



**JOURNAL OF THE 458 SQUADRON COUNCIL**  
**Year 75 No. 277 August 2024**



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***Contributions and reports for the next Newsletter #278  
are due to The Editor by 30th November, 2024.***

## Vale

# Jim Wardle NSW Flight FLIGHT REPORTS



## United Kingdom Flight Report by Keith Wilkinson

Every now and then someone comes up with a little gem that adds to the fascinating history of 458 RAAF Squadron. And here (pictured) is





a great example - a wartime steel helmet bearing the history of the squadron. The helmet belonged to a UK member of ground crew who served with 458 from Holme-on-Spalding Moor right through to the squadron's operations in and around Italy. That squadron member was LAC James Edward Garside, who was born in London, England, in 1922. Mr Garside died in 2012 at the age of 90. His son, Paul, who is also a Londoner, has started to delve into his father's stories and to look through his writings and memorabilia. Perhaps the most striking object his father left behind is the hat which he had filled with inscriptions featuring all the places he served with 458 between 1942 and 1945. It's a wonderful memento and also, in its own way, a memorial. What's even more interesting is that





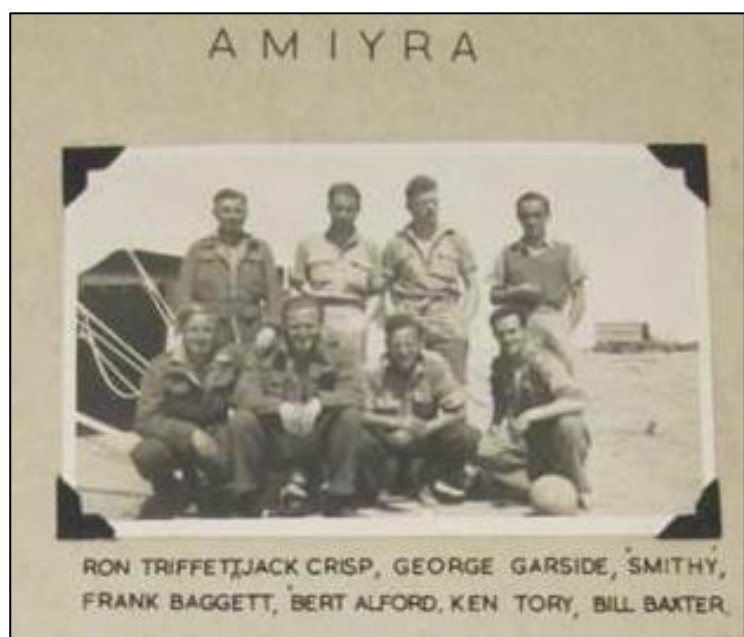
Mr Garside compiled a very detailed and long hand-written memoir about his time with the 458 squadron. His son Paul has begun to decipher it and aims to write it up so his accounts can be passed on to Mr Garside's six grandchildren. The other night I spent a couple of



hours chatting with Paul as he quickly read his way through his dad's pile of notes. There's some quite humorous stuff in them about punch-ups, drunkenness, and violent rugby games. But there are descriptions too of tragedy, and of grinding poverty among people he encountered on his travels...like in Aden where there were "blind beggars" He described in quite harrowing detail seeing a plane crash in which the pilot was burned. He also saw inside a badly injured air gunner and wrote "there was no chance for him". Mr Garside is thought to have worked in signals on the squadron. After the war he worked with the Ministry of Defence in electrical engineering - radios and radar stations. His son would like to hear from anyone who knows more about his father in the squadron. There are pictures of him in the squadron archives. Some of these are possibly in photo collections now held by relatives of other 458 men as they show groups of men. One of his best friends with 458 Squadron was a guy called Ken Tory. One thing has totally baffled Paul. It seems from squadron photos his dad, as a Christian name, was called George. (see photo below taken from the 458 Albums on our website)

[Official Squadron Albums | 458 RAAF Squadron](#)

He has never heard anyone call his dad George. In fact, he was known as "Ted" from his second name of Edward. So, Paul wonders whether captions he has seen were written in error, or whether George was a wartime nickname. Chances are this is something that will never be resolved. But you never know!





## Queensland Flight Report by Brett Taylor

In my March newsletter I included information regarding the 458 Squadron relocation to Italy, namely Foggia and Falconara along with some photographs from my father's photograph album.

This month's newsletter again follows the theme of Falconara.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> May I was pleasantly surprised to receive an email from Graziano Fiordelmondo who had read my March newsletter on the internet and wanted more information. Since then, Graziano and I have exchanged a number of emails and he has kindly agreed to me sharing his story below.

Graziano is an amateur historian and was gathering information for conferences to celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Falconara on 17-19<sup>th</sup> July 1944. Two conferences were held in Falconara on 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July this year.

### **LIBERATION OF FALCONARA**

According to Graziano, Falconara and all of the adjacent Ancona area were liberated by the Allies in particular the Polish II Army led by General Anders on 16/18<sup>th</sup> July 1944. They were supported by the Italian Army of the CIL (Italian Liberation Committee) and partisan bands against the German and Italian Fascist Armies. The airport at Falconara was important for both the Fascists and the Anglo-American Allies from 1940 at the beginning of the war in Italy through to the summer of 1944. This explains Graziano's interest in the airport and the historical activities around it.

### **GRAZIANO'S FAMILY STORY**

Graziano's father Giancarlo lived in Ancona and was only fourteen years old at the outbreak of the war in Italy. His family lived in Ancona and unfortunately lived through the bombing until the liberation of Ancona. Fortunately, none of his family died or were injured and their house was also saved.

Ancona, especially the port and the rail station area, was destroyed and there were thousands of deaths. The family of Graziano's wife lived in Falconara. His mother-in-law (twenty-two years old at the



time) lived in the villa of Marquis Trionfi in Falconara Alta. After the liberation, Allied officers were quartered in the villa, particularly those of the RAF (supposedly also RAAF, USAF and perhaps South Africans). His father-in-law however was captured by Allied troops, probably New Zealanders, during the battle of Bardia in Libya in January 1941. He was a POW up to Jan/Feb 1946 in South Africa in the Zonderwater camp, immediately collaborating with the Allies and then going to work on a farm.

### **HISTORY SEARCH**

Graziano found the 458 March newsletter because he was researching the internet for any news on the crash of an Allied plane during an emergency landing at the Falconara airport in 1944.

Graziano was really surprised to see the photos taken of my father at his town from the 458 newsletter. Photos that he guaranteed no one in Falconara had ever seen before. In fact, further investigations of my father's photos of aircraft in the 458 March newsletter which I had labelled as in Falconara, were more likely in Foggia.

Graziano's particular research related to the Falconara Airport which resulted in the link with 458 Squadron while they were operating from it.

Graziano presents history on many occasions to schools and cultural associations in order to make the population aware of what had happened in their area, in particular with everything that had to do with WWI and WWII. Specifically, about the terrible and horrific period of Fascism with emphasis on the Holocaust and Nazi-fascist oppression. He has been asked to prepare a meeting at both a school and an association which is expected to occur around September/October this year.

To help Graziano I sent a scan of Chapter 15 from Peter Alexander's book "We Find and Destroy" which has details of the 458 Squadron operations in that area.

