



**JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL  
Year 75 No. 278 December 2024**



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**TAS, NT, ACT and New Zealand** – Looking for volunteers.

**\* Mail all communications for Squadron Secretary to Stephen Bruce (address above), and for the Squadron (and NSW Flight) Treasurer to Beryl Dodds (address above) \*\* Have you notified Editor 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 postal address above or email Roland at [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)  
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***Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter #279  
are due to The Editor by 31st March, 2025.***

**Vale**  
Peggy Hull    Victoria Flight

**FLIGHT REPORTS**



**New South Wales Flight Report by Stephen Bruce**

We had a meeting at North Ryde RSL on 12th November which was well attended.

Our 458 banner has been repaired and conserved thanks to Melanie Alexander's efforts. The cost was expensive at \$1000.00 but it was deemed important that we keep our banner in a condition as original as possible without detracting from its age and provenance.

I was able to provide all in attendance a concise summary of my trip to Malta in October, 2024, to meet government and stakeholders who could assist us with planning our proposed

**458 Squadron Reunion in Malta, October, 2025.**

The overall experience was tremendously positive and I must say that I was extremely impressed by the respect my family and I received from The Air Wing at Luqa Airport (where 458 was based in 1943) and the Malta Tourism Authority (MTA), who will host a day's event including historical and sightseeing highlights. The MTA will also provide us with some very competitive accommodation options in the nearby vicinity in Valetta.

Formal ceremonies will be held at Valetta War Memorial which hopefully will be attended by Maltese and Australian Government Officials to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the cessation of WW2 in Europe.

Our Vice President, Rob Wilkinson, also provide us with return flight options to Malta through either Dubai (Emirates), Istanbul (Turkish Airlines) or Milan (Cathay Pacific).

We have set the dates at

**13/10/2025 to 17/10/2025**

as these dates are more affordable in terms of airfares and accommodation. A more detailed itinerary will be provided soon.

**At this point of time, we need to reach out to all who are interested in attending this event next year.**

**We invite all those who would like to join us in Malta in October, 2025, to email me (Stephen Bruce) an expression of interest. My email address is [stephenwbruce@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenwbruce@hotmail.com)  
Or Roland Orchard [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)**

### **Stephen Bruce's 458 Reunion Preparatory Trip to Malta, October, 2024.**

The Following summary of events centred around our proposed "final reunion" in Malta in October, 2025 to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the cessation of WW2 hostilities in Europe. At this stage we have 16 confirmed who will attend!

**Please contact Stephen [stephenwbruce@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenwbruce@hotmail.com)  
or Roland Orchard [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)  
if you would like to join us.**

Malta is actually a great location to visit with a population of 553,000 spread over a few areas and towns where we would be located namely Valetta, Mdina and Birgu.

Most of the notable historical sites covering events of WW2 are in Valetta namely, war memorial, saluting battery, underground war rooms and St Elmo War Museum. The Luqa airport (where our squadron was based) is around a twenty-minute taxi from Valetta.

We were successful in meeting in person people and organisations who are committed to ensure the success of our planned events between **13th October and 17th October, 2025.**

We had an audience with The President of Malta, HE Myriam Spiteri Debono at The Palace which was organised by His Excellency Mario Farugia Borg, High Commissioner of Malta in Canberra. Considerable Protocol issues were highlighted with a view to a successful event.

Maltese Tourism Authority (MTA) will entertain us with a city tour and lunch and organise some of our transportation needs whilst in Malta.

Our son Adam and I met with Lt. Colonel Nicolas Grech, Air Wing Commander of Luqa airfield who will also provide us with a tour of their facility and hopefully locate the site of our airbase at the airfield which was heavily bombarded during the darkest hours of the campaign in 1943. Lt. Colonel Grech is also an avid historian and hopes to uncover some interesting relics of interest to 458 Squadron.

I was also in contact with Commonwealth War Graves (Malta) head Mr Mark Fitzgerald along with RAFA Malta delegate Mr Stephen McCarthy who will provide assistance with formal ceremonies at The War Memorial at Valetta as well as other sites. It is of importance that as mentioned to me by Jeremy Orchard more than 95 gallant airmen of 458 lost their lives in Malta and I for one think it is incumbent on us as descendants of 458 Squadron to mark this event next year with as many relatives as possible from our global flights.

**As previously mentioned, please contact Stephen [stephenwbruce@hotmail.com](mailto:stephenwbruce@hotmail.com) or Roland Orchard [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) if you would like to join us.**



Valetta War Memorial, Malta





Old Town Map of Valetta, Malta

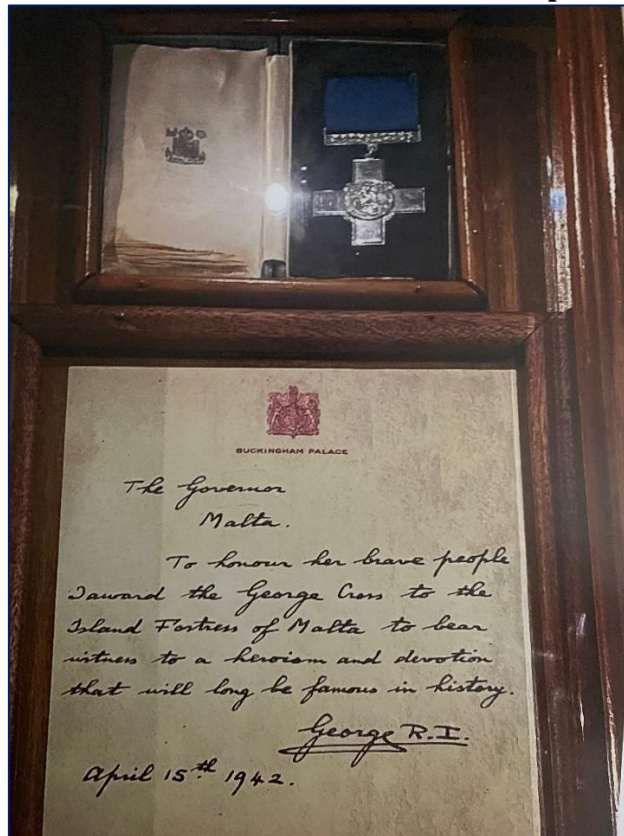


Old Town Fort St Elmo, Malta.





Stephen Bruce and Lt. Colonel Grech at Laqua Airport, Malta



King George VI George Cross Award to Malta.



## United Kingdom Flight Report by Keith Wilkinson

A retired RAF jet fighter pilot is on a mission to find out the life story of a man who was killed whilst flying with 458 Squadron. Jeremy Heygate is researching Flight Sergeant Bernard Eric Adams from Loughborough in England. He wants to feature him - and four other men - in an illustrated talk on Remembrance Day in 2025.

Bernard Adams, a second pilot, lost his life on August 5th 1943 when his 458 Wellington crashed into the Mediterranean Sea after developing engine trouble.

Jeremy Heygate flew Harrier jets during his own service with the Royal Air Force. Our picture shows him beside the Rock of Gibraltar. It could not have been a more fitting place - as 458



Squadron was based there in 1945. There are some iconic pictures of squadron Wellingtons in the exact same spot!

Photos over page-

'S' Wellington photo from the Official 458 Squadron Photo Album.  
Australian War Memorial photo of 'X' and 'H' Wellingtons.





But Jeremy's interest in "our man" is not confined to the Air Force. Bernard Adams is one of five Second World War veterans on a memorial plaque inside Loughborough Boat Club. Bernard and the others were members of that rowing club. Jeremy is an active member of the club and competes against some of the same clubs that these five veterans raced back in the 1930's.





Photos of the memorial plaque at the Loughborough Boat Club, England.

For some time now Jeremy has been compiling biographical information about the boat club members in honour of their sacrifice. In particular he is keen to find photographs of Flt Sgt Adams - maybe with his 458 Squadron crew.

Details of the crash are featured in the RAAF records. There is also a record of a remarkable escape and rescue of the sole survivor, air gunner Bryan Watson, who spent eight days in a dinghy. This can be found on Page 102 of the current edition of "We Find and Destroy. A History of 458 RAAF Squadron" (Peter Alexander).

Sgt Clifford Ebbage from Yorkshire survived the initial impact but died in the dinghy. The rest of the crew were Australians...Flt Sgt Roy Gordon Spencer from New South Wales; P/O Lindsay McKay from South Australia; P/O John Marcus Fischer, of New South Wales.

It is possible that relatives of the crew may have photos and if so, we'd like to hear from them. Or there may be relatives still alive of Bernard Adams who might be interested in the memorial. So far no-one has been traced by this project.

Among the information Jeremy has, is that Bernard Adams was born in Loughborough, England, on August 18, 1914. His father was a builder's foreman. He attended Loughborough Grammar School and, before joining the RAF, he was a librarian in Loughborough and Audenshaw near Manchester. He was a member of the boat club from 1932 to 1935. It is believed he was married and lived with his wife in Audenshaw.

