churchill was telling thousands of weary veterans and local people that peace in Europe has been declared, you might notice Ron standing with several dozen others beside Nelson's column. On the left - a picture of Winston Churchill after he made the Victory in Europe announcement – 8 May 1945.

Ron was about to be posted to the Pacific region when peace in the Pacific was declared.

After Ron settled into married life he spent the next 25 years working voluntarily for the Queensland Ambulance and St John's Ambulance Brigade teaching and practicing First Aid. Ron received from the Grand Priory of the Venerable Order of St John the commendations of "Serving Brother" in January 1972 and the "Officer Brother" in December 1978. [Submitted by - Linda Dennison and Wendy Lawes (Ron's daughters.)]

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**Flight Lieutenant Claude Anthony "Tony" MARTIN**  
**Service Number: 403224 – RAAF 459 Squadron -**  
4.1.1941 – Oct 1943 – discharged 1945

"Operation Stoneage" – the Squadron's involvement began on 15 November 1942, they provided anti-submarine cover by Sergeant Bryan Rostron's crew to a strong naval force of four cruisers and six destroyers sailing from Port Said to Alexandria during the assembly of the convoy. Two further escorts covering the assembly were provided from LG-208 the next day and night. The patrols were uneventful but upon landing back at base the career of the

'flagship' AM-950 almost came to an untimely end when its starboard engine caught fire as the pilot, Sergeant Tony Martin, was about to taxi to dispersal. Fortunately, "Smart work by the crew of the fire tender quickly extinguished it". Tony Martin recalled the event with humour; *"As soon as we stopped we jumped out and were attempting to hose the flames down with fire extinguishers from the aircraft when the fire brigade got across pretty smart and walloped it, spraying us all over in the process"*.

On another mission to locate the cruiser-minelayer 'Welshman' which had been struck by 2 torpedoes from a U-boat, the second follow-on plane patrol was sent to search for the Welshman, piloted by Tony Martin and crew in Hudson 'A'FH314 was briefed to 'search between Tobruk and Cape Azzaz". Taking off in the face of the gale at 22.00 hrs, they searched for 3 hours but could not locate the warship. They were then forced to return to base due to the impossible conditions – full gales and heavy rain squalls. Apparently the Welshman had sunk before it could be located.



Tony on the left : At the end of the Athletics Meeting - receiving the coveted championship trophy, fashioned from an old German shell case and a Stuka prop for his remarkable versatility in the 440 yards and 880 yards races, high jump and shot putt events.

Flying Officer Tony Martin recalls that he and his crew in Hudson 'L' FH250 had an encounter with a night fighter on their way to the target:

*"We had been alerted to increased night fighter activity in the area. Fortunately, recent Intelligence had indicated that a sharp lookout by bomber crews could warn of their approach, due to the tell-tale orange light from their new homing device. As we were nearing Kos, an orange light suddenly appeared ahead to our starboard. I decided that the best thing to do was to go down rapidly. I turned towards the light and went directly under him, diving to 2,000 feet. He never came after me, so after about 15 minutes we climbed up again and continued to the target without further interference."*

## Tributes continued

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### **Corporal J.H. 'Jack' Stainton RAF – Ground Crew - RAAF 459 Squadron – Desert Air Force in the Middle East**

J.H.Stainton was on a typical RAF Ground Crew Tour of Duty in the Middle East. A Foundation Member of 454 RAAF Squadron from "Go to Whoa", 1942-1945. Jack's story [from the 2003 Bulletin]:

"I served in the RAAF from 2nd April 1942, to help form 76/454 Squadrons at Aqir, Palestine. First I was posted to help maintain 159 Squadron, RAF then 160 Squadron RAF (Liberator) at Shallufa, or LG224, then Fayed in September, 1942 and finally joined 454 Squadron RAAF which was formed in Aqir, Palestine in 1942.

My new Squadron moved to northern Iraq (or Mesopotamia) where it was equipped with fighter-bomber Blenheim Vs. In January 1943 moved to LG227 in Libya with Baltimore's 111's, thence to LG91 in February 1943 to the Western Desert Air Force in support of British 8th Army, then to Gambut 111 between Tobruk and Derna equipped with Baltimores for photo reconnaissance flights over the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas and over Crete.

In August 1943 it was back to LG91 T Lakatia, and November 4th 1943 to Berka 111 with a detachment at Gambut. July 1944 to Pescara in Italy, then to Falconara flying against the retreating Germans still on Baltimores. There was a detachment at Forli (early 1945) and a final move from Cesenatico in May (after the surrender) to Villa Orba, northern Italy where 454 was on peace keeping duties to stop Marshall Tito taking over Trieste. When we left Villa Orba we left Aldo sheet metal, nuts and bolts, rivets, etc. which he was glad of as he had no materials in his blacksmith's shop. The Australians had then gone back home so 45 of us were left in Villa Orba until the RAF found us two months later, they just left us there with our paperwork to draw supplies from Udine so we were fine.

