

RAAF Association – Victorian Division
Sunderland Branch



A.C.N. 004250 248

Incorporating 10 Squadron RAAF, the first RAAF Squadron in action in W.W.II;
461 Squadron RAAF, The Anzac Squadron; and 13 RAF Squadrons

29 August 2021

WINTER 2021

Sunderlanders and friends.

Well Sunderlanders and friends, Covid challenges are still with us and I suspect may be so for some time yet. Please remember in these difficult times to keep in touch regularly with friends and family. Maybe call someone with whom you haven't had recent contact. We all need the contact and support from time to time. It is also very important to ensure your own safety.

Anzac Day Commemorations were once again curtailed by Covid restrictions and it seems such a long time ago. I am sure we all remembered our beloved Sunderlanders and other ex-service personnel with whom we have connections and commemorated them in our own individual ways.

In my last Newsletter I mentioned that Peter Jensen ex 461 Squadron, President of NSW Branch was to celebrate his 100th Birthday on 12 April 2012. Sadly Peter passed away on 8th April, 4 days short of his birthday. I have included a tribute to Peter in this Newsletter.

Unfortunately, I am also sad to advise that C N Noel Dunn of 10 Squadron passed away on 23rd June 2021 in his 100th year. There is a tribute to Noel also in this Newsletter.

A few weeks ago I was contacted by a gentleman from the St. Kilda (Vic) Cricket Club enquiring about an airman who served with 10 Squadron during WWII. Bruce's name is listed on the St. Kilda Cricket Club Roll of Honour and the Club was seeking a photograph. Following some researching, the airman happened to be 401596 Flying Officer Bruce Napoleon Gilbert.

You can imagine my surprise when I found his service number to be 34 after my father's and that they had enlisted on the 1st of March 1941 and both born in 1914. I have included a short article about Bruce's service later in this Newsletter.

Recently one of our NSW second generation Sunderlander, Ann Pyke-Flaherty sent me a 2020 article re the Pembroke Deck Officers' Mess from the Western Telegraph newspaper in the UK. I have included the article in this newsletter.

The article rekindled memories of a visit with my father Ricky Hattam to the mess in 1978. The buildings at that time were abandoned and quite rundown but we were able to enter and have a look around. The eating mess (in the photo), was spectacular. We also visited my dad's room which he shared with Ron Mackellar. What a pity the whole complex was demolished. Great article, thank you Anne.

SUNDERLANDERS - IN MEMORIAM

403592 FLT LT Peter Theodore JENSEN

Peter enlisted in the RAAF in February 1941 at the age of 19 years. He trained in Canada and the United Kingdom before being posted to 461 Squadron in July 1942 as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner with the rank of Pilot Officer.

Peter was lead wireless operator in Flight Lieutenant Dudley Marrows' crew of Sunderland W6077 UT-U. As a member of this crew he was involved in the famous action of the sinking of U-Boat U461 by aircraft U of 461 Squadron on 30 July 1943.

On 16 September 1943, Dudley Marrows and his crew including Peter this time in Sunderland EK578 UT-E whilst on patrol in the Bay of Biscay were attacked by 6 JU88 German heavy fighters. Peter was active in the tail turret until the turret hydraulics were damaged rendering the turret unserviceable. The Sunderland was heavily damaged and was forced to ditch (land on the sea). After a harrowing time afloat the crew were finally rescued by Capt. Walker of Walker RN (Royal Navy) fame in his sloop HMS Woodpecker.

Peter continued flying operations with the Squadron until March 1944 when he transferred to No. 4 OTU (Operational Training Unit) RAF Invergordon at Alness in Scotland as an instructor.

Peter returned to Australia with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

Post war time, he continued his service as was the long serving President of the NSW Sunderland Branch of Air Force Association becoming a Life Member of the Sunderland Branch.



Peter was instrumental in the long term project to have a memorial wall to the Sunderland Squadrons erected at Rathmines in NSW. The Sunderland walls located adjacent to the Catalina Memorials were dedicated in 2013 and list all the losses for both 10 and 461 Squadron, and allows the placement of the names of Sunderlanders who have passed post war. To my knowledge, this Memorial is the only one in Australia specifically dedicated to the Sunderland Squadrons.