As for the other veterans on the rowing club plaque (pictured previous page) - Jeremy says four were in the RAF, and one was in the Merchant Navy and was killed in a U-Boat torpedo attack. Quite fitting then that Bernard Adams was in a squadron that hunted German submarines.

If anyone can assist Jeremy Heygate with his quest, please do get in contact with us. Jeremy has another significant connection. His own dad was a WW2 pilot and flew Mustangs, Typhoons and Spitfires. One of his father's best wartime mates was an Australian.

## **MEANWHILE...**

I have had a number of recent chats with our Squadron Co-Presidents Charles Humbles and Bill Wake. I'm very pleased to report that they are both doing well and are in good health. They always look forward to reading this newsletter. Both have fond memories of the squadron and the people they served with all those years ago.

Please contact Roland Orchard [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org) if anyone knows any relatives of Bernard Adams or his crew members.



### **Queensland Flight Report by Brett Taylor**

I have no correspondence to report and so I will again rely on records from my father that I have inherited about 458.

This newsletter is the third and last one about the 458 detachment to Foggia, Falconara and Ancona in Italy. This time it is from my father's diary over this period. It was written as a record for his sister in case he didn't make it home. The diary became something of a friend and confidant to him but provides good detail of day to day operations of the squadron and living in that war zone. It reflects the excitement, fear, stress, camaraderie, risk, the mundane and sadness.

My father never intended to share this with the world but as it is an uncommon and extraordinary record of the real WWII experience, I have decided to share this part of it.

When he was 80 years of age, he wrote his life story at my request which also covered his WWII experience. Where he provided additional information to the diary, I have included that in brackets as well.

My father used slang and abbreviations throughout the diary as was the service men's habit. Where I considered it necessary, I have provided my interpretation or explanation in brackets and normal type set, not in italics, which is the edited transcript from the diary.

#### ***Friday 1st September 1944***

*Had our excitement last night when W/O Simonds out on a navigational trip, returned about 11:30 pm and ran out of runway.*



*Fortunately, the aircraft didn't burn and they all got out in one piece. The kite is a write off. Later in the evening or rather early morning, W/O Dunnan came back with his dinghy missing from his engine nacelle. Apparently, his starboard tyre burst while they were on patrol and that had the effect of blowing the dinghy out. They returned and spun around on landing. The undercart collapsed, but once again no fire, thank God. All the crew are O.K.*

*We are on the move again, first to Foggia and then on to Ancona, which is quite close to the Gothic Line. (a 200-mile defensive line from La Spezia on the Mediterranean coast to Pesaro on the Adriatic coast)*

*I have a feeling that the war is nearly over. The Allies are in Sedan (France) near the Belgium frontier and further south they are in the Argonne Forest, which is about 70 miles from Germany.*

*I shall be very glad when it is all over. I hear that S/L McKay is back in England, the lucky dog.*

*I threw a terrific party in our mess the night my promotion came through. Guthrie joined in with me as his F/Lt also came along.*

#### **Friday 8th Sept 1944**

*My promotion is back dated to 18th August. Whacko.*

*Well, we are at Foggia or should I say some of us are at Foggia. As ever some bright boy mucked up our arrangements and now we are scattered to the seven seas.*

*We have our aircrews and a small number of tradesmen here. While at Cagliari our road party are sitting, waiting for a ship. They were on a ship, but were put back on to the wharf due to some cock-up. Our ship party is in the B.P.D (Base Personnel Disposal?) at Naples but as all our tentage is at Cagliari, they must stay where they are.*

*I was in charge of the Rear Party, which became rather protracted as the D.C. 3's wouldn't take their full 5,000 lb load. After much argument, we got an additional 3 D.C3's.*

*Our camp here is near a vineyard and some farm houses. Fortunately, the farmers allow the boys to get the grapes which saves us a great deal of trouble. The farm houses fix our laundry, thank God.*

*A Bruce Thomas, Observer, has turned up. He used to work for Willy Colder, seems a good type.*

*Simonds had some bad luck on arrival here. He lost some fabric from his wing and came in fast, bounced and ground looped. Lucky to get away with it.*

*The flies and mosquitoes are bad here, very bad, but I'm told that they are worse at Ancona. What a life.*

### **Sunday 10th September**

*Still at Foggia. Really a lovely day, sun shining with a pleasant breeze blowing. It rained during the night and now there is that fresh earthy smell. I expected to go to Ancona in charge of the ground party, as the aerodrome is U/S, but now I'm not sure what is going to happen. Our departure has been delayed for a further day or so, maybe I'll fly now. Haven't got a clue. Had a lot of photos from Laurie Le Guay (Squadron photographer). They are a bit of a "line shoot", but will go down at home very well.*

*Took some fellows to supper in at the Officers Club. A really good evening was spoilt by some silly coot from 73 Squadron wanting to fight another bloke. I get very impatient with fellows who cannot hold their liquor. Such fellows should be more careful when "having the odd noggin".*

*George Riddoch is a good dependable type and I like him and his crew. Good fellows.*

*The Beaus from 272 pranged the Italian Liner "Rex" a night or so ago. They got 59 rockets into her, below the water line. Just as well they got her, as we were lined up to go and bomb her. I would much rather protect shipping than prang it. A ship is such a lovely thing and I hate to see one wrecked. The coast line of the Med and the Adriatic is lined with wrecks. Isn't war a bloody silly pastime.*

### **Tuesday 19th September**

*In Ancona, Falconara Aerodrome really. I came up with the advance party by road, but we have since developed into a detachment. It is a pleasant spot, fairly close to the front line, which is about 35 miles away. We can hear the guns and see the flashes from our 'drome,*

*while life is made more entertaining by the Ack-Ack in Ancona, as we get the "shoofti" kite over fairly often. Yes, there is a war on up here alright.*

*(Falconara was the nearest 'drome capable of taking heavy aircraft. The conditions were shocking. Heavy rain made the aerodrome taxiways almost impossible. The mud was at least 1 foot deep.)*

### ***Tuesday 3rd October***

*We haven't flown for about four days and in all probability, we won't fly for another four days. We are just about flooded out.*

*All our fellows are under a roof, fortunately, as this ground is very sticky and it would be most unpleasant under canvas.*

*We sent the odd gharry (truck) into Rimini and "won" a certain amount of furniture and crockery for the mess. With any luck at all, our mess will be really good.*

*I'm glad of an opportunity to run a pukka detachment. It was a bit difficult to start with, but it is much easier now. The Adjutant sent up an Orderly Room Dog who copes with most trouble in that direction. Whittem distinguished himself by taxi-ing into a drain, which didn't help matters. Wrecked the stern frame and geodetics, rear wheel housing etc*

*Tyres have been our main trouble, but we appear to be over the worst of that now. The Wimpy Bomber Wing at Foggia were getting 1.7 (average) landings per tyre. Ours must have been about the same.*

*Dusty Miller put up a good show a few nights ago. He found, bombed, and illuminated a 1,000 tonner plus E.V.'s for the Beaus, who really fixed it. They are doing a damn fine job.*

*The Group Captain here at Falconara is a wizard bloke. Prosser Hanks, a Battle of Britain type. This mess is one of the best I've been in for a long time. Bob Drewitt, a last war pilot of 56 Squadron fame, S/L Waghams, the best Flying Control Officer I've yet met also a 1914-18 pilot, S/L Plunkett, the Admin King, a most obliging fellow. F/Lt "V. G." King Intelligence type, a bloody funny man. W/C Lewis, Wingco flying all, go to make a very happy Wing.*

*Going in to Ancona to have a look at our flat and have a bath.*



## **28th October Saturday**

*Many changes and more worries. Chiefly my main worry is about an attempt to steal one of our Wimpies and, although the attempt was unsuccessful, I feel there is bound to be repercussions. We had a guard on our A/C and our guard as the only A/C guard on the entire aerodrome and they had to pinch our A/C.*

*Once again, the aerodrome is in a hell of a mess and although the runway has been completed, it is virtually impossible to get to the runway.*

*Archie Fell, Don Wright, Esau and Old Drinkwater have gone back to Foggia to be T.E.'d (Tour expired) Crusher Jones and Shorty Coulter, Peter Hedgecock and Johnny Sheerlock, have also been Tour expired. I'm glad because they have "had it". Joe Bartlett has also gone on his way. Joe is a very brave man.*

*The G.C. Hanks has been posted and we had a party last night. G.C. MacDonald of Alghero is here in his stead. Couldn't be a greater change. It will be very interesting to see what happens. I still want to go back to England and hope it can be fixed.*

*I hear Cyril Edwards had some bad luck. He got pickled and fell off the roof of the Rest Camp in Naples. Injured his spine I'm told.*

*Our flat in Ancona is in really fine fettle now and Relda, our Italian cook, is doing very well. Her interest in the flat is remarkable, which is just as well, as it is hard to run it with so few officers available.*