The first conference was held on 12th July and a friend of his presented pictures, movies and other information about the Falconara liberation including news about the Allied Air forces that had had a base there.

In Graziano's words:-

“On the evening of the 17th there was a meeting at the castle of Falconara Alta relating to the passage of WWII front in our country, where, as I told you, our airport was mentioned in the period 1939-46. For family reasons I was unable to go but I passed all the documentation to another speaker, a very young professor of contemporary history, Dr. Luca Subissati (who reads to us in copy). You cannot imagine the amazement when they brought your greetings to the whole meeting, obviously referring to the figure of your father as Leader of the 458 Squadron of the RAAF in Falconara (during) the period September 44 - January 45. Many knew that (the Allied Squadrons) had passed through our airport after the liberation (Australians, Canadians and Americans) but they were not aware of the relevant squadrons. Everyone was very pleased to be able to see the photo where your father and other members of 458 Squadron were posing at the barracks/workshop c/ Falconara airport in that autumn/winter of 1944. It also made the whole audience smile when Luca was overwhelmed reading the pages of the book that you sent me (which) focused on the attempted theft of the airplane. Attached you will find two photos where the photo of your father and companions was projected on the screen. I am also sending a copy of this message to Dr. Serena Brunelli, of the culture office of the municipality of Falconara.”

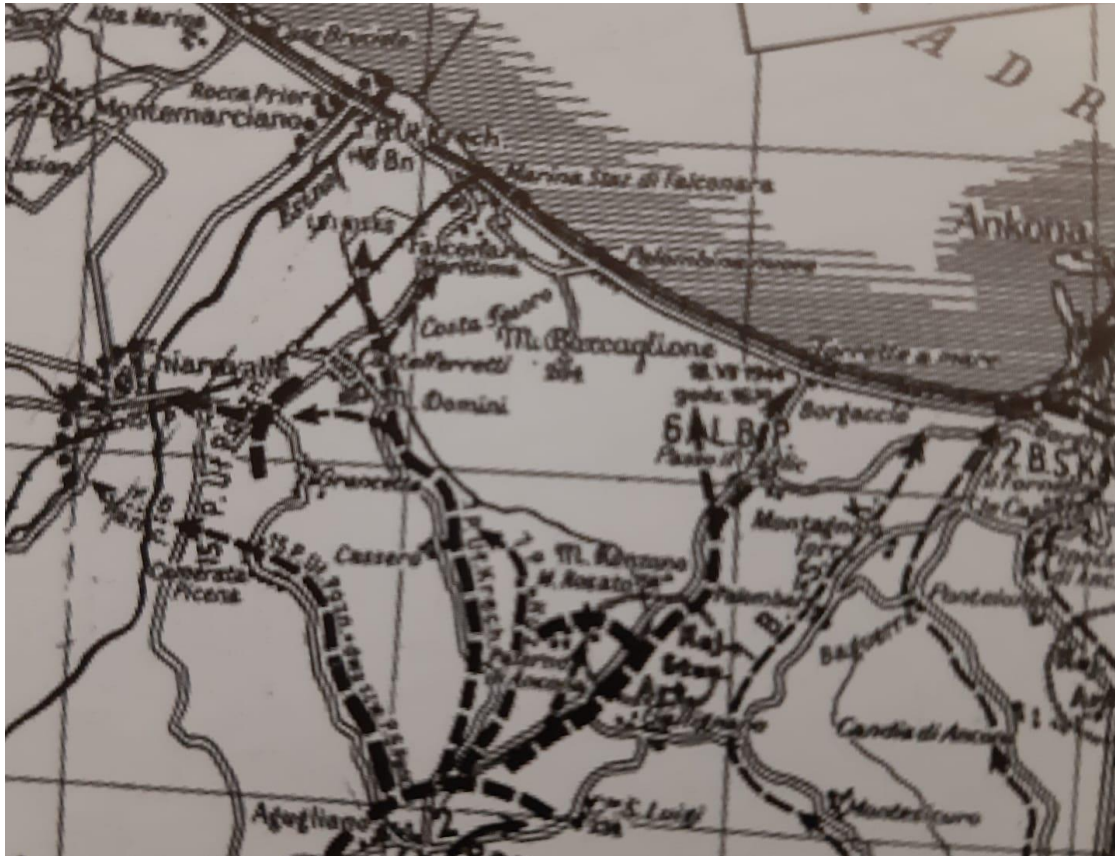








Here is a couple of images Graziano sent to me, showing the routes of attack, and a photograph of liberating troops taken about 17-19 July 1944.



Graziano has also noted below some of the RAAF graves in the Ancona Commonwealth Cemetery;

Pilot Officer George Henry Blom      29/6/19 – 11/9/44  
Plot IV Row K No.20

Flight Sergeant Ross Harding          18/10/23 – 21/11/44  
IV. L. 17

Flight Sergeant Kenneth James Leslie      1/5/22 – 14/12/44  
Plot II Row E No 5

F/S K. J Leslie 419785 was in 458 Squadron and his details are shown on the association website. On the night of the 13/14 Dec 1944, he was second pilot in a Wellington crew returning from an Armed Recce along the coast when bad weather caused them to be diverted from Falconara to Jesi aerodrome. However, the aircraft crashed into a hillside south west of Jesi killing all on board. All the crew were buried in the same Ancona Cemetery.

Flying Officer Kent Morgan Walkins          10/4/23 – 17/3/44  
Plot III Row J No.10

### **REFLECTION**

Graziano's interest in the liberation of his home town Falconara reminds me how fortunate we were in Australia that the Japanese were prevented from an invasion during WWII. Had the Allies not won the Battle of the Coral Sea and then the Battle of Midway, our life in Australia would have been very different.

Graziano also reminds me that the 458 newsletters are not just read by interested relatives and friends but also potentially by millions of people world-wide. It is amazing to think that after 80 years, a connection is discovered between a particular Italian civilian in Falconara and 458 Squadron members. Such is the power of the internet, I guess.



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

Anzac Day 2024 in Sydney was a great success (except for the usual delays and misinformation covering our step off locations and timings).

Our reunion at Castlereagh Boutique Hotel was attended by 28 stalwarts, including six newcomers to our group. There was a great deal of happiness in the room from all, meeting new direct family descendants and sharing their stories and remembrances. The photos bear testament to the success of the day and look forward to a continuation of the growth of involvement of all in the 458 family.

Our proposed October, 2025 Reunion in Malta is gaining traction. At present we have 20 from NSW and Victoria flight who are interested in attending "a final reunion" in Valetta where 458 was based in the defence of Malta.

It is an appropriate time as we commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the cessation of WW2 in Europe (albeit not the exact date). It should be noted that our previous reunion was held in Canberra in 2005 where previous High Commissioner for Malta Dr Ivan Fsadni suggested our next reunion should be held in Malta!

**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)**

Representations have been made to The High Commissioner in Canberra His Excellency Mario Farugia Borg and we will also involve our High Commission in Malta along with Australian Department of Veteran Affairs to plan an official event.

Further information will be provided as it comes to hand. Rob Wilkinson will provide us with indicative airfares for those travelling from Australia.