The Rathmines base was the RAAF flying boat base and to be the home of 10 Squadron when they returned home with its Sunderlands from the UK.

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VX19047 SGT. Clive Noel DUNN MID (28 Dec 1921 – 23 Jun 2021)

Almost immediately after his 18th birthday Noel sought to join the Air Force in December 1939 and soon after found himself at RAAF Laverton to commence training.

Following training at various locations Noel was advised he was posted to 10 Squadron in the UK and on 23 February 1954 he embarked on the TSS Ulysses for the UK. After an eventful journey he finally arrived in Glasgow, Scotland and eventually joined 10 Squadron at Plymouth on 17 May 1941.

By early 1941, German U-Boats were instructed to remain on the surface and engage with attacking aircraft. This put aircraft like the Sunderland at a disadvantage when attacking due to having only one turret that could fire forward on the U-Boat. In May 1942, Noel and Sgt Bruce Lowe at the request of the Squadron's Flight Sgt Ozzie Ferguson were tasked to design and build the mountings required to install four forward facing fixed machine guns in the Sunderland nose. In a tribute to Noel's skill and dedication, the project was a success and soon employed and installed in all the Squadron's Sunderlands.



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Noel was later involved in a further upgrading of the Sunderland's firepower with the installation of beam guns consisting of two turrets fitted with a 0.5 inch gun that could be employed to repel aircraft attacking for the port and starboard beams. This was another contributor to the reason that the German aircrew referred to the Sunderland as the "Flying Porcupine".

Secretary/Treasurer: Rick Hattam. Please address all, correspondence to Secretary: Rick Hattam,
5 Waurn Park Court, BELMONT VIC 3216, Phone 0418 994 759; rickyh461@gmail.com

For anyone who understands aircraft and airframes, making all these significant changes to an aircraft can have major structural consequences and need very careful attention. The success of these modifications was a morale boost to aircrew and a testament to Noels' skill as an engineer.

In January 1945 Noel was awarded Mentioned in Dispatches (MID) for his distinguished service.

He commenced his return to Australia in September 1944 and Noel was eventually posted to the RAAF No. 1 Flying Boat Repair Base at Lake Boga on 6th January 1945. Noel was discharged from the RAAF on 24 August 1945, going on a career with ANA Australian National Airways and TAA Trans Australia Airways

Noel was long time and esteemed member of the Victorian Sunderland Branch and regularly participated in the Melbourne Anzac Day marching proudly with the 10 Squadron banner.

We thank Peter and Noel not only for their wartime service but for their ongoing commitment and support to the Sunderlanders community post war. RIP gentlemen.

401596 FO Bruce Napoleon GILBERT

Service No: 401596
Rank: Flying Officer
Born: Lilydale VIC, 3 January 1914
Enlisted in the RAAF: 1 March 1941
Unit: No. 10 Squadron, Mount Batten
Died: Air Operations: (No. 10 Squadron Sunderland aircraft W3999 – RB-Y), off UK Coast, 21 June 1942, Aged 28 Years
Buried: Unrecovered
CWGC Additional Information: Son of Charles Champneys Napoleon Gilbert and Constance Marion Gilbert; husband of Dorothy Elsie Gilbert, of North Richmond, Victoria, Australia.
Roll of Honour: St Kilda VIC
Remembered: Panel 109, Runnymede Memorial, Surrey UK
Remembered: Panel 99, Commemorative Area, Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT
Remembered: Rathmines Memorial Bowling Club, Rathmines NSW



On 21st June 1942 Sunderland RB-Y W3999 Captained by Flt Lt M L Judell was shot down while on an air-sea rescue search for a missing RAF Wellington. This was the first Sunderland lost by No. 10 Squadron in the air through enemy action in the twenty-nine months of its operation. Ironically, 3 members of the crew of RB-Y travelled to the UK with Noel Dunn.