## **Sunday 12th Nov**

*Saturday and Sunday. Days of bad weather, icing at 1000 feet and even under. Attempts to find crews in the drink.*

*What a life. Yesterday the American Bomber Group were out in really bloody weather and sure enough the noon hour was full of "mayday" calls and S.O.S. W/T messages.*

*Fighter Ops rang and asked me if we could help and we said we would. The Met man had a hell of a gloomy tale to tell. Cu. Nim with low cloud, down to 400-500 feet. No picnic. Didn't like sending old Riddoch out in that, so our crew went to have a look.*

*Old Dave, the Met King, was right; it was bad. Two great water spouts up to 2,000 feet. The Fighter Controller tried to control us, but*

*it is not satisfactory with G.R. Wimps. The spot where the fellows were in the sea was under a whacking great cloud. The water was trying to start a water spout, but couldn't quite do it. Ye Gods, it was very very rough under that cloud and we had to come out. Poor fellows in the drink, we had to leave 'em there because our auxiliary oil pump went for a "burton" and our oil temps were rising. When we taxied in "R" was running, so we stopped and found that George Riddoch had been ordered to look for two-star Reds. I rang the Group Captain and got the sortie scrubbed, just was well or we would have had a Wimp in the sea as well.*

*Sunday was a day of panic. At about noon Kim Bates, the G.R Controller rang up and said that as the G.C. was out, would I come to Ops as I was acting Station Commander.*

*(For about 3 days I was the Station Commander. The Group Captain had gone walkabout with an English actress, who was touring the stations to entertain the troops. I rather fancy the G.C. was more than entertained.)*

*That shakes me. I dashed over, to see the usual panic. The Americans were out again. "May day" calls and W/T SOS messages were howling in. It is most difficult to sort out Who's Who, as quite a number of the Yanks forget to give their call sign. Old George Riddoch was out on an ASR (Air Sea Rescue) job, so we sent old Snow Slater out to do what he could. Weather again, but not as bad as yesterday. (The Americans were bombing the Polesti Oil Wells and they were being badly mauled. I will never forget their aircraft trying to land. I really enjoyed the Falconara detachment, as I was able to make all my decisions and were well away from H.Q.)*

*Had an amusing interlude today when I was in the Met Office. Old King one of the forecasters, was giving S/L Fox some "gen" when Fox said. "Isn't it a curse, six weeks before going home and the Jerries have pranged my house". King said "Did they knock the roof off?" and Fox said "Yes, the whole lot". King replied "Oh, I only lost half of our roof". That is the amazing outlook of the English. "Oh, I only lost half of mine". If it had been me, I would have been moaning like hell about it, but he was quite pleased that one half remained.*

*Alice wrote and said that she had been bombed and about half of her home was rendered U/S. No moan about it, just casually mentioned it. Makes you think y'know.*

*We, 287 Wing, are having a dance here on Wednesday. Should be quite a "do". Must admit I'm really looking forward to it. Haven't been "social" for ages.*

### **Tuesday 6th Dec 1944**

*Back to Foggia and perhaps it is just as well. The mud here now is quite indescribable. An ordinary gharry is useless and we rely on our four-wheel drive jobs. We have been signalled to return to Base, so today has been spent packing up. Got four gharries up from base and tomorrow off we go. Jack Aitken is in the No.1 Canadian Hospital with a compound fracture of his left leg. Hit by a jeep while riding a motor bike. This wing have been mighty decent to us and while our operations have been very difficult to get air borne, it seems to have been a happy ship.*

### **Sunday 8th Jan 1945**

*As usual I seem to be slipping well behind with this little book. Back from Ancona and then I went to Rome on leave. I managed to get a ride in a DC3 over to Rome and stayed at the New Zealand Club. That is quite a place. Had a nice single room with private bath attached and it really made the place.*

*Met a Naval Lt Jim Bridgland from Melbourne and he had a jeep so that made our holiday a very pleasant one. The Australian Comforts Fund have a place there and here, I met three Australian girls who were married to Italians. The poor devils really are up against it. Food, clothing, money - everything almost impossible for them to obtain. Felt very sorry, but what can one do?*

*I went down to Naples to see what could be done about a posting to England. Saw the necessary department, but the big white chief (BWC) was out. Fixed up an aircraft to fly me back to Foggia and while I was out waiting to pick it up, I met the BWC who had just landed from Malta. We had a natter and he promised his aid. Am keeping my fingers crossed now and must wait and see.*



*Flew back in a Fairchild and the Sgt who was flying it promptly got lost in the mountains. As the clouds were right down on the mountains, I didn't take a very good view of it. No future flying up valleys that are liable to finish and not being able to climb up out of it because of icing. After 2:30 we finally arrived at Foggia. Went up and had another go at the Hun, this time as a pair.*

*Took up another crew who were very young and very keen. We had a contact deep into the heavy flak area at Venice. We let 'em come out and they were attacked for 2.5 hours at least. I was there for 2.5 hours and it was still going on. Guess there were some very despondent Huns up there.*

*I went up to Ancona for a Naval Conference and was again entertained to lunch by Captain Dickinson. He is a very fine fellow and, despite his bluff outlook, is a very decent fellow. Old Bob Drewitt was in evidence as usual and Doug Maitland {Lt/Com}, the Canadian, was in great form, as usual. W/C Harvey came down to look at some of their M.T.B.'s and I must say I like boats. There is something about a boat. The Navy turned on its usual gin and we fairly staggered away at the end. Great blokes, the Navy.*

*My crew have been tour expired, also McCann. It won't be long before I'm on my way, I hope. There is a new crowd in and the old crowd should move on. McCann, Peter Campbell, Bishop, Bert Sleight, Lofty Chambers and Carr have done a good tour and are good fellows.*

*My father was also tour expired and by 6<sup>th</sup> February was in Gibraltar, and eventually Australia in October 1945.*

My question this time is:

- Does anyone recognise any servicemen from Queensland that my father has referred to?

**Brett can be contacted on**

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**or contact Roland Orchard [editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)**



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

MEB0237

Above -Foggia, Italy. January 1945. Armourers of No. 458 Squadron RAAF at Foggia airfield prepare to bomb-up a Vickers Wellington aircraft prior to its take-off on a night anti-shipping airstrike.



Photo above from the Official 458 Squadron Album. Falconara airstrip-(perforated steel plate runway) – 1944 – North of Ancona, Italy. 458 Sqdn. Wellingtons on the far side of the runway.



## Victoria Flight Report by Roland Orchard



458 Squadron Co-President Bert O'Leary, pictured above, seated on the right with sons Mark (left and directly behind Bert) and Paul (right), turns 100 in January, 2025. Bert has unfortunately had a couple of falls over the last few weeks however remains in good spirits. We are hopeful of a visit from representatives of the RAAF to recognise Bert's wartime service and of course his 100<sup>th</sup>. On behalf of all 458 Squadron Association members, we wish you all the very best for this lifetime achievement.

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY BERT for the 14<sup>th</sup> January, 2025.**



It is with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Peggy Hull (photos below), wife of Bill Hull. Peggy was 100 years and 10 months and died on the 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2024. Our sincere condolences to Peggy's daughter Andrea and the Hull family.



Recently, it was nice to hear from Cecilia Temple from Stratford, Victoria. Cecilia sent me some photos, including the plaque made 30 years ago by her cousin for Cecilia's Dad, Cecil Percy, a 458 Squadron Veteran. (below)



Cecilia also sent a photo of the front cover of the Stratford Town Crier featuring Cecil (pictured next page on the left with moustache) as one of 4 Veterans commemorated at the Stratford Cemetery on the occasion of Remembrance Day 2023.

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**SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER, 1PM**  
**STRATFORD CEMETERY**

*Honouring Our*  
**WORLD WAR II**  
*Men & Women*

A Commemoration Day will be held at Stratford Cemetery on Sunday 12 November. Come and see the certificates and read the stories of our World War 2 service personnel who are interred in our cemetery. Men and women who returned from service to their community. Army, Navy and Air Force members, each with a unique life story.

*Details on page 2*

Below is a pre-war photo of Cecil Percy, enjoying his much loved sport, motorcycle side car racing.





A note to the readers from Cecilia-



I am forwarding an article about Goldfish club (see photo of the GF club badge); it may be of interest to 458 members.

My father Cecil Percy (dec) was a member of the Goldfish Club which is a worldwide club, currently with 500 members. Only AirForce personal can be members. To be a member you have to be rescued at sea following aircraft crash. My dad ditched at sea following the aircraft icing up on the wings. The aircraft was doing a submarine search out of Malta. There were two survivors out of crew of fourteen, a flying boat came to pick up survivors from dad's aircraft, sadly it crashed on take-off, because it was overloaded. So, to this day I don't know who the other survivor was. I know that Harry Baines (dec) picked up both survivors by boat, both went to Malta for medical treatment. (See page 129 of We Find and Destroy 2001 edition) If any 458 members know anything about this incident I would love to know. The goldfish club was started by 457 Squadron WW2, and it to this day run by volunteers.

