

# CONTACT



NEWSLETTER

of the

AIR FORCE

ASSOCIATION

VICTORIA

ABN 96 091 342 304

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Volume 72, Issue 4



AVM Brent Espeland AM,  
1940 –2017

# President's Message

Dear Colleagues

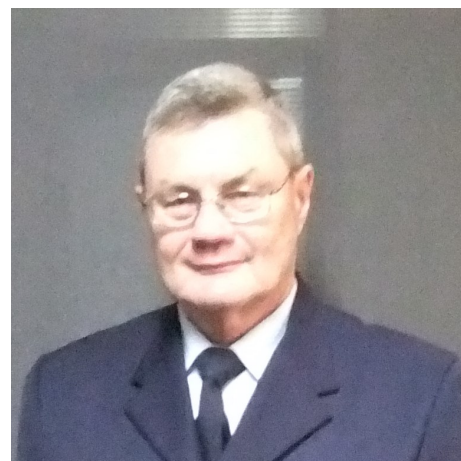
In my opinion, 2017 has been a great year for the Division and heralds a promising 2018. We have established new branches, the latest the B24 Liberator Branch, and more are likely to be created within the next few months. We have enjoyed several very successful fellowship events hosted by the Division and held another memorable Annual Pilgrimage to the AFC Memorial at Point Cook.

Last month, Christine and I travelled to Tetbury, UK to unveil an Australian Flying Corps plaque donated by the AFA National to commemorate the Corps' presence in Tetbury during the Great War and to acknowledge the wonderful relationship they enjoyed with the Tetbury townspeople. We were accompanied by Maureen and John Capp from Australia. John's father served in the Australian Flying Corps and was a WWII veteran. The people of Tetbury were very impressed by the Association's generosity and our efforts to travel to the UK for the occasion.

I was pleased to present the Division's Sir Edmund Herring Award to Jennifer Spencer for her oil painting 'Gallantry Spent' at the Repatriation Hospital's Story Writing and Art Competition prize presentation ceremony. I was among others on the SWAC Committee who judged the exhibitions and was immediately impressed by the painting that depicted Australian Light Horsemen riding in the desert. Sadly, the Story Writing and Art Competition will end at the end of 2018 after operating 56 years. It seems fewer artisans are taking interest in the event despite it being adequately supported by DVA and sponsored by a range of Ex-Service Organisations including our Division.

Our new website is operational. The integrated database component will be completed before Christmas. The site will provide a range of functionalities that will improve membership administration including the opportunity for members to pay their subscriptions online and amend their personal details. I held a Branch Presidents' Meeting to update the branches on website development and to announce the establishment of a Communications Team to manage our Division's communication, especially the social media. There was an appeal to the branches, which I extend to you, to submit your human-interest stories or other newsworthy items to the Team who will upload them on the most appropriate site or include them in *Contact*. It's a great opportunity to share your knowledge and experiences.

Peter Colliver, our Division Honorary Treasurer, and I visited the Association's Western Australia Division in early October to view its Retirement



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## News

and Age Care facilities. We remain highly impressed by the operation which commenced from an idea back in the early 1970's. Following years of prudent management, cooperation and team effort the organisation has become one of the most successful of its type in Australia and has been awarded several times for the standard of its quality care. I have floated the idea of the Victorian Division moving towards this field of veteran and wider community care and received positive responses. Clearly, this development would be a major step for us requiring investigation and consultation with all members prior to any decision-making. You'll hear more about this matter from me.

Rumours spread fast. I was appointed on November 22<sup>nd</sup> the Association's National President by the National Council following the passing of our National President AVM Brent Espeland, AM (Retd). I am very honoured to take up the role and look forward to the many challenges ahead. I worked for Brent Espeland when he was Air Officer Commanding Training Command and greatly admired him for his steady and calm leadership. He was always very respectful and genuinely took interest in people. Brent was a gentleman and I am privileged to follow in his footsteps.

I will be working closely with the Board to identify and appoint your next President, and we anticipate an announcement will be made early in the New Year.

The Festive Season is a special time to spend with our family and friends. I love Christmas at home with my wife, children and grandchildren. Whether you are spending time at home or elsewhere, I hope you have a great Christmas and New Year, and please – stay safe.

God Bless

Carl Schiller

**OFFICE CHRISTMAS CLOSURE**  
**RAAFA OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED**  
**FROM;**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> DECEMBER 2017**  
**TO**  
**17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2018.**

## ***'Gallantry Spent' painting wins Writing and Art Competition Special Award***

**An oil painting depicting Australian Light Horsemen riding in the desert has been awarded the AFA (Victoria) Story Writing and Art Competition prize for 2017.**

AFA (Victoria) President Carl Schiller presented the Division's Sir Edmund Herring Memorial Prize to Jennifer Spencer for her 'Gallantry Spent' oil painting. The Special Awards prize was given in recognition of Jennifer's outstanding painting depicting Australian Light Horsemen riding in the desert.