**Best Regards, Stephen Bruce. 458 Squadron Secretary**











## Vale Jim Wardle.

A few snaps from the funeral of Jim Wardle. His sons, Simon and James have marched with us on many occasions. Jim's wife (Rosie) was the daughter of RAF 458er Len Best.



## Victoria Flight Report by Roland Orchard

### Melbourne CBD ANZAC Day 2024











On a crisp and rain free autumn day, 12 of us marched to the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. Earlier some of us attended the 5.30 am Dawn Service. One of the many highlights on this day was thinking about our “new found” Co-President Bert and our recent meeting (23/3) with him: 99 years young Warrant Officer Bert (John) O'Leary who resides in Frankston South. He served with the Squadron at Gibraltar. Another was having Rob Forgan join us from Mt. Gambier. It was also fitting that 460 SQN was marching behind us as they were formed out of 458 SQN. Within the hour after completing our march, Victoria Flight President, Roland Orchard opened the meeting and called for a minute's silence in remembrance of recently passed Veterans, widows & members of 458 Squadron. He then recited the ode. Lest we Forget. The meeting was called to discuss the coming year's focus and activities and to conduct the 2024 AGM. The meeting place was the same as 2023, just across the road (Birdwood Ave) from the Shrine. In attendance were Chris & Heather Wurr, their daughter Karen & husband Clinton and their son. Rob Forgan, Neil Flentje, Roland Orchard and daughter Emily, Chris Orchard, Jeremy Orchard, friend John Marino. Apologies

were received from Howard & Sally Bertram, Jane & Eric Foster, Matthew Wuillemin, Gill & Joe Somers. Those who marched were: Rob Forgan, John Boydell, Chris Wurr and Great grandson of 458 veteran Lisle "Woozle" Wurr, Neil Flentje, Roland Orchard and daughter Emily, Chris Orchard, Jeremy Orchard, our sisters Pene and Edwina, John Marino This year we had 5 Air Force Cadets displaying the picture of the Wellington and carrying our Banner; Four from 414 Squadron in Richmond and one from 415 Squadron in Melbourne. Following beside us (with the onlookers) as we marched were Heather Wurr and daughter Karen and husband Clinton.



**Left** - RAAF Flyover as the 458 Squadron contingent marched past The Shrine of Remembrance.

**We would like to wish Gill Somers our very best for a speedy and full recovery.**



## **Canada Flight Report by Adam & Cate Wagstaffe**

WO2 Robert Alfred Phillip Sheffield. R102577 RCAF and Normandy musings

We have recently returned from Normandy, France. We were there for the 80th anniversary of D Day and the Battle of Normandy. In part because our father/grandfather fought in Normandy with the 9th DLI, 50th Division, XXX Corp. We were there as well because there was a gathering of WW2 liaison aircraft (much like our own Aeronca L-3) also commemorating the 80th

<https://www.l-birds.fr>







While there, we made the trip to Golleville, Manche, Normandy to pay our respects to the crew of 458th Wellington R 1785. The story of the flight, crew and dedicated memorial is already told so well in the « Education/Lest We Forget » section of the squadron website





as well as in the August 2009 newsletter. It was interesting to note that even though the brave crew died in 1942, their memorial stone was included in the 80th Anniversary commemorations as you see from the bunting surrounding the stone.



Respect to

RAAF pilot 404431 FO Bernard Peter Hickey (28) Brisbane. QLD

RAAF pilot 400716 Sgt Victor William Johnstone (24) Lockington. VIC

RNZAF Navigator NZ403773 PO Robert Birnie (24) Auckland. NZ

RAFVR WO 1159702C FSgt Albert Sydney Austin (21) Aston,  
Birmingham. UK

RAAG AG 407639 Sgt William Wallace Forgan (22) Crystal Brook,  
Adelaide. SA

RAFVR AG 752964 Sgt Fred Hinton (21) Leicester. UK

<https://aircrewremembered.com/mcguiness-raaf-archive-ww2-458-sqd-wellingtons.html>

We also had the opportunity to visit the Juno Beach Centre in  
Courseulles-sur-mer, Calvados. Normandy.

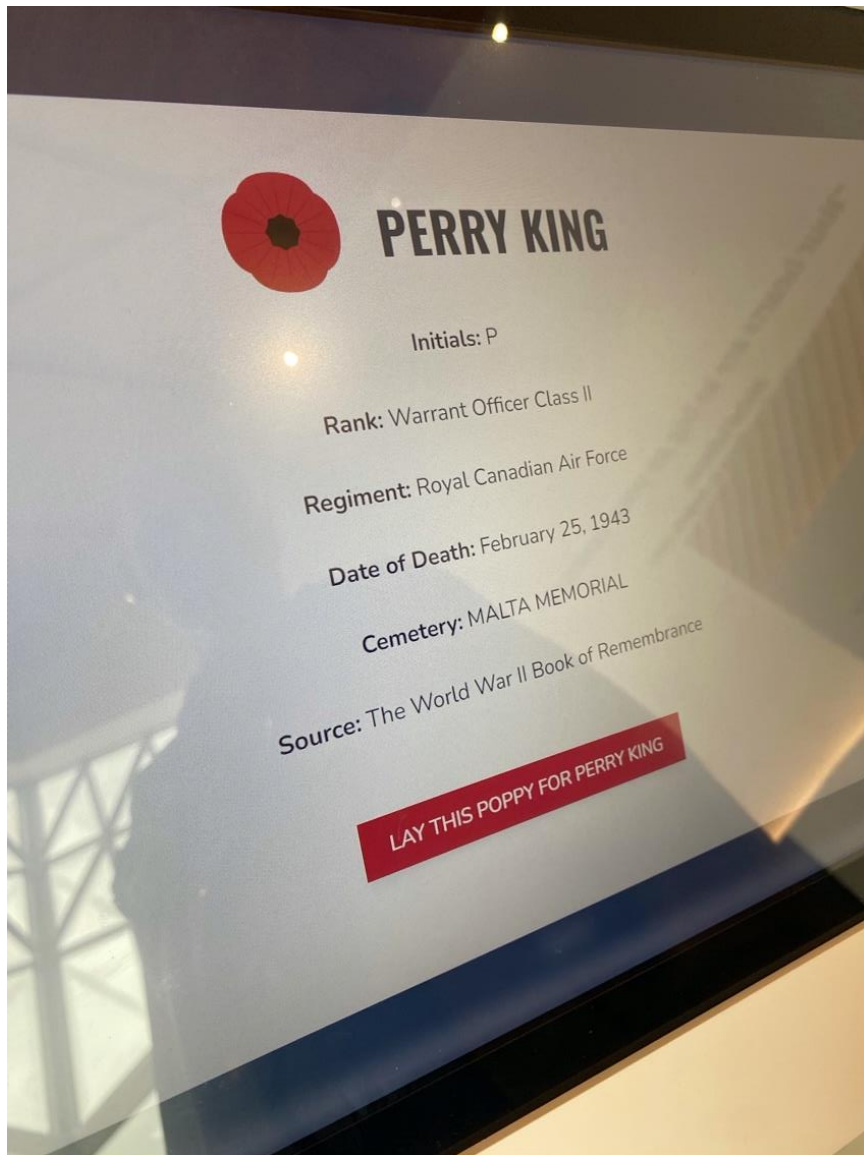
The Juno Beach Centre is Canada's Second World War Museum and cultural centre located in Normandy, France. The Centre pays homage to the 45,000 Canadians who lost their lives during the War, of which 5,500 were killed during the Battle of Normandy and 381 on D-Day. Opened in 2003 by veterans and volunteers with a vision to create a permanent memorial to all Canadians who served during the Second World War, the Centre's mandate is to preserve this legacy for future generations through education and remembrance. Individuals or groups can sponsor "bricks" in the name of Canadians who fought in WW2. We will be investigating how many of the 458<sup>th</sup> Canadians are already dedicated and how we might sponsor those who are not yet.