Cecilia Temple (Cecil Percy was my Father)

**If anyone knows more, please contact Roland Orchard**  
[editor@458raafsquadron.org](mailto:editor@458raafsquadron.org)

## **Extract from 458 Squadron RAAF WW2 Fatalities**

[Honour Roll | 458 RAAF Squadron](#)

**Scroll down and click on link to the AWM Record of our Fallen under the RCAF Honour Roll**

*Wellington Serial number: Z 1218*

*Radio call sign: FU – D*

*Unit: 458 Sqn RAAF Summary: Wellington Z1218 took off from RAF Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire, at 1839 hours on the night of 20/21st October 1941 to bomb the Antwerp docks, Belgium. Ten*

*aircraft from the Squadron took off on the mission, and of these Z1218 failed to return.*

**This was the first operational mission of 458 Squadron.**

**Crew:**

**RAF Sgt P J M Hamilton, Captain (Pilot)**

**RAAF 400410 Sgt P G Crittenden, (2nd Pilot)**

**RAF PO Fawkes, D K (Observer)**

**RAF Sgt A Y Condie, (Wireless Operator)**

**RAF Sgt T Jackson, (Front Air Gunner)**

**RAF Sgt P G E A Brown, (Rear Air Gunner)**

*Post war it was established by a Missing Research and Enquiry unit that the aircraft crashed at Marchienne on 20/10/1941 presumably as a result of enemy action. Marchienne is located approx 2 miles south west of Charleroi, Belgium. Sgt Brown (RAF) was a POW but all the rest of the crew were killed. They are buried in the Charleroi Communal Cemetery, which is approx 28 miles south of Brussels, Belgium. W R Chorley states that Sgt Crittenden was the first Australian serving in Bomber Command to be killed on operational flying with an RAAF Squadron. **by Alan Storr***

I (Roland) bring the above to your attention, not only to bring to the forefront the memory of our honourable dead, the first fatalities for 458 Squadron but once again, the power of our glorious website. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 2024, I received an email from a historian from the Free University of Brussels (1973), Claire Dujardin.

Claire's email reads:

*I am a Belgian Historian of the Free University of Brussels (1973). I am interested by the Diggers in the WW1 in Charleroi (Belgium) and also by the Australian WW2 aircrews buried in the Charleroi cemetery.*

*For the moment, I am writing an article on the crash of the Wellington Z 1218 in Mont-sur-Marchienne. I read an article of the grandson of Sgt Percival George BROWN (POW), James Fitzmaurice (ref ; <https://www.458raafsquadron.org/2020-266-september.pdf>).*



*I send this message to ask permission for photos of 3 members of the aircrew, P.G. Crittenden, Percival Brown and the pilot Hawkes if I may use the photos to illustrate my article and to expose in the Museum of Charleroi.*

*I am a volunteer in the Memorial Museum of Charleroi that is a military museum. The Museum has little pieces of the Wellington given by an old man of Mont-sur-Marchienne who had the pieces. It is why I write the article. My friend of Brisbane, Ms Alison McCallum, can also edit the article in English if you want for your Association of the 458 Squadron.*

*For the Remembrance Day 2019, all the Australian WW1 soldiers and Australian WW2 aircrew men received crosses from Australian schools of Canberra thanks to Arnaud Dusaucy, Head of Mission at the Belgian Embassy at Canberra. Thus, your men are in good hands here.*

*Thank you for reading.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Claire Dujardin*

Our communications have been numerous which have included our 458 member, James Fitzmaurice. As you read in Claire's email, James is the grandson of the survivor of Z 1218, Sgt. Brown. Claire will be releasing her article when she has finished it and has allowed me to publish it in a future edition of the 458 Newsletter.

Thank you Claire for your kind, caring and compassionate nature, not only to our 458 Squadron fallen but our Australian Diggers who served and died in Europe during both World Wars. Claire, you truly deserve all of our appreciation from the 458 Squadron Association members all over the world.

**by Roland Orchard.**



## Canada Flight Report by Adam & Cate Wagstaffe



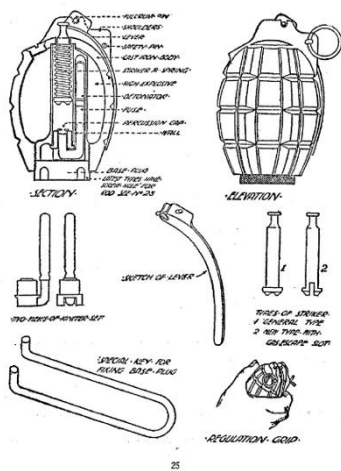
*WOII Peter Edwyn Elkford Brown (W/Op.)*

181,000 British Columbians enlisted in World War II. 4,236 soldiers enlisted from Westminster Regiment, which is where our story begins. Peter Brown worked for B.C. Electric for 12 years as a clerk, meter reader and collector in Chilliwack BC, and incredibly, he lived on Wellington Street. His hobbies were wireless telegraphy (theory and code) and recreational rifle shooting. It only seemed right, that he would join the Westminster Regiment in 1940 and begin his heroic journey, starting with Blair Rifle

Range in North Vancouver, where these two 458 newsletter contributors (Adam and Cate) now reside minutes away from. Blair Range was an ideal location for military training as it was isolated and still had road access. Most of British Columbia is remote (even today) and only accessible by logging roads which are frequently shut in the winter months. The famed Westminster Regiment (known colloquially as the Royal Westies) used the range for training. With no official transport, they hired a lumber truck and an old Ford truck; often overloaded with men and with an overheating engine on the bumping logging road to the range every day.

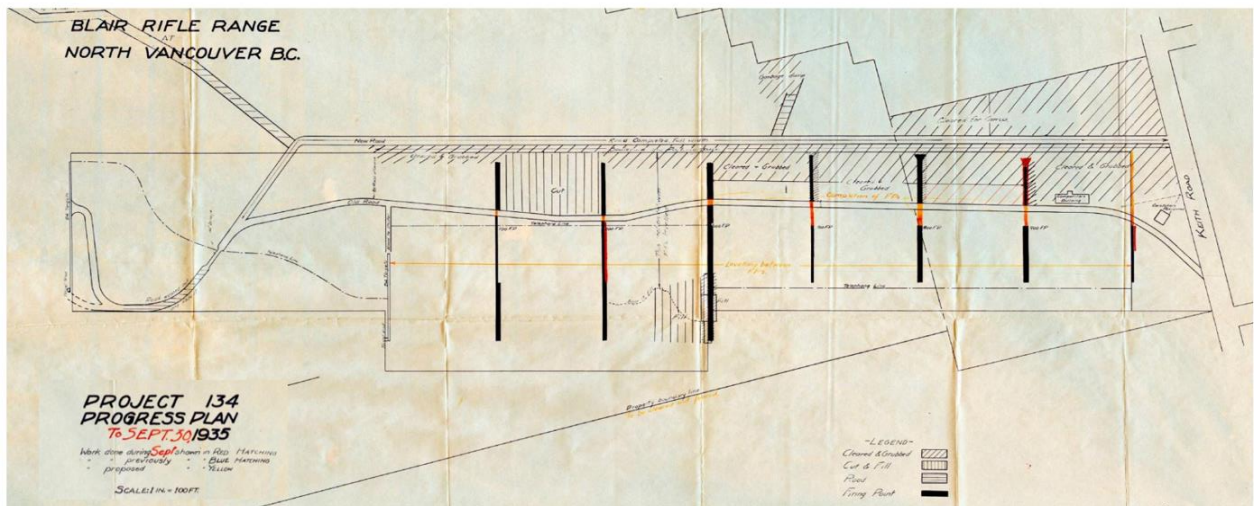


*"A" Company of the 2nd Battalion Westminster Regiment at Blair Range, North Vancouver BC for machine gun practice.*



The range was used for numerous military weapons included the Lee Enfield Mark IV rifle (.303 caliber), the Bren Light Machine Gun and the #36 Mills Bomb pineapple grenade. Though Peter trained here for his firearms qualification, the school was initially used during the Great Depression to house unemployed and homeless men. Not entitled to relief payment after the age of 16 many British Columbians did not want to burden

their families and congregated in Vancouver from across Canada, living in 'hobo jungles' along the railway tracks. The rifle range would have been a modest haven for WWI veterans and seasonal workers compared to the shanty towns we all associate the 1930s with.



Property Plan of the Blair Rifle Range, North Vancouver  
[www.leelau.net/2016/CMHC/assets/4706%20Sacuto%20Blair%20Range%20article.pdf](http://www.leelau.net/2016/CMHC/assets/4706%20Sacuto%20Blair%20Range%20article.pdf)

Unfortunately, today, the range sits derelict behind a bramble-covered chain link fence. It is often under hot debate in District of North Vancouver council meetings on whether it will be developed into more housing. Because of the heavy military presence on the 110 acres, the land and groundwater have been left contaminated with lead, copper, miscellaneous metal and possibly unexploded munitions, which only became apparent in the 1970s. A lot of work would be required to restore or redevelop the area and find those missing pineapple grenades!