Extract from Herington, J. (John) (406545) Air War Against Germany and Italy 1939-1943, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1954 – Page 285

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The crew members of W3999 RB-Y were:

Sergeant Phillip Mervyn Benison (11065) (Second Fitter)
Flying Officer Cosmo Clive Chataway (405394) (Third Pilot)
Aircraftman Class 1 Thomas Dorney (19034) (Second Fitter)
Flying Officer Bruce Napoleon Gilbert (401596) (Navigator)
Flying Officer Jacques Hazard (Free French Forces) (First Pilot)
Flight Lieutenant Maurice Leopold Judell (466) (Pilot)
Sergeant John Valentine McLean (405419) (Second Radio Operator)
Sergeant James Edward Taylor (3846) (First Radio Operator)
Aircraftman Class 1 Francis William Tipping (4089) (Armourer)
Leading Aircraftman Robert George Willis (11931) (Rigger)
Sergeant William Lawrence Winterflood (405093) (Tail Gunner)



Corgi has produced a model Short Sunderland Mk.III W3999/
RB-Y No.10 Squadron RAAF, Early 1942 (1:72) Item
AA27503
I am unsure of the availability of the model at this time.

PAST EVENTS

ANZAC DAY 25 APRIL 2021

Depending on your location, once again this Anzac Day Commemoration were conducted in different ways across the Nation. In Victoria there were all sorts of restrictions and permit requirements. I didn't try to attend the March in Melbourne, but went privately to a local Memorial that I have been involved with for over 20 years and laid wreaths.

Let's hope that in 2022 will be able to come together, in person and in spirit, to commemorate the men and women who have served our nation in all wars, conflicts, and peacekeeping operations.

COMING EVENTS

2021 NSW Branch - 10 Squadron Dudley Marrows Memorial Award Dinner

It is planned to once again hold the dinner in Adelaide possibly in November. Details will be available later. Let's hope we can make it this year.

When Pembroke Dock had 'the finest officers' mess'

By [Bruce Sinclair](#) @WTBruceS Content Editor



It was, reputedly, "the finest officers' mess in RAF Coastal Command," yet today its site in Pembroke Dock's former dockyard is only marked by long neglected trees and undergrowth.

Alongside the 'new' road into the former Royal Dockyard – and within yards of the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre in the old dockyard chapel – is where RAF Pembroke Dock's officers' mess was built in the mid-1930s as the RAF rapidly expanded its local flying boat station. Boasting dozens of rooms and excellent facilities for that time, it was 'home' for generations of serving officers, from many countries, when stationed at 'PD', and the venue for countless events and parties, in wartime and peacetime.

The RAF finally departed from Pembroke Dock in 1959 and with no further use by the military the RAF station was sold off.

By 1985, when the colour photographs were taken, the building was looking very sad, with broken windows and doors. Not long afterwards this elegant complex was demolished.

Over succeeding years there have been various plans for the site, including building a hotel there, but so far these have come to nothing. It remains a place for the ghosts of flying boat personnel of past years whose voices once echoed in the mess corridors.

Pictures from the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre Archive.



The Pembroke Dock Officers Mess in its heyday



Two photos of the Mess circa 1985

Thank You Anne Pyke-Flaherty for passing on this article.

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SHOPPING SECTION

“MARITIME is NUMBER 10” Book – Currently out of stock

“ANZAC SQUADRON”

This book relating the story of 461 Squadron the “ANZAC SQUADRON” by Norman Ashworth is also from the Secretary at a cost of \$55.00 per copy, postage and handling.

Sunderland Lapel Badges – “Sunderland” lapel badges are available from the Secretary at \$8.00 ea. packaging and postage paid.

10 and 461 Squadron Plaques

We now have both 10 and 461 Squadron Plaques in stock. The cost is \$70.00 including GST, postage and packaging.

ELECTRONIC REFERENCES AND CONTACTS

Short Sunderland/Hythe, Sandringham & Seaforth/Solent. Face Book Group

Facebook group that might be of interest to some Sunderlanders – Short Sunderland/Hythe, Sandringham & Seaforth/Solent. It’s a Private Group, but often has Sunderland, RAAF 10 and 461 Sqn content. Worth following.

VALE

Peter Jensen, 461 Sqn; C. N. (Noel) Dunn MID, 10 Sqn.

LEST WE FORGET