<https://www.junobeach.org/>



While we were at the museum, we did take a moment to virtually dedicate two poppies.

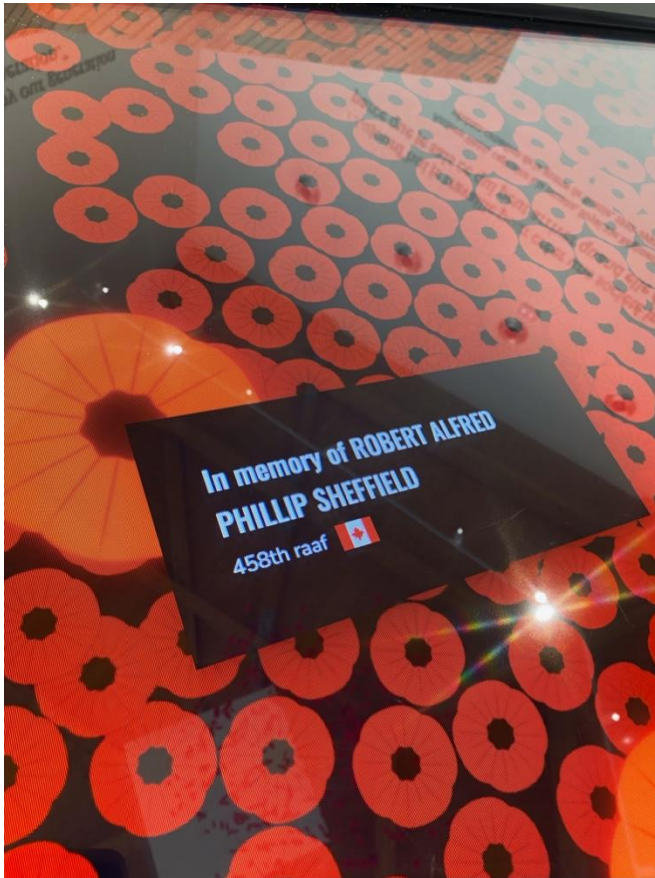
One to WO Perry King R93340 RCAF, our subject in the December 2023 Newsletter



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Go East Young Man

The other was for **WO Robert Alfred Phillip Sheffield. R102577 RCAF**, second pilot in LB134 with Perry King and crew.



Killed in Action February 25.1943





Robert Alfred Philip Sheffield was born October 31, 1922, in Vancouver BC. Canada. His parents were Alfred Ernest Sheffield originally from London, England and Gertrude Maude Sheffield (nee Thomson), also from London. He was brother to John, Edward, Jack and Helen. He was raised in Hollyburn West Vancouver (just a stone's throw from us now and from the home of long time Canada correspondent Brian Quinlan).

He was educated through to senior matriculation where he specialized in Stenography, Bookkeeping and Secretarial.

He played the trumpet in both the school as well as a military band and enjoyed photography and skiing. With the BC mountains and ski hills at his doorstep these hobbies seem hardly surprising.

He enlisted on September 24, 1940, a month before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, but had to wait until April 21, 1941, to be called up. However, Robert did not sit around waiting and having obtained his driving license found work as a driver in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division Petrol Co with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC) The RCASC moved supplies from the rear areas to the frontlines. They delivered all rations, ammunition, petroleum products, and all other essentials. They did so with a variety of vehicles ranging from three- to ten-ton trucks, and forty-ton tank transporters.



EAST. On April 21, 1941, Robert reported to #1 Manning Depot in Toronto Ontario, where if you recall from other Canadians we have storied, he learnt to march in an ill fitted uniform (we have read that those that could afford went to local tailors who made relative fortunes adjusting and altering cadet uniforms.) Robert would have taken the train from Vancouver a three-day three-night journey that would have passed through the Rocky Mountains to Alberta and on



through Saskatchewan and Manitoba to Ontario. I did this journey myself in 1973, a great way to see western Canada.

Just one month in Toronto and Robert was travelling EAST again to #17 Equipment Depot in Ottawa for another two months.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1941 Robert headed EAST once again, this time to Victoriaville, Quebec and #3 Initial Training School (ITS)

“The #3 ITS of the BCATP was located at Sacred Heart College.



Previously it was a catholic school for boys, before the war, with room for 500 boys..it now housed upwards of 900 airmen.

Lectures included Math, Signals. Sanitation, Administration, Map reading and the Link Trainer.



It provided 4 weeks academic based training and testing for Pilot, Air Observer/Navigator candidates, at the end of which men moved on to train as either Pilots or Observer/Navigators. Those who did not meet the requirements were rerouted to train as Wireless Operators/Air Gunners” [www.wartimememoriesproject.com](http://www.wartimememoriesproject.com)  
We have seen it written that the top of the class tended to be sent on the Navigator stream as it was believed that a higher intelligence and grasp of maths was required. Those wanting to become pilots soon learned not to shine too much at the ITS.  
Robert passed the school (but not too well) and along with 42 prospective pilots from course 31 was posted EAST to Stanley, Nova Scotia and #17 Elementary Flight School (EFTS).





415-058 #17 EFTS Stanley, Nova Scotia

#17 Elementary Flight Training School operated from March, 1941 to train pilots in basic aircraft operation. The school ran up to four 30 student classes simultaneously for six weeks. Graduates passed on to advanced training at other bases. Aircraft flown were the Fleet Finch and Tiger Moth.



Painting by Paul Tuttle. Fleet Finch "In the circuit" at EFTS No. 17 Stanley, NS

Robert Sheffield was stationed at #17 EFTS Stanley from August 20.1941 until his graduation from course #36 on October 10.1941. Of the 42 in the class 29 graduated and 17 of those, including Robert Sheffield were transferred immediately to No. 8 Service Flight Training School in Moncton, New Brunswick. (Moncton is actually slightly West of Stanley! slight hiccup, back to East again shortly).







Robert was part of course No. 41 October 10.1941 to January 03.1942. At Moncton pilots flew the North American Harvard and the Avro Anson.



“City of Moncton” purchase with the help of local school children was used at No.8 SFTS in Moncton



Avro Anson at N0.8 SFTS Moncton. NB.



Harvards and Ansons at NO.8 SFTS Moncton. NB.

On graduation Robert Sheffield was presented with his wings, promoted to Flight Sergeant. He was also immediately sent EAST to Y Depot Halifax, Nova Scotia. This was the embarkation depot for aircrew shipping overseas from Canada.

Robert was also given leave from January 03 to January 21, 1942. We do not know whether he made the train journey back across Canada to Vancouver to see his family, but he had time, just, to do so and it would have been the last time his family saw him alive.