In March of 1941 Peter enlisted in the RCAF Special Reserves. His interviewer summarized Peter as “a very decent, smart man, mature, fond of and has studied radio to the point of getting his radio operator’s amateur ticket. However, wants to be an Air Gunner. Is a good shot, excellent family background and strongly recommended.”

In July of 1941 Peter went to No. 2 Wireless School, (course no. 22) in Calgary, Alberta. Each participant required a minimum of 5 hours of flying time as 1<sup>st</sup> Operator, Listening Watch



<https://bcatp.wordpress.com/2018/11/29/no-2-wireless-school/>



and Sole Operator to qualify as an Air Operator. Peter had over 9 hours of flying time.

He underwent ground training courses in theory, radio equipment, Morse, procedure, signal organization, armament, drill and PT. He received his Wireless Operators Badge in December of 1941.

In January of 1942 he transferred to No. 2 Bombing & Gunnery School at RCAF Station Mossbank in Saskatchewan. In the course of the entire war, 6241 personnel graduated from the school, including Peter. A substantial number of non-Canadian graduates were Australians, Britons and New Zealanders.

In B & G School, Ansons were used for the training of bomb-aimers and “Bolies” (The Bristol Bolingbroke was a Canadian-built versions of the British light bomber Blenheim IV) were used for gunnery training. A Bolingbroke or Lysander target tug would put a drogue or target 300 feet behind it while other Bolingbroke’s flew parallel to the drogue and opened fire from their turrets at the drogue. Each Bolingbroke carried three trainee gunners (Peter being one of them), each with their own coloured rounds of ammunition. Matching the holes in the drogue with the colours used indicated each trainees

score.

Alternatively, two Bolingbroke’s would fly line astern while a third attached them from the side and rear, using a “curve of pursuit. Arni Olafson, another graduate from the school, recounted



*(Image above) The Bristol Fairchild Bolingbroke was a maritime patrol aircraft and trainer used by the RCAF during WW2. It was a license-built version of the Bristol Blenheim MK IV bomber.*

of an attack training exercise in which a young airman became airsick and looked around desperately before depositing his lunch in his own boot.



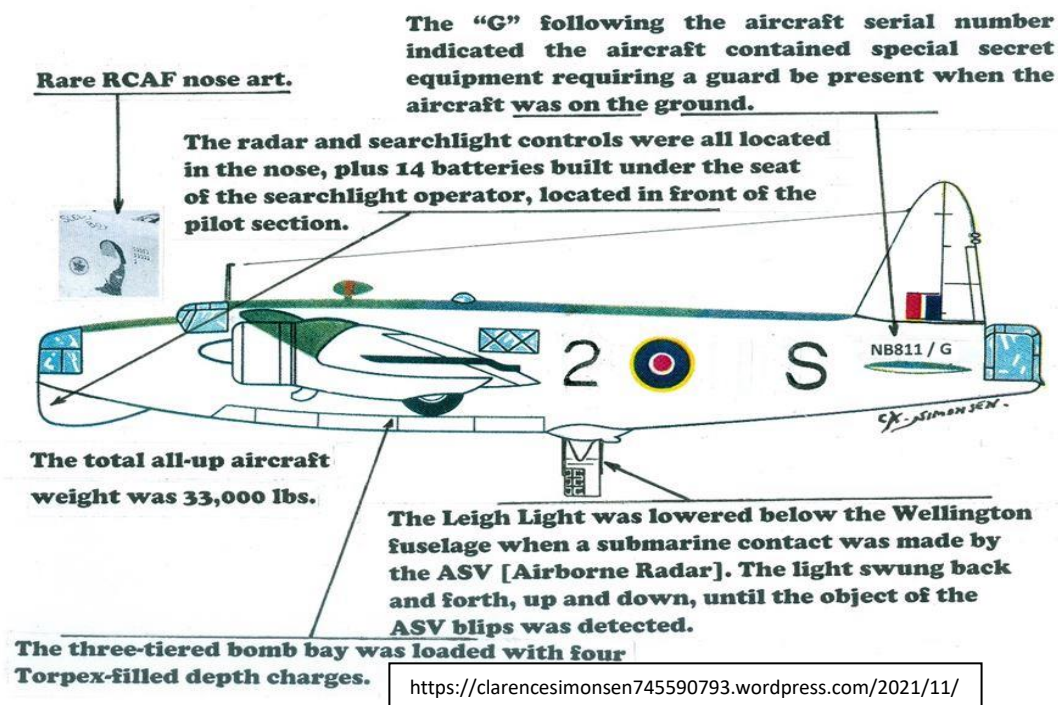
*The No. 1 Radio School Crest*

In early 1942, Peter would take the same arduous journey as Perry King (see 458 Newsletter No.275 December 2023). They would depart. by ship from Halifax, Nova Scotia bound for England and the No.3 Personnel Reception Centre RAF in Bournemouth. Peter went on to No. 1 Signal School, renamed No. 1 Radio School in January of 1942. This school was specifically designed for Wireless Operators and remained open until the end of National Service in the early 1960s.

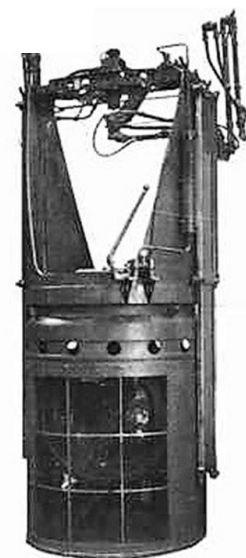
In July 1942, Peter went on to No. 3 Coastal Operational Training Unit, initially designated for training the aircrew for Vickers Wellingtons, based at RAF Haverfordwest. Wireless Operators and Air Gunners operators swapped jobs either by arrangement or as detailed by the captain.

The A.S.V (Air to Surface Vessels) was, by modern standards, an elementary form of Radar, which was highly secret at the time, even to the point that aircraft had a 'G' painted on the fuselage, indicating that they were to be guarded at all times, while they were on the ground. By sending out impulses, it could detect return blips on a cathode ray tube. One could use either front aerials with a spread of 30 degrees or so, or side aerials with a spread of 20 degrees. Its range and accuracy varied according to the height of the aircraft and the weather. When working well (it could have off days) it could detect a ship at 15 to 20 miles, and land, if it was a rocky coast, at 30 to 40 miles. A low coast did not show up satisfactorily and a rough sea would mix up the return signal. **Radar, Air to Surface Vessel, Mark II**, or **ASV Mk. II** for short, was an airborne sea-surface search radar developed by the UK's Air Ministry immediately prior to the start of World War II. It was the first aircraft-mounted radar of any

sort to be used operationally. It was widely used by aircraft of the RAF Coastal Command.]



It was the Mk. II equipped Fairey Swordfish that located the German battleship *Bismarck* in heavy overcast skies, torpedoing her and leading to her destruction the next day. Mk. II was only partially effective against the much smaller U-boats, especially as the signal faded as the aircraft approached the target and they would lose contact at night. To close the gap, the Leigh light was introduced (pictured right), allowing the U-boat to be picked up visually after it passed off the radar display. With the introduction of the Leigh light, nighttime U-boat interceptions became common, and turned the German ports in the Bay of Biscay into deathtraps. Peter was trained as an ASV operator here and thereafter had the designation S.E. Or S.I. (Special or Secret equipment or instrument) operator.



*(Image above Right) The Leigh Light was a 22-million candlepower, 24-inch searchlight manufactured by Savage & Parsons.*  
<https://clarencesimonsen745590793.wordpress.com/2021/11/>



It is likely while at RAF Lyneham pending overseas posting (coincidentally the current location for Defense College of Communications and Information Systems, where No. 1 Radio School headquarters is) Peter Brown would be permanently crewed with Pilot and Flight Sergeant Lawrence Harry Gleason and the rest of the crew who were all Canadian, except one lone Brit.



*L-R: Harold Stanley, Eric Brown (lone Brit), Laurence Gleason, Maurice Kempton, Wendell Drew, & Peter Brown*

Having completed the Wellington conversion and coastal training with No.3 (c) OTU Peter and the rest of the crew were posted to Middle East Command in December of 1942. They would have flown a Wellington, likely a Mark V111, to the Middle East completing a Bay of Biscay patrol along the way. They were initially posted to 69 Squadron RAF. This was the same "Warburton's Airforce" squadron that Perry King and crew (newsletter No.275) would join about a month later. The same 69 squadron of Malta fame comprising a ragtag group of top pilots and crew flying Spitfires, Baltimores,



Beaufighters and Wellingtons on P.R. (Photo Reconnaissance) and shipping attack missions.