The Veteran Community Story Writing & Art Prize Presentation was held in the Acacia Room, Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital on Friday, 24 November. Carl was accompanied by fellow Board Member Di Hoopert and Barbara Stallard, the Division's Office Manager.

'Gallantry Spent' was purchased by a Vietnam Veteran who donated the painting to the hospital to hang in a public place.

The Story Writing and Art Competition has been running for 56 years, starting off as an occupational therapy activity for returned service personnel. During this time it has received strong support from Department of Veteran Affairs and a raft of sponsors, including the Air Force Association. Regrettably, due to a decreasing number of entries over the past number of years, the competition will close at the end of 2018.



*Jennifer Spencer is presented with the Sir Edmund Herring Memorial Prize by AFA President, Carl Schiller.*



## Eulogy to AVM Brent Espeland AM,

1940 –2017

By

**Peter Colliver,  
National  
Secretary, Air  
Force  
Association**

Brent assumed the National presidency at pivotal stage in the Association's evolution. The transition from our World War II cohort had been completed, and a strategic plan had been framed.

Implementation, however, was frustrated and stalled. There was a vision for one Association, but we remained tribal and territorial. Some even feared that an effective national body would somehow diminish the role of the State Divisions

Brent proved to be the oil that smoothed our path and the glue that has held us to it

He believed that in addition to having the best-led, best-trained, best-equipped military in the world, Australia should have the best cared for, best-treated, best-respected veterans in the world.

He had a passionate belief that, though not Air Force, the Association is a creature of Air Force and an integral part of the Air Force family, and of the broader Defence community, and that it has a role to play in advancing and preserving the interests of serving and former Air Force and ADF members, and providing support not elsewhere available.

His ability to handle delicate situations, was demonstrated early in his presidency, when faced with a couple of issues he dealt with them in such a way that the protagonists were able to accept the outcome, even though it wasn't precisely what they had hoped for.

When it was proposed that DFWA, the Naval Association, RAR Corporation, the Special Air Service Association, and the Air Force Association form the Alliance of Defence Service Organizations (ADSO), Brent was determined that this attempt must succeed, where previous attempts at

coalition had failed to last.

As a measure of the success to which his background efforts positively contributed, ADSO now comprises some 17 member organizations. An even more significant indicator of the progress that has been made is the joint response to the Federal Minister for Veterans Affairs, which Brent signed, two weeks ago, on behalf of ADSO, together with the National President of the RSL – the first such joint response I can recall in my thirteen years of involvement at the national level.

Brent had a real knack for focussing on the essential elements of a situation or debate. He could lead by the nose, if he had to, but he preferred to persuade, to nudge or cajole to achieve the desired outcome. The right outcome, was better than a fast outcome.

He had a tremendous capacity for work, and gave his all to every task he undertook, and to every position he accepted. Weeks after his operation in May, he travelled to Melbourne, after a medical procedure in the morning to chair a meeting of our National Council.

In August he joined our strategic planning session by Skype from his hospital room. His insightful contributions helped us to re-shape our plan and our vision for the future.

He may not have been large in stature, but he leaves big shoes to fill.

Our lasting tribute to him will be to give substance to his vision.

RAAFA representatives,



Association members attending the funeral of AVM Brent Espeland

From left; John Mc Crystal, Peter Colliver, Graeme Bland (WA), David Helman SA Ron Glew (NSW), Carl Schiller, OAM, CSM, Bob Bunney Nat VP, John Murray RAAFAWA CEO

# Air Force Association Vietnam Veterans Bursary

## Recipient Joins Scottish Chamber Orchestra

Young Australian flautist, Bronte Hudnott has joined Edinburgh-based Scottish Chamber Orchestra as Sub Principal Flute after graduating with distinction from the Royal Academy of Music in London.



In 2010, Bronte Hudnott was awarded an Air Force Association Vietnam Veterans bursary to assist with her undergraduate studies at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Since then she has continued her studies as a flautist and graduated in 2015 with a Master of Arts Degree with distinction from the Royal Academy of Music. After trialling with several orchestras in the UK and working as a freelance musician, Bronte commenced work in March 2017 as Sub Principal Flute with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

In 2009, the Air Force Association Foundation, together with the RAAF Vietnam Veterans Association (Vic) and the Vietnam and Associated Veterans Sub-Branch, instituted an annual bursary to provide financial assistance to children and grandchildren of RAAF Vietnam veterans. This was later extended to children and grandchildren of

RAAF members with operational service or three or more years of continuous full-time service seeking to progress their recognised vocational training.

Recipients receive support during their Year 11 high school studies, first year University or an equivalent recognised TAFE or vocational training course.

The Bursaries are presented at a joint RAAFA and RAAFFVA ceremony annually in February.