On the 23 of January 1942, he boarded a ship in Halifax harbour and headed EAST to England and his last year.

On arrival in England, like so many before and after Robert was posted to NO.3 PRC (Personnel Reception Centre) in the seaside town of Bournemouth on February 10, 1942. The aircrew were billeted in various hotels in this prewar resort town. He was there for almost

two months before his next posting to No.14 AFU (Advanced Flying Unit)

No. 14 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit was formed at R.A.F. Station Ossington, Nottinghamshire on the 26th of January 1942 from No. 14 Service Flying Training School. The unit was and remained part of No. 21 Group, Flying Training Command throughout the war.



<http://www.ukairfields.org.uk/ossington.html>

Pilots trained in the twin engine Airspeed Oxford. The AFU's were primarily used for pilots trained overseas (Canada, Australia, Rhodesia) to get them assimilated to "black out" conditions, night flying, cross country and English operational methods. (Robert had already obtained his wings at the SFTS on Moncton. If he had been trained in England the next stage after SFTS would be directly to an Operational Training Unit (OTU). At this point he did not fly with a crew, this was still just pilot training. The "crewing" was yet to come.





Airspeed Oxford, used at the Advanced Flying Unit.

Here is the report of Roberts flying at No.14 (Pilots) AFU

Form 1490C

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**REPORT ON THE FLYING AND GROUND TRAINING OF PILOTS**

SURNAME SHEPFIELD CHRISTIAN NAMES ROBERT ALFRED PHILIP  
 NUMBER CAN. R102577 RANK SGT

**ADVANCED AT UNIT**  
**No.14(P) SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL**

ARRIVED ON 6.4.42. LEFT 22.6.42.  
 FLYING TIMES : COURSE No. 5 A.F.C.

	Type of Aircraft	Day		Night		Formation	Instrument	Passenger	Link Trainer
		Dual	Solo	Dual	Solo				
Previous Flying	Elementary	29.15	30.50	-	-	-	-	-	10.00
	Advanced	40.30	43.05	3.00	9.00	10.00	21.50	27.40	20.00
At S.F.T.S.	Oxford(BATF)	11.20					11.20	5.45	5.15
	(AFU)	38.45	44.15	5.45	3.55	1.25	9.50	5.55	5.45
	<b>Total</b>	119.50	118.10	8.45	12.55	11.25	43.00	39.20	41.00

**GROUND EXAMINATION MARKS.**

Airmanship ... ..	%	Navigation (Part 1) .. ..	%
Maintenance ... ..	%	.. (Part 2) .. ..	%
Armament ... ..	%	Signals (Written) .. ..	%
Signals (Pract.) ... ..	%	.....	%

**FLYING APTITUDE** (on conclusion of Course)

	Exceptional	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Poor
1. Natural Aptitude ... ..					
2. Skill in Landing ... ..					

On completion of his training at Ossington on June 22.1942 (we can see a big chunk of his training there was formation and instrument

flying) Robert was posted to No7 Personnel Reception Centre (PRC) in Harrogate, Yorkshire.

He was there from the 23 June 1942 until 6 August 1942. The PRC was essentially a holding location, where airmen waited for the logistics of squadron, strategic, tactical and paperwork to come together.

Now we do know that one other future 458<sup>th</sup> RAAF member was at the No7 PRC at the same time as Robert. Perry King, our subject in the December 2023 Newsletter. In fact, Robert and Perry were posted to the same No 7 (c) Operational Training Unit (OTU) on August 6, 1942.

*(During the 1940's The RAF Bomber and Coastal commands were stuck with the terrible problem of selecting crews. Pilots, Navigators, Wireless Operators, Air Gunners, all from different countries, different training, different backgrounds, ages etc, how do you choose who goes with who?*

*The creative solution: Jam them all in a hangar or mess hall and tell them they had 10 minutes to join a crew!)*

Now by 1942 this would have been known to all prospective crew and we are guessing that at the PRC in Harrogate a fair amount of "pre-crewing" was done. Robert Sheffield and Perry King had two months of waiting and it seems reasonable that as they arrived at the OTU they knew each other and were ready for the selection 10 minutes. Why did Perry King become the captain and Robert Sheffield the second pilot? (They were both trained in the same way, similar hours and experience) It may have been as simple as the "Zulu" decision. Perry was born nine months earlier and his surname started with a letter earlier in the alphabet. We don't know for sure, but....

The waiting at the PRC was likely full of boredom and led inevitably to high jinks from time to time. Robert included. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, 19 year old Robert was reprimanded and fined 7 days pay for being absent. No details available 😊

Be that as it may, Robert Sheffield was posted to No7 (c)OTU at Limavady, Northern Island (also referred to as Aghanloo Airfield). on August 6, 1942.



[www.gitrailni.com](http://www.gitrailni.com)



Charles Cundall (1890-1971) "Study for Coastal Operational Training Unit (Limavady, Northern Ireland)", circa 1942

Along with Perry King and the new crew he was introduced and converted to the Vickers Wellington. He practiced, low altitude flying, torpedo training, coastal tactics and perhaps even an introduction to the Leigh Light. Training, conversion and crewing completed in December of 1942 Robert was heading EAST once again. This time to the Middle East, to 458<sup>th</sup> RAAF and his final flight.



First to Gibraltar and then East again to Malta, where Robert and crew were first assigned to 69 Squadron RAF. On Jan 15.1943.



Robert flew three missions with 69 squadron in January 1943.

January 21/22 to Palermo

January 24/25

January 26/27

On February 01, 1943, the Wellingtons and crew of 69 Squadron RAF were operationally transferred to 458<sup>th</sup> Squadron RAAF. This was made official on February 14.1943.



Robert was now a member of the 458<sup>th</sup> fraternity and along with Perry King and crew he flew as second pilot on three missions with the squadron.