Being a coppersmith, sheet metal worker and welder all sorts of things were made for our Italian friends. Three who were engineers worked with us and we made cooking equipment, small heating stoves fed with high octane fuel through 8mm copper tube laid in a trench, tiny holes in the tubes fed from an aircraft petrol tank. This enabled us to cook and heat, the winter was very cold and lots of snow.

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*Jack Stainton and his son-in-law Carl Oberg at the London Dedication Ceremony – St Clement Danes 26 March 2009*

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### **Flying Officer -- James Raymond BABER - PILOT – RAFVR - Service Number: 173938 – RAAF 454 Squadron - 3 Oct 43 to 30 Jul 44**

A recent email to our Hon. Secretary Penny Griffiths - reads as follows:

*"Dear Penny,*

*The ravages of time have dug deep trenches in my memory's field, so that some of those old mates have been lost forever. At least I still meet an old crew member, Jim Hendy (now a widower) once a week for a couple of beers and a chat about old times. It may be that the impact of*

## Tributes continued

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*those few months with 454 RAAF had a greater effect on our memories, (he remembers more than I do!), than all the other months of civilian life. Rex Robinson, Navigator, has been smitten with eye trouble. He lives alone now but has a close relationship with his family.*

*Finally I applaud your efforts and the other daughters of 454 & 459 Squadrons who have kept the Association alive. It is heart warming to know that the effort to remember and honour the contribution made to preserve peace will be sustained by your efforts. Congratulations to you ALL!*

*Sincerely, Jim Baber."*



**L to R:** Les Weale, Rex Robinson, Jim Baber and Jim Hendy

## CONTRIBUTIONS

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***A story sent to Hon. Secretary – October 2012 – from Gerry H Spring – Engine Mechanic – RAF – RAAF 459 Squadron:-***

“The photos of the flooding in winter at Gambut bring back memories; a few tent residents dug out the centre in the tent to make more headroom - the desert tents were rather low, but excellent against Kamsin winds [Kamsin winds is a S.S.W. wind, which blows in Egypt in March and April, generally not more than three successive days at a time]. Unfortunately, no one gave a thought to the winter rain that took place – hence the flooding, who would have thought of that happening in the desert!

There was mention of poisonous insects etc. – scorpions by the dozen, though these were mainly outside the camp area – sheltering under the drums at the petrol dump. I did have a companion with me one night, before we had beds off the floor, we slept on ground sheets, and one morning I awoke and picked up my toilet bag and found a horned viper asleep by the side of the bed!



Our biggest annoyance was fleas, we had to sprinkle our blankets with kerosene, I must have killed hundreds; whether they were brought in by Jerboas [Jerboas are nocturnal small jumping rodents that resemble mice] and mice, who knows? Our daily bath which was necessary as we were always in fine dust was a quart of water in a cut out petrol tin – starting from our hair and washing down – this always left a tin of muddy water.

On the whole we led a healthy life, the cooks did a good job considering the limitations of fresh vegetables and meat, but one thing there was plenty of was onions, I believe the Egyptians used to make beer with them. One particular item we had with meals was Oleo Marge, this came in large tins and must have been made with some anti-melting ingredient – it was like candle grease and on one occasion I broke a steel knife trying to get it out of the tin. We did have good supplies of bread which wasn't bad after we picked out the baked weevils, although we must have

## CONTRIBUTIONS Continued

missed some of them, anyway it all helped with the protein! Having said all that if I had the choice, I would rather be in the desert than back at some base like Cairo.

I hope I haven't bored you with these little recollections, one never forgets old memories, not like current ones, I go into the next room to get something and forget what I came for – must be old age!"