As we have written about before, the conditions in Malta at the end of 1942 were still dire and squadron records were naturally not of the highest order. In many cases the mission crews were identified by the captain's name only, (the rest of the crew sometimes filled in by hand later), the aircraft by a single letter or even the nickname of the operational type of Wellington:

<b>Goofington</b>	<b>ASV and Flare Equipped Wellington</b>
<b>Fishington</b>	<b>Torpedo carrying Wellington</b>
<b>Snoopington</b>	<b>Recce/ Flare equipped Wellington</b>

A note of interest: at this time the Leigh Light had not been introduced to the Middle East, so Wellingtons often worked in pairs such that a Goofington and a Fishington, which would be on patrol in the same area at the same time. The plan would be that if a target was identified with the ASV radar by the Goofington, the Fishington would start the attacking run on the bearing given by the Goofington and then the Goofington would light up the target with a flare for the Fishington to pinpoint its torpedo drop. Cumbersome, but it worked. With the introduction of the Leigh Light on the Mark X1V used by 458th RAAF, a single Wellington could track the target with the ASV and light up the target while on the torpedo run.

We have been able to determine that Sgt Peter Brown, Flight Sgt Gleason and crew were kept incredibly busy with 69 squadron. From December 27th, 1942, to Jan 31<sup>st</sup>, 1943 they flew fourteen missions and amassed 124 hours of flying time, predominantly at night and mostly at less than 1000 feet over water.

Here are a few of those 14 missions, highlighted to identify Peter Brown and the rest of the crew:

Unit:	No.	SO	SQUADRON,	R.A.F.	Appendix	"A"	Fort:	541.	Month:	14.
Aircraft Type & No.	Crew	Time Up	Time Down	Time Down	Details of Work Carried Out.					
3rd Jan. 1945 R.U. Spitfire 906	Sgt. Lewis, J.	Photo rec- Palermo & Naples.	1030	1430	Naples. Raining and almost obscured Vis. practically nil. No photos or sightings: Palermo. Harbour just visible through small break-photos but reports doubtful. Either Trapani or Baglio Rizzo photos. Cloud 7/8/10 some large A/C on drone. Cape Vetroano. Photos. Visuals too difficult because of cloud. Pantellaria completely obscured by cloud. Vis. Good above cloud. Weather: stormy.					
4th Jan. 1945 R.U. Spitfire 584	W/Odr. A Warburton.	Photo rec- Palermo (Biscari)	0750	1135	Naples 1 hospital ship. 1 liner 5 M/Vs 8/10000 tons 2 M/Vs 2/4000 tons. 4/5 small D/Rs 2 Fiat 2/Rs photos taken. Castellamare. 1 light C/R 1 vessel under construction. photos taken in 2 runs. Palermo. 15 D/Rs 5 M/Vs 5/8000 tons 2 M/Vs 2/3000 tons and 1 of 4/5000 tons outside. Photos taken: Some flat Biscari. photos - no visual. Vis-Good. Weather - gusty.					
4th Jan. 1945 R.U. Spitfire 424	P/O Frazer, J.	Photo rec- Taranto & Messina.	0925	1310	Taranto 2 B/S 1 M/V 1,500 in outer harbour. 2 M/Vs 7000 1 M/V 5000 1 M/V 5000 1 M/V 2000 and 1 hospital ship. Photos taken. Messina 2 M/Vs 2000 tons 3 M/Vs 1,500 1 beached liner inside harbour. 3 C/Rs 3 D/Rs 1 tanker 7000 tons train ferry in harbour. Photos taken. Light A/A single bursts well below. direction accurate. Vis. and weather good.					
4th Jan. 1945 Wellington 'D' 818	S/Ldr. Cox #6 and crew SGT Lt. BICE SGT W. KEADALE SGT AN. BRADHAM	Shipping search Cape Bizerta area	1455	1812	288' Gozo 50 mls. found upper rear guns faulty turned for base. No sightings Weather stormy. Vis. Good.					
4th Jan. 1945 R.U. Spitfire 424	F/O Brown M.E.	Photo rec- Palermo.	1450	1705	Palermo: photos taken no change in harbour. Biscari photos taken. Sighted 10 small A/C on drone. Weather and Vis. Good.					
4/5 Jan. 1945 Wellington 'D' 728	F/Sgt. Gleason and crew SGT Lt. WEBB SGT Lt. DREW SGT Lt. BROWN	Patrol Maritimo/ Cavoli area	1715	0506	30 knot headwind commenced patrol. A/C blips evasive action taken 2/5 A/C near Pantellaria. Saw one when it passed overhead on reciprocal course to Wellington. resembled Savoia 79 but appeared to have twin tail. 090° to Wellington. climbed through thick cloud. Weather report to base on request from N. of Tunis 3750 N. 1250 E. blip investigated found nothing. 3 blips 152° Carbanara 38mls. investigated and dropped flares nothing seen although orbited 2 miles round big flare. 270° Maritimo 20mls. large and continuous rain squalls. 0547hrs. completed patrol. Weather: intermittent rain. Vis. poor. Dark. Clear in patches.					

Below is an example where Wellington is identified as "Goofington D" and the crew briefly mentions Flgt Sgt Gleason H.L. And the crew is U/K (unknown) we know of course that Peter Brown was on board and was the AVS operator.

27/26/12.					shipping contact flare dropped visual 1 sub-
Goofington 'D'	F/O Gleason, H.L. Crew U.K.	1755	0514	Patrol Cavoli Maritimo area.	marining 540 degrees speed 10 knots submerged after flare was dropped. 050 degrees Cape Len 10 miles probable aircraft contact was investigated - no sightings. 020 degrees Pantellaria 20 miles 2 aircraft contacts. 005 degrees Pantellaria 30 miles 2 aircraft contacts. 560 degrees Pantellaria 10 miles steered course for base having completed patrol. 560 degrees Pantellaria 10 miles had now jammed course of aircraft 020
27/28/12.	P.R.U. Spitfire 486	F/O Philpotts, H.E.	0550	0915	Patrolled to Cavoli at 1,700 feet. 050 degrees Cavoli 15 miles small contact no sightings. 070 degrees Cavoli 30 miles received message to alter search N to Ustica. 010 degrees Maritimo 33 miles picked up rooster homed on this but made no sightings and received no contacts having homed on rooster for 15 minutes. 215 degrees Maritimo 30 miles sighted 2 M/Vs in line astern course 260 degrees speed 25 knots. Signal sent to base. Vis.-fair. Weather - good.
28/12/42.					Messina Visual only 5 M/Vs, 1 D/R in harbour. 1 M/V 6/7000 tons, 2 M/Vs 4000 tons, 2 M/Vs 2/3000 tons, 1 M/V between F/S and S/S 4/4/4 No further observations due to darkness. Naples visual only 3 C/Rs and 1 C/R on its side. 210 degrees Imperatore 5 miles 3 D/Rs course 240/2500 at 15 knots. 0900 Syracuse 15 mls 1 hospital ship 10,000 tons 1600 at 10 knots.



Aircraft type and No.	Crew.	Time Rise up.	Down.	Type of out.	Details of work carried out.
Geoffington 'R'.	P/O W. Nash. Sgt. E.C. Noble. P/O R.K. Nichol. Sgt. J. S. Galloway. Sgt. J. H. Laughlin.	2030	2230	Special/Recco N. Sicily.	Flw on bearing 310 degrees for 35 minutes when S.E. went U/S. Stepped course for base.
30/31/43.					
Fishington 'H'.	P/O E.A. Spelman. Sgt. O.F. Edmunds. P/O H.A. O'Neil. Sgt. S.F. Phillip. Sgt. E.C. Thomas.	1723	0033	Shipping search N. Sicily.	045 degrees Pantellaria 33 miles sighted and contacted at least two night fighters showing red lights. Carried out search as ordered at 1,500 feet no sightings. 015 Pantellaria 40 miles sighted night fighters with three green cartridges. This was followed by 1 searchlight from Sicilian coast which swept area. 230 degrees Goro 8 miles sighted 4/8 small ships flashing lights. (Panic 2145 report to Navy who said: "only finding 44 boats old boys")
30/31/43.					
Fishington 'H'.	P/O W. Nash. Sgt. J.E. Hinde.	1722	0148	Shipping strike and search N. Sicily.	Carried out search as ordered at 2,000 feet. 100% covered no sightings.
30/31/43.					
Geoffington 'H'.				ASV patrol	ASV patrol from C. Armi. Carried out patrol 4 times at 2,000 feet without contacts or sightings 100% covered. 2 powerful searchlights illuminated aircraft from Catania. 060 degrees Cape Passero 30 miles from engine went U/S sent U/S and returned to base. (Panic 2145 report to Navy who said: "only finding 44 boats old boys")
30/31/43.					
Geoffington 'H'.				Block patrol	Carried out patrol as ordered 2,000 feet. 100% covered no contacts or sightings. Vis - Good. Weather - some showers.
30/31/43.					
Geoffington 'H'.					