February 03.1943

February 15.1943

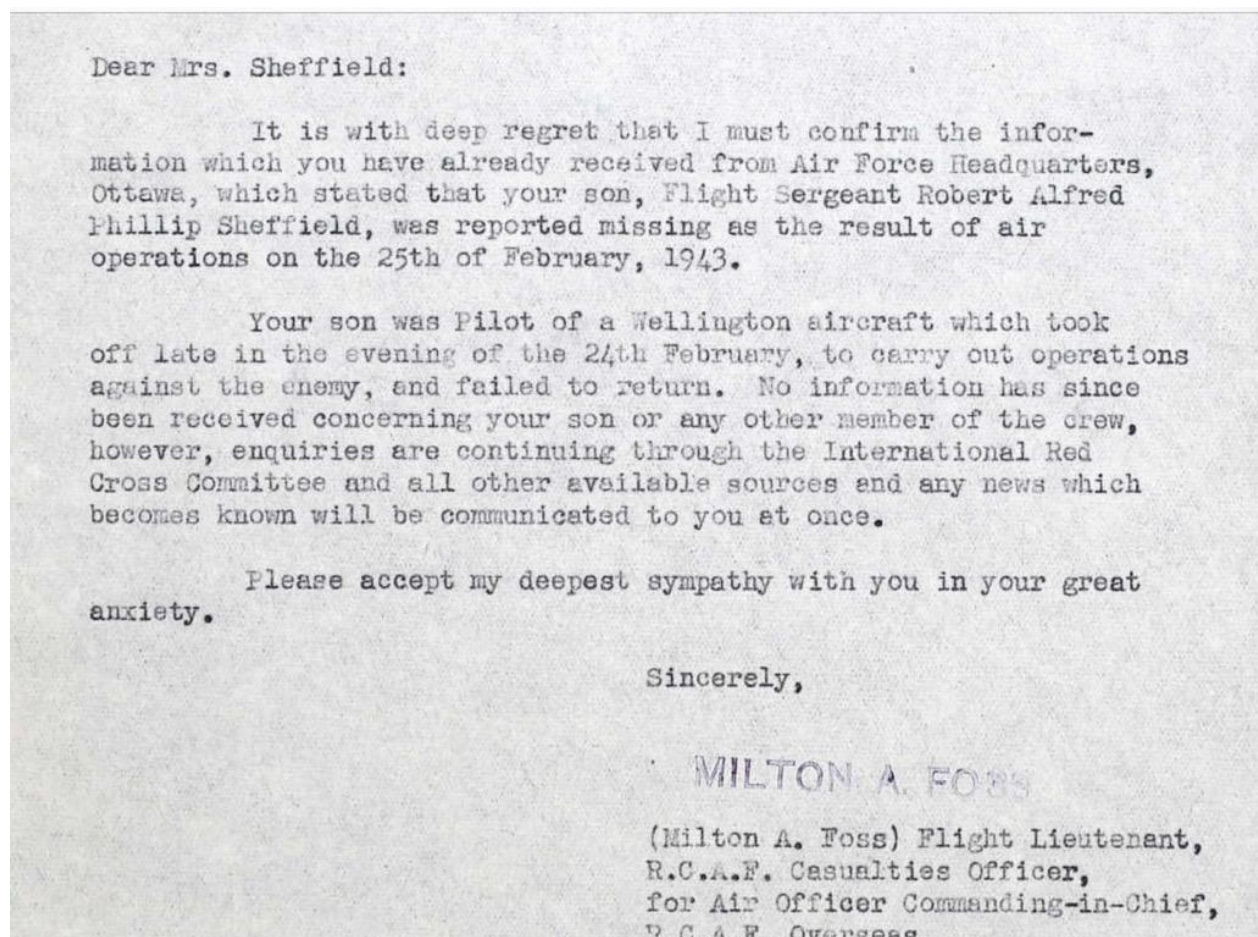
Date	Aircraft Type & Number	Crew	Duty	Time		Details of Sortie or Flight	Remarks
				Up	Down		
15th Feb.	Wellington L.S.180.	R.93340. Sgt. King. P. R.198677. Sgt. Sheffield. R.196833. Sgt. Clarke.L.W. R.90549. Sgt. Jenkins.F. R.95108. Sgt. Kirk. J.F. R.78884. Sgt. McLeod.	Captain. End Pilot. Navigator. W./Optr. S.E./Optr. Rear gunner.	2219.	0815.	Armed Patrol Maritime Area. Nil cloud. Visibility fair but hazy. Saw flak and searchlights at Palermo. Night Fighter on port moving round to port quarter and following. Called up Mosquito on T.R.G. Landed safely at base.	

<https://www.rafcommands.com/database/air27/index.php?qname=&cur=37150&qn1=&qnum=&qdate=>

And finally on February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1943. On this mission R102577 Wo2 Robert A.P. Sheffield and the rest of the crew were shot down and killed in Wellington Mk V111 LB134. Robert has stopped going EAST.....

The crew remained missing presumed killed until 1947. For further details on his missions with 69 Sq RAF and 458<sup>th</sup> Sq. RAAF please see Perry King in

[https://www.458raafsquadron.org/assets/newsletters/2023\\_275\\_deember.pdf](https://www.458raafsquadron.org/assets/newsletters/2023_275_deember.pdf)



Robert was promoted to Warrant Officer (WO) on Jan 02.1943 but is unlikely he was aware.

Robert Alfred Philip Sheffield is remembered on the Malta Memorial, Malta. Panel 11, Column 1.





At the base of the column itself, a bronze panel bears the following inscription

*“Over these and neighbouring lands and seas the airmen whose names are recorded here fell in raid or sortie and have no known grave. Malta Gibraltar Mediterranean Adriatic Tunisia Sicily Italy Yugoslavia Austria, Propositi Insula Tenax Tenaces Viros Commemorat”*

(An Island resolute of purpose remembers resolute men)

The following are the accredited medals due Robert Sheffield Citation(s):

1939-45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-45, Canadian Volunteer Service Medal and clasp. Posthumously awarded RCAF Operational Wings in recognition of gallant service in action against the enemy, the 24 June 1946.



**R102577 WO2 Sheffield, Robert Albert Phillip. (RCAF) 458th RAAF Honour Roll.**

\*\*\*\* We are in contact with a distant relative of Robert Sheffield. They are hunting for possible pictures and more details and we will send them a copy of our research. \*\*\*\*

## Trip to Narromine, NSW.

By Jeremy & Chris Orchard

### **Our first visit to No. 5 EFTS at Narromine where young airmen learned their craft on the Tiger Moth aeroplane**

It was great to escape the city (of close to 5 million) three weeks before Anzac Day and to retrace the footsteps of Dad's i.e. Squadron Leader Gordon Orchard, early days after enlisting in the Air Force. The countryside in Australia has a real sense of adventure and charm. Despite the long distances, it doesn't disappoint. Air fields, Aviation Museums, RAAF bases, gold mines, giant telescopes, wildlife (emus, kangaroos, and up-close cattle). The bush is peaceful and friendly and not overcrowded.



Dad becoming a pilot



Course 7 at No. 5 EFTS ....continued \* see caption below

Our focus was visiting the Narromine Aviation Museum: <http://narromineaviationmuseum.org.au/> the site on which No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) was based, where Dad completed his initial Flight training in the summer months of 1940 and 1941 at 20/21 years of age! No mean feat considering the RAAF had formed just 19 years earlier in 1921.

**\* Caption (see above): Five student pilots from Course 7 Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) at No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School (5 EFTS) Narromine. They are from left to right: 400732 Aircraftman (AC) Gordon Orchard; AC Douglas Scott; AC Leonard Reid; 404553 Pilot Officer (PO) Douglas Wilberforce Spooner Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM); 402745 PO Rawdon Hume Middleton VC posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the RAAF's first VC recipient**