The photo of Iris and myself was taken in 2006

## QUESTIONS

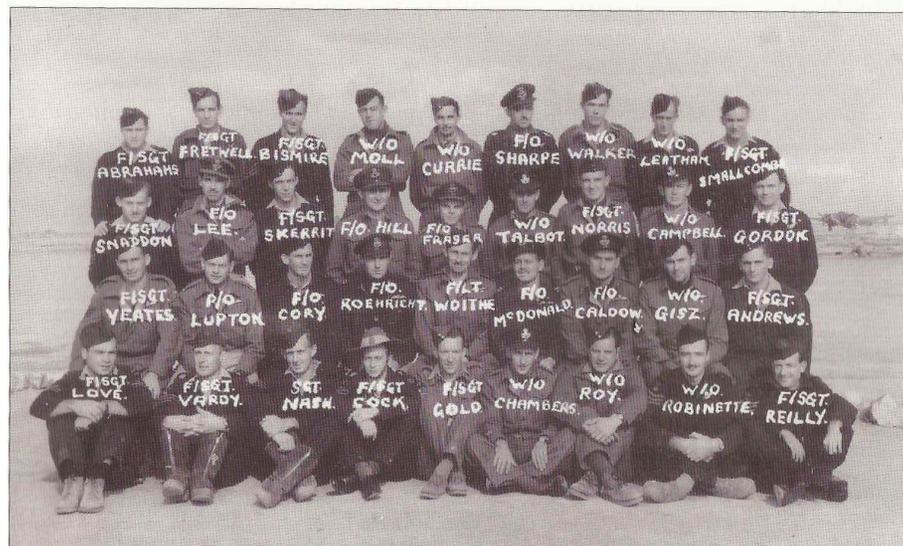
[Question from - David Barker, the nephew of **Flt Sgt Geoffrey Windibank Fretwell** RAF No. 1358319 [Wireless Operator/Air Gunner] with RAAF 459 Squadron who was killed in a low-flying accident – on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1944. Pilot Officer William Lupton and four other crew members lost their lives on a radar training flight in the newly arrived Ventura 'S' FP543. Lupton had taken with him, as well as his standard crew, one of the Squadron radar technicians, Leading Aircraftman George Campbell, F/Off Philip Geoffrey Lee – RAF No. 129482 and F/Sgt John David Jones – RAF No. 1266748.

The search party revealed in evidence that it was of the opinion that the aircraft had been flying low as it approached the beached wreck of a ship and had struck the mast of the ship with its port mainplane at high speed and

hit the ground breaking up approximately 250 yards [228 metres] from the impact.

David is asking for any recollections by others who served in Flt Sgt Fretwell's squadron, or their relatives who might have diaries or published reminiscences by his comrades. If you have any information can you please get in contact with our Honorary Secretary, Penny Griffiths as per the letterhead.

Below: 'B' Flight – photographed a few days before the loss of William Lupton's crew (except Alan Vardy) in a training accident.  
(Henderson)



## ANZAC DAY 2012 – SYDNEY



Marching up George Street, Sydney - 2012



John & Marg McKenzie –  
2012 Anzac March



John McKenzie & Penny  
Griffiths – talk time

## FRONT PAGE OF OUR WEBSITE

### 454 and 459 RAAF Squadrons

[PER](#)  
[ARDUA-AD](#)  
[ASTRA](#)

Home

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Multimedia

**News/Events**

It is with regret that we inform you of the passing of

- [James Raymond Baber](#) 454 on the 21st February 2013

New page for [Herbert Clues](#) 454  
 New page for [Cliff Williams](#) 454  
 Updated profile and photo for [Gerald Spring](#) 459  
 Updated profile and photos for [Herbert Bertram](#) 459  
 New page for [Keith Jessup](#) 459

Anzac day  
2012 Photos

Lest We Forget

[More News...](#) ▶

454 History

1942 - 1945 Planned as one of the 17 Australian-manned squadrons for the Royal Air Force (RAF), 454 Squadron was formed on 23 May 1941.

Served in Aqir-Palestine, Amiriya-Egypt. Moved to Gambut Ill, Cyrenaica then to Berka Ill & joined Desert Air Force at Pescara, Italy, for close support of 8th Army operating out of Cesenatico, Italy

[More 454 History](#) ▶

[454 Members](#) ▶

Multimedia

Historical [Pictures](#) of the 454 & 459 squadrons.

[Videos](#) of Anzac days and other relevant events

[Stories](#), [poem](#), [squadron magazines](#) and much more

459 History

1942 - 1945 No. 459 Squadron operated from six main bases and some ten detachment locations - a chain of airfields spanning 1000 miles of the North African coastline from the Bay of Sirte (Benghasi) to the Levant (Palestine and Lebanon) and to Southern Arabia.

[More 459 History](#) ▶

[459 Members](#) ▶

Penny Griffiths, Honorary Secretary,  
 53 Harold Street, Matraville, NSW, 2036, Australia  
**Phone: (02) 9661 7170**

e-mail : [thesecretary@454-459squadrons.org.au](mailto:thesecretary@454-459squadrons.org.au)  
 Web site: [www.454-459squadrons.org.au](http://www.454-459squadrons.org.au)

Contact us if you need any help with the website.

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS RETURN SLIP NOW**  
**454 & 459 ANZAC DAY REUNION**  
**THURSDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2013**

**COMMENTS & SUGGESTIONS**

[Website feedback welcome]

Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron: \_\_\_\_\_

Address *[if changed]*: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*If you are a relative or friend:*

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	\$
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$</b>

***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.*

*This year we have only one wheelchair available [no charge] contact Penny if you would like to use it on the day. **Thank you.***

**PLEASE RETURN THIS RESPONSE SLIP ASAP**  
whether or not you are attending on 25th April 2013  
**Address : Penny Griffiths, Honorary Secretary,**  
**53 Harold Street, Matraville, NSW, 2036, Australia**