*S. L.H. Gleason.  
P/O H.M. Kempton  
Sgt H.W. Organ.  
Sgt L.J. Laforet  
Sgt G.T. Drew.  
Sgt P.E. Brown*

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The last flight with 69 Squadron RAF was on the night of January 30/31, 1943. Flying Wellington "J" on a torpedo strike mission (A "Fishington" Wellington) they spotted a MV (motor vessel) but could not attack because there was not another Wellington with flares around to illuminate the torpedo run in the poor weather.

30th Jan. 1943.	P/O Nash & crew.	Shipping search N. of Sicily.	1045	1715	3 M/Vs and 1 tanker with 1 D/R and 2 escort only 12 mls. away from harbour coming from N. towards harbour outer 2 M/Vs and 2 escorts 2 ml behind same course speed very slow. No films so no photos. Tanker 2500 tons 1 M/V 2500 3 M/Vs 1/2000 1 D/R leaving harbour. In harbour 1 tanker 2000 5 M/Vs 5/6000 tons 3 D/Rs 3 escort vessels no F boats visible. Traps not covered owing to lack of films and petrol. Vis. Good weather Good.
30th Jan. 1943.	Sgt. Schulman & crew.	Shipping search toe & heel of Italy and Eastwards.	1330	1735	080° pt Alice 20mls. small schooner course 260° slow. 090° Cape Colone 20 mls. 1 small coaster 2/300 tons course 180° speed slow. 090° pt Stilo 15mls. 1 A/C U/I approaching from WNW but avoided. No contact. No further sightings. Weather: Good Vis. Good but hazy
30/31 Jan. 1943.	Sgt. Norton & Wellington 'B' crew.	Torpedo strike N. of Sicily.	0105	0355	S E went U/S sent message to base ordered to abandon task S/C far base.
30/31 Jan. 1943.	P/Sgt Gleason & Wellington 'J' crew.	Torp strike N of Sicily	0050	0650	3900 N. 1442 E sighted 1 M/V and 2 D/Rs course U/K orbited area could not attack without illumination owing to poor weather and Vis Good. No other A/C present.
30/31 Jan. 1943.	P/O Douglas & Wellington 'L' crew.	ASV patrol C.Armi coastwise to Toronto	1800	0440	240° C. Rizzuto 15mls. 2 blips dropped flares to investigate and sighted 2 small M/Vs 5/200 tons course 270° speed at 8 knots Patrol completed twice 100%. Received message from base to return 175° C. Spartivento (Italy) 17mls. S/C for base. Vis Bazy. Weather Good.

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On February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1943, all the "Special Duty" Wellington aircraft and crews of 69 Squadron RAF were transferred to 458th squadron RAAF. Operationally at first but officially as of February 15th. So, from February 1<sup>st</sup>, Peter Brown and the rest of the crew were now officially part of 458th RAAF. Unfortunately, their time with 458th would be limited. This now experienced crew (14 missions) would all, but one, die on their second mission (16th in total). The circumstances of that last flight do raise a question mark.

00:43 Fri Nov 29      \*\*\*      discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk      VPN 100%

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE & NUMBER	CREW	DUTY	TIME		DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REFERENCE
				UP	DOWN		
3/4th Feb.	Wellington. VIII. H.X.	J.R.126. P/O. Dodd. A. 120744. P/O. Kelly.H.A. J.2872. P/O. Wilson.R. R.24215. Sgt. Corcoran. R.21245. Sgt. Hiddill. 128279. P/Sgt. Carroll.	Captain. 2nd Pilot. Navigator. W./optr. S.I./optr. Rear Gunner.	0140.	0620.	Shipping Search and Strike Maritime/ Trapani Area. Cloud Strato Cumulus. Visibility good. Weather good, bumpy. No sightings during patrol.	
3/4th Feb.	Wellington. VIII. H.X.590."2".	108294. P/O. Douglas.J. 108274. Sgt. Smith. B.W. 75558. Sgt. Lake. J. 110919. Sgt. Gray.R.F. R.23320. Sgt. Howls. H. R.22808. Sgt. Dean. G.	Captain. 2nd Pilot. Navigator. W./optr. S.I./optr. Rear Gunner.	1750.	0150.	Shipping Search Cape Spartivento/Cape Colonne. Cumulus cloud. Visibility good, vary dark. Weather - good but showery. No sightings. 0055 hours - Oil pressure pipe burst when 70 miles from base. Sent W.G.R. "Engine Trouble."	
3/4th Feb.	Wellington. VIII. H.X.519."1".	112467. P/O. Taylor. J.L. 1364335. Sgt. Allier. G.R. 13240821. Sgt. McKenzie. 1022822. Sgt. Lyle. 1023149. Sgt. Milne. A.M. 85277. Sgt. Nicholls.	Captain. 2nd Pilot. Navigator. W./optr. S.I./optr. Rear gunner.	2515.	0545.	Shipping Search Cape Spartivento/Cape Colonne. No sightings on patrol.	
5/6th Feb.	Wellington. VIII. H.X.747.	R.62597. P/Sgt. Gleason. 128252. Sgt. Brown. E. J.2518. P/O. Kempton.H. R.28370. Sgt. Laforest. R.22208. Sgt. Brown. P.E. AMS.405158. Sgt. Armour.R.D.	Captain. 2nd Pilot. Navigator. W./optr. S.I./optr. Rear Gunner.	1240.	0500.	Patrol Trapani/Palermo Area. Sighted 4 destroyers Course 100 degrees speed 20 no other incidents.	

DETAIL OF WORK CARRIED OUT  
By No. 458 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron.  
For the Month of February 1943.

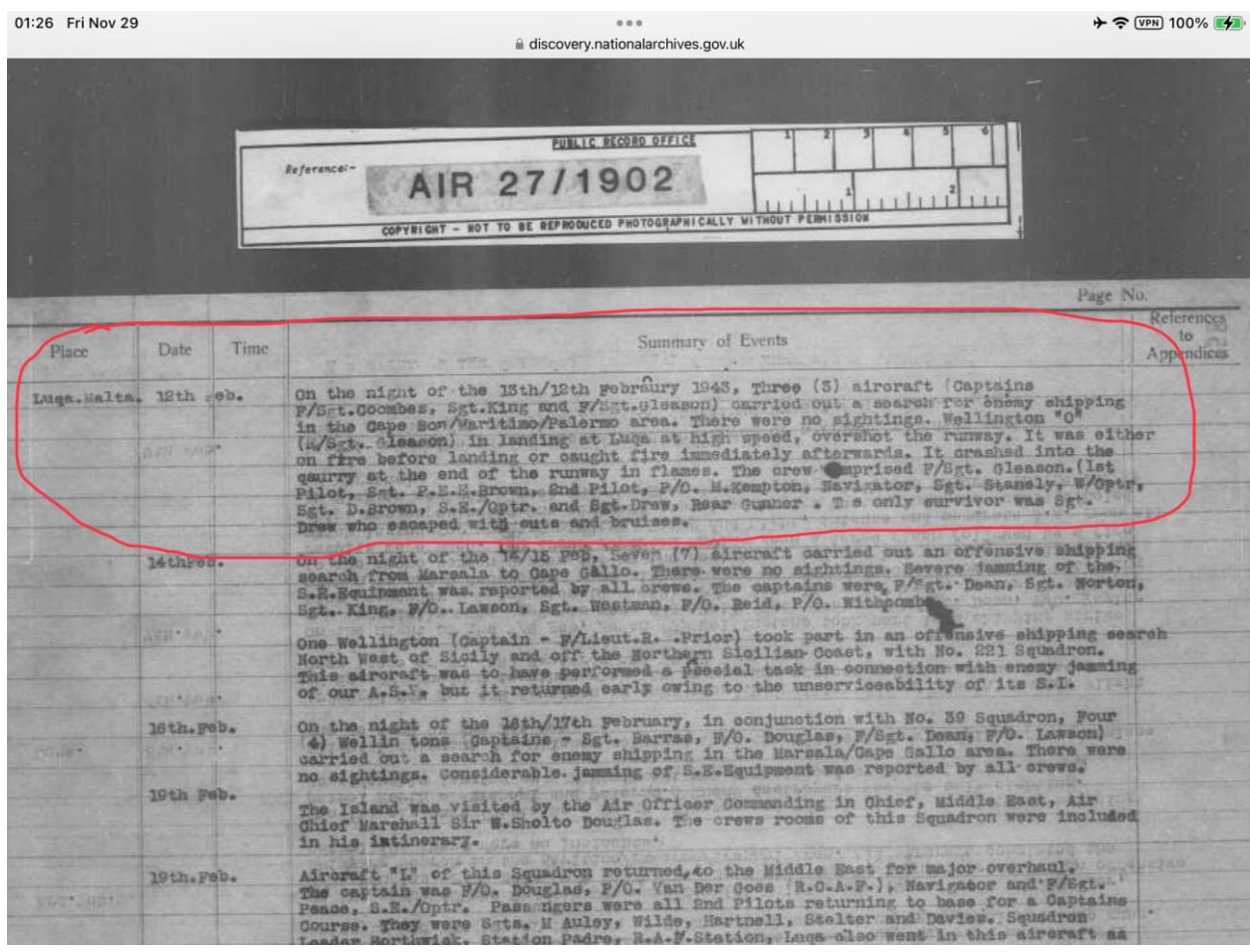
**SECRET**      Page No. 3

The first flight with 458th was on the night of February 05/06, 1943.