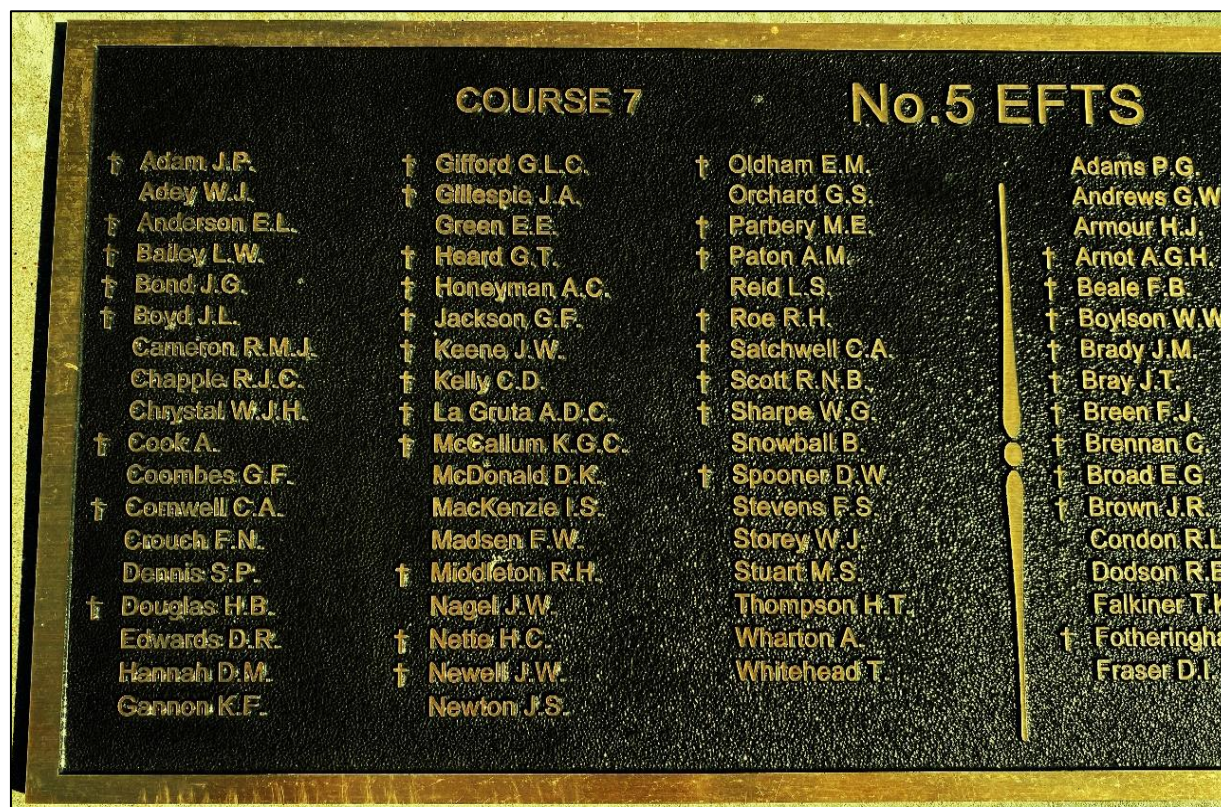
**Commemorative plaques outside Museum**

It turns out in Dad's class of 53: making up Course no.7 of 46 courses at No. 5 EFTS there were four others who went on to also serve with 458 SQN (not all at the same time): F/O Jack Gordon Bond 400690 KIA (later on when serving with 22 SQN), S/Ldr Geoffrey Francis Jackson 400414 KIA and commemorated on our website Honour Roll: <https://www.458raafsquadron.org/honour-roll>, F/LT Graeme Frank Coombes 402788, and W/Cdr Alan Wharton 404556 (note: the picture of Alan shown below comes from the Museum). Sad to say that 28 (53%) of the graduates were casualties of the war paying the ultimate sacrifice. Lest We Forget. Their names live for evermore.





Plaque outside the Narromine Aviation Museum and excellent displays in the Museum (pictures below)



**W/Cdr Alan Wharton, DSO OBE DFC**  
1919-2004



After passing through No.7 pilots' course at Narromine and in Canada during 1940-41, Alan was posted to a bomber conversion unit in England. On arrival, he had to act as a pall bearer at the funeral of six airmen killed in training. It was an ominous introduction.

Alan flew a tour of operations in Wellington bombers with 458 Squadron RAAF over Germany, and with 148 Squadron RAF in the Middle East. Returning to England he instructed bomber pilots, then volunteered for a second 'tour'. In the meantime, his fellow crewmen were shot down and killed. In July 1944, by now a Wing Commander aged just 25, he was posted to command 466 (Halifax bomber) Squadron at Driffield, Yorkshire.

Post-war, Alan married Jean Lloyd of Narromine and began a long career with Qantas, beginning as a pilot and finishing as director of flight operations.

*One became very accustomed to death. There were very few occasions when all the aircraft in our squadron returned from a bombing mission.*

Alan Wharton



Our memorable visit was a very moving and worthwhile experience. We would love to read about others in our 458 family who may write about their similar visits and personal connections for this Newsletter too.

**From Jeremy Orchard, travelling with my brother Chris.**

## Emails

**From Rob Forgan**

**Mon 29/04/2024**

Hi Roland,

Wonderful to catch up with everyone who attended the 458 get together, ANZAC Day parade and AGM in Melbourne. This may be of



interest.

Fresh on the heels of the 458 gathering in Melbourne on ANZAC Day, I found myself babysitting three grandchildren while their mother and father attended a wedding ceremony and celebrations somewhere between Berri and Loxton. While on our way to baby sit, I called into see where the late Ian Showell (458 Squadron Service Number 5621) ran his house boat business at Liba Liba Landing, Renmark. He built the first house boat hire fleet on the Murray after conceiving the idea while stationed in Egypt and spending time on the Nile. Ian was an engineer and Flight Mechanic, born in July 1913. Ian has gone, so has the business by the look of things, but a few of his own design paddle-



wheelers are still moored on the banks of the Murray. However, on the way to the landing, Ian is remembered and acknowledged in his community when I noticed a street name in a very smart riverside housing development. (photo attached)

In 1991 458 Squadron had an All States (inc NZ) reunion in the Barossa Valley that involved an excursion to the South Australian Riverland. At Renmark they were received by Ian and his wife Fee Showell who were prominent citizens of the area, and were welcomed by the Mayor. Ian developed the riverside area and had given a block as a garden reserve in memory of 458 and other local RAAF members of 458 who have fallen. Ian and Fee Showell generously donated a 458 Memorial Plaque and Reserve on the Jane Eliza Estate, Renmark on that weekend. That plaque I think has been relocated to Meander Avenue in Renmark.

There were trees and plants in memory of our C. O. s , Adjutants , D. W. Os , Medical Officers and Engineering Officers. Groups of trees for aircrew, and for ground staff. (Site plan attached). The Dedication event was conducted, in the unavoidable absence of Padre Fred McKay, by Peter Alexander, who included words and a prayer prepared by Fred McKay.

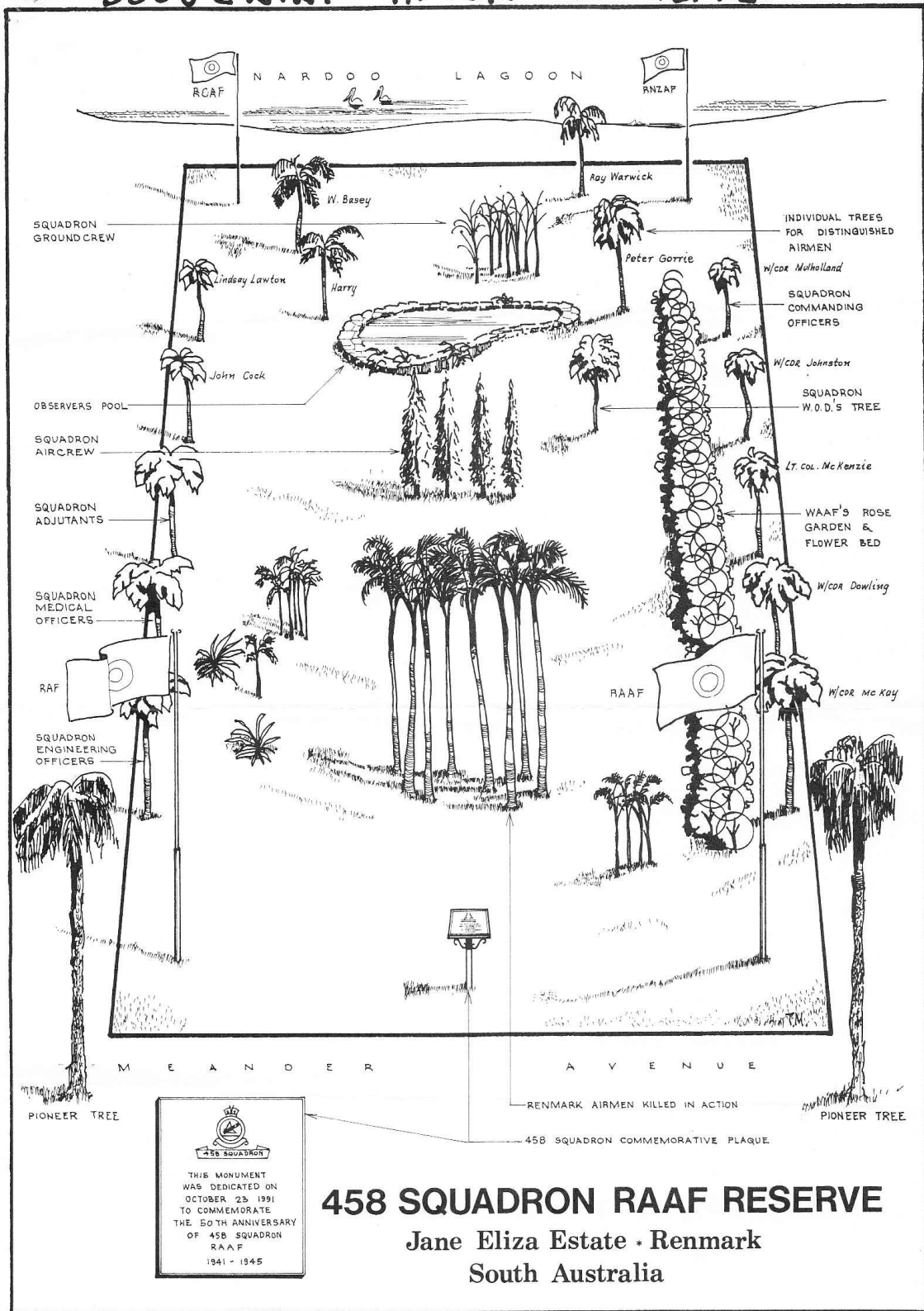
Peter Alexander, said, in part, that we were remembering but doing more than that in dedicating the Reserve. We were also providing a peaceful place where younger people could come and possibly think of the airmen of years before whose work and deaths had preserved peace for them. Fred McKay's prayer of dedication was "Eternal God, we dedicate "this Reserve, the gift of the Showell family, as a living Memorial to "members of 458 Squadron RAAF who gave their lives in the cause of "freedom in World War II, and we dedicate the 50th Anniversary Plaque "and monument accordingly to the work of the Squadron and its members. Amen. "

Ian was an engineer and flight mechanic who showed on his return that he was also an innovator and a pioneer tourism operator.

Lest We Forget

**Rob Forgan**

# SOUVENIR. "AFTER 50 YEARS."



**Ted McBride**

**Wed 8/05/2024**

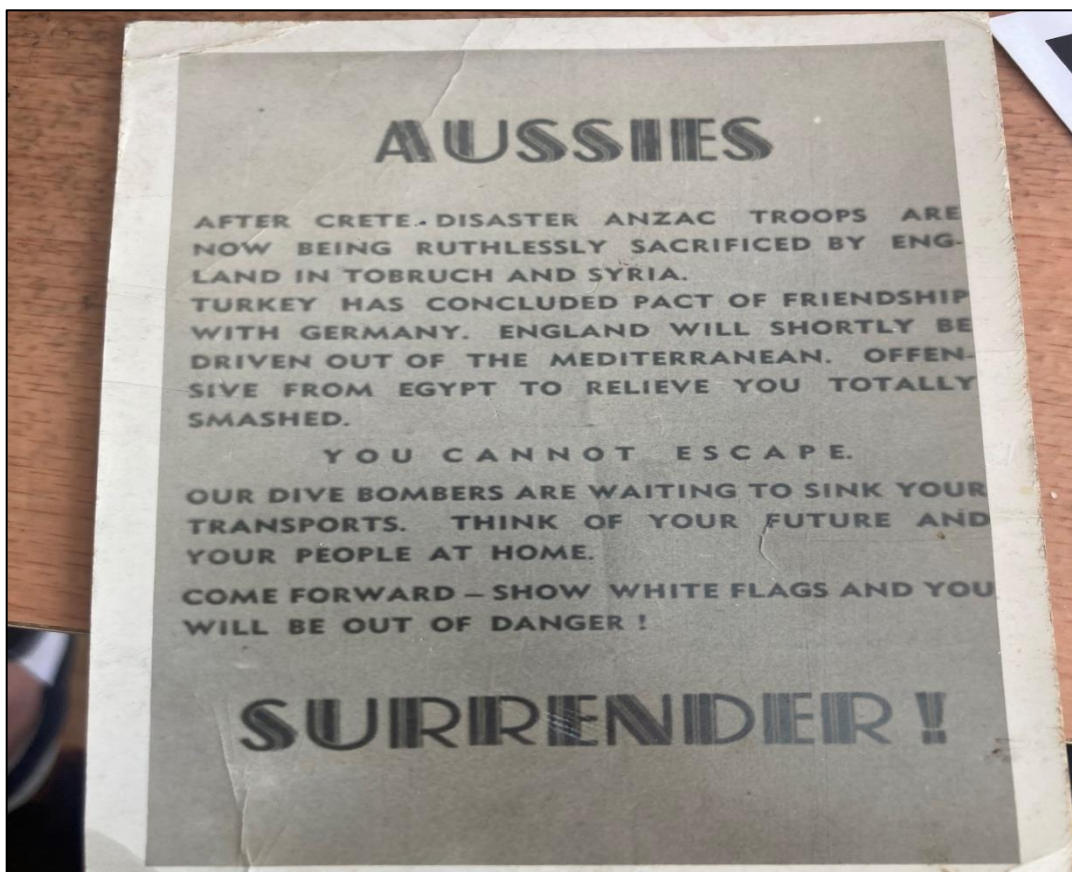
Found these things. Thought they may interest some people.







One is some reunion somewhere on ANZAC Day (they've got medals on). The second photo is a card that was dropped over the people (Allies) by the Germans.



## Helen skidmore

Mon 10/06/2024

A picture I thought you might like to see, sent to me by my cousin Sue, Bill's (Turier) daughter, with information supplied by her. I think it shows the playful character of both (Bill Turier and Hal Coffill) after the war - They are waiting to be served as a Duke or King might be in a castle!!!! They deserve it!!!

Helen