In Wellington Mk V111 Ser.HX747 from 1830-0300 hours, it is reported twice in the squadron records but was only one flight. They spotted 4 destroyers and tracked them but the AVS equipment operated by Peter Brown (and showing him as S.I. Operator) was continuously jammed by the enemy.



Their second and final flight with 458th was on February 15th. 1943. They took off with two others 458th Wellingtons on a shipping strike. The Wellingtons were captained by Flt Sgts Coombes, King (Perry King and like Peter Brown recent from 69 Squadron RAF) and Gleason (Peter Brown's pilot) Less than two hours after take-off all three aircraft reported serious oil issues with one of the two engines and all three immediately returned to base, about a 20-minute flight.



Flight Sergeants Coombes and King with their crews landed safely. Flight Sergeants Gleason, Sergeant Brown, and the rest of the crew crash landing at Luqa airdrome on their return. All but one of the crew died.

There is of course no evidence, certainly none documented in this case, but Malta and the aircraft stationed there did experience episodes of tampering and sabotage. On this night it was an apparent 'major coincidence' that the three Wellingtons all suffered

the same engine/oil issue at the same time and would have been refueled, oiled and armed at the same time in the same area.

As a side note: the Quarry at the end of the runway was featured prominently a year later, when a detachment of 458th back in Malta suffered the "Black" day of April 19th 1944. (Well documented by former UK President Leon Armstrong). The day that the Wagstaffe family commemorates.

DATE	AIRCRAFT TYPE	DUTY	DETAILS OF SORTIE OR FLIGHT	REF
15th Wellington Feb. 12th	1289528. Sgt. Brown. E. J.9518. P/O. Kempton. M. R.91441. Sgt. Stanley. H. R.92300. Sgt. Brown. PER R.75235. Sgt. Drew. W.T.	24. Crash Landed. On land anding, either terwards. Crew rew killed w gt Drew susta	Cape Bon/Maritime/Palermo. No other messages received. high speed-overshot on ore or catching fire immediately into quarry. All members of ption of Sgt. Drew (R/G). ts and bruises.	
15th Wellington Feb. 12th	Aus. 405788. F/Sgt. Coombes. F. R. 105554. Sgt. Coombes. Stelter. 2nd Pilot. Aus. 406591. F/Sgt. Dacey. C. Navigator. Aus. 400000. F/Sgt. M. Kay. J. W./Optr. 1181548. Sgt. Hackett. E.P. S.E./Optr.	1945. 2035. 1852. 2257.	Patrol. 15. extended coastwise to visibility 10 miles. Port Engine faulty. Oil pressure dropped 25lbs. and temperature going upfast. Signalled that returning to base. Shipping Strike Cape Sparivento/Taranto. Strato Cumulus Cloud. Visibility fair to poor. Weather very hazy. Sighted enemy night fighter, lost height rapidly to starboard and headed for for cloud. M/F. passed astern. No attack made. Signaled Base S.I.- U/S. (Jammed). Climbed again and M/F. reappeared astern slightly to stbd some distance away. Engine trouble starboard (sparks) not running rough, but with darkness and S.I. U/S rendered visual	

Reference - **AIR 27/1902**

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Place	Date	Time	Summary of Events	Page No.	References to Appendices
Luga, Malta	12th Feb.		On the night of the 15th/12th February 1943, Three (3) aircraft (Captains F/Sgt. Coombes, Sgt. King and F/Sgt. Gleason) carried out a search for enemy shipping in the Cape Bon/Maritime/Palermo area. There were no sightings. Wellington "O" (F/Sgt. Gleason) in landing at Luga at high speed, overshot the runway. It was either on fire before landing or caught fire immediately afterwards. It crashed into the quarry at the end of the runway in flames. The crew comprised F/Sgt. Gleason (1st Pilot, Sgt. P.E.H. Brown, 2nd Pilot, P/O. M. Kempton, Navigator, Sgt. Stanley, W/Optr, Sgt. D. Brown, S.E./Optr. and Sgt. Drew, Rear Gunner. The only survivor was Sgt. Drew who escaped with cuts and bruises.		
	14th Feb.		On the night of the 14/15 Feb, Seven (7) aircraft carried out an offensive shipping search from Marsala to Cape Gallo. There were no sightings. Severe jamming of the S.E. Equipment was reported by all crews. The captains were, F/Sgt. Dean, Sgt. Norton, Sgt. King, P/O. Lawson, Sgt. Westman, P/O. Reid, P/O. Withpash.		

Below are the 458th crew that that crashed February 15<sup>th</sup>, 1943:



**P/O Lawrence Harry Gleason (Pilot) RCAF R/87397**

Born in Canara Saskatchewan and worked for the Post Office before enlisting in 1941. He smoked 10 cigarettes a day, the odd beer or two, and played senior hockey (sounds like a typical born a bread Canadian). Lawrence was keen, intelligent, courteous, and eager to fly. He died age 25.

**F/O Maurice McAllister Kempton (Obs) RCAF R/94642**

Maurice graduated from Central Collegiate in Moose Jaw and studied Electrical Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan before returning home to work at the BA Refinery. He was well composed, intelligent, often very direct which made him good officer material. An asthenic gentleman who loved motorcycles. He died age 29.



**Sgt. Harold Ernest Stanley (W/Op. & Air/Gnr) RCAF R/91441**

Born in Nigeria, West Africa to Canadian missionary parents of the Minna Diocese, Harold worked at Walter Coles & Sons Limited Caterers Restaurant in Toronto as a table hand. He was apprenticing to become a baker at Sutton West when he enlisted in January of 1941. Harold was exceptionally keen and quick to understand, learn and solve difficulties, apt to jump at conclusions. He had a smart appearance but was considered very quiet and shy. He died age 22.

**WO2 Peter Edwyn Elkford Brown (W/Op. & Air/Gnr) R/92308 RCAF**

Peter's sister Marjorie passed away in 2007. She is survived by her husband and three children. We reached out to one of Peter's nephews and hope to learn more about Peter, sadly not in time for this publication. Peter died age 32.



**Fl/Sgt Wendell Pierce Drew (W/Op. & Air/Gnr) R/75285 RCAF**

Wendell is not listed on the 458 Honour Roll. Wendell was the lone survivor of the plane crash. He spent 6 months convalescing before reporting back to the recruiting depot and retraining in the Lancaster. He bounced around various squadrons before moving to 405 squadron in June 1944. Wendell died in another plane crash with 405 Squadron on July 29, 1944. He died age 23.

**Sgt. Eric Ansell Brown (Second Pilot) RAF 1289528**

The UK is a little stricter on archive information and only allow direct family members access at this time. Eric was born in Edmonton Essex to Ernest Stanley and Grace Brown. He had an older sister Victoria (died 1985) and a brother Donald (died 1999). He died age 21.







Sergeant Peter E Brown is commemorated in Chilliwack BC his hometown

The “Blue Hydrangea” garden was started by the Chilliwack Branch of Women's Auxiliary to the Air Services. Between 1942 and 1946, 48 Blue Hydrangeas were planted in a dedicated garden in solemn tribute to the loss of 48 Chilliwack Airmen during World War II. A 49<sup>th</sup> plant was placed in memory of eleven Royal Air Force crew who died in the crash of Liberator KK241 on Mt. Welch in 1945. The former garden is largely forgotten other than in the Chilliwack Museum & Archives and in the hearts of a few veterans and family members. The garden was originally located on the grounds of the former Chilliwack High School which is now the Chilliwack Middle School.

Peter Brown is buried in Malta (Capuccini) Naval Cemetery. Grave Reference: Prot. Sec. (Men's). Plot F. Coll. grave 104. He is Commemorated on [Page 140](#) of the Canadian Second World War Book of Remembrance.





We also wanted to briefly circle round to Perry King once again. Our newsletter entry from last December (No.275) detailed a new art installation throughout the city of Aurora Ontario which honours RCAF pilots. This project was brought to our attention through email correspondence with Roland and the Heritage Authority lead Christopher Watts, who

courageously spearheaded the project.

We finally got a chance to view the installations on the Aurora Heritage Authority Facebook Group. We are very proud to see one of 458 Squadron's own, represented in such a way. It is so important to educate younger generations on the sacrifices these men made for our freedoms.

Posted November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024, on the Aurora Heritage Authority Facebook Group. This lamp post features our very own Perry King. You can stroll the streets of Aurora and see more installations hanging on lamp posts throughout the town as well as streets named after the fallen men of Aurora. There is a 'King' street. Thank you for making this happen Christopher Watts.