Are you interested in finding out more about the Air Force Association-Vietnam Veterans Bursary? Visit <http://raafavic.org.au/news/25801/raaf-association-foundation>

***Did you know*** that help is at hand for any veteran or spouse of a veteran who is in need of assistance with bills for gas, electricity or any other expense? If you know a veteran who needs a helping hand, please make sure that they get in contact with our Office Manager, Barb, on 03 9813 4600. Welfare funds are available.

All discussions will be treated as confidential.



### RAAF ASSOCIATION VICTORIAN DIVISION

#### BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

GPCAPT. C. F. (Carl) Schiller OAM CSM Ret. : State President

Darrell Robinson: Executive Board Secretary

R.J (Bob) Brackin : Immediate Past President

D (Darryl) Topp and M (Max) McGregor Vice-Presidents

P.W. ( Peter) Colliver Chairman Welfare Patriotic Fund & National Secretary

J. (John) McCrystal : Chairman RAAFA Foundation

Directors: D. (Di) Hooper ; T. A. (Tony) Pilli;

P. (Peter) Finkelstein: Honorary Solicitor

#### BRANCH SECRETARIES

**Catalina** Ronald Kirk (98193527); **ATC/AAFC** Hugh Tank (98773424);

**Ballarat** Tom Jobling (53331653); **Bendigo** Glenis Gordon (54369293); **Fighter Squadrons** **Engineers** Kingsley McRae 0419 518303, **21 Squadron** Mike Dance 5776 2106; **RAF** Ted Hayes 9841 8553; **Melbourne WAAAF** Jessie Reed (98029073); **North Metropolitan** Elayne Whatman (93021048); **Vietnam Veterans** Gill Coughlan gilly4346@gmail.com ; **Sunderland Squadrons** Ricky Hattam (52413431); **2 Squadron** Walter Sherman 5282 8315; **B24 Liberator** Paul Rourke 0409179254.



# Around the Branches

## BENDIGO BRANCH

It's nearly time to say goodbye to 2017. Can you believe this? The last few months have been hectic for members of Bendigo RAAFA.

I'll commence this report on a sad note.

**VALE:-** Jim & Jean Peterson who were both 95.

Mrs. Joyce Rollinson & Mrs. Hilda Dean who were both widows of past RAAF members.

Now for the good news:- We welcomed Jeanette Taylor, wife of Trevor & Ann & Les Dole.

We had a visit from Peter Colliver, National Secretary & State Treasurer, who along with Carl Schiller are our mentors.

Our branch was well represented at commemorations for VP Day, Vietnam Veterans' Day, Malaya/Borneo Commemorations and a service conducted by the Bendigo Cemetery Trust to mark the 100th Anniversary of Beersheba.

Once again members travelled to Melbourne to attend the Air Force Band concert on 8th October. Many thanks to Laurie Bell who arranged special front seats for us.

Members joined Ballarat RAAFA for their 'Battle for Britain' commemorations which was very well organised and really enjoyable.

Arrangements are underway for our 'Picnic in the Park' at which Ballarat branch will join us for a social gathering, also our Christmas luncheon which is being held on 7th December, bad luck HQ have organised their Christmas luncheon for the same day!!

On behalf of the President and members of Bendigo branch, I take this opportunity to congratulate Carl Schiller & his merry band for all they are doing, also to Barbara Stallard who carries out all we ask of her so pleasantly. A BIG THANK YOU.

To all the members and families of RAAF Association branches, our best wishes for a merry yule tide and may 2018 be a healthy, safe & happy year.

Glenis Gordon, Secretary, RAAF Association,

## BALLARAT BRANCH

Here in Ballarat we are finding the year fast drawing to its close. We celebrate Christmas oTimesn Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> of December at 12 noon. Even sooner is our visit to the Bendigo branch on Friday the 24<sup>th</sup> of November. We anticipate both.

Our November meeting was interested to hear of the redevelopment of RAAF Base Tindal from the perspective of Mr Bruce Hammond a civilian Land Surveyor. We had many questions for him.

We mourn the death of our long standing member Robin Nuttall. Robin brought a great deal of colour to life and we will miss him. Bill Wilkie who was a POW in Germany has gone into permanent care, so he no longer joins us at our meetings. I am impressed by the efforts our older members make to join us and the efforts other members make to help them.

We have two projects carrying into the new year: The first is a membership drive, this is beginning to bear fruit but we will need to persevere. The other is the refurbishment of Hut 48, This was the Officer's Mess for the RAAF Base housing the WAGS school. It is being refurbished by the City of Ballarat under Heritage schemes and will be available to us as co-tenants. We see it as both a place to express our presence as an association but especially as a place to focus the memory of those who trained for service here in Ballarat. Peter Schoutens is working on a memorial structure and Tom Roberts has done much research on the very difficult task of identifying WAGs who trained here and subsequently died in service. It's a difficult job and Tom needs all the leads he can get.

An immediate challenge for 2018 is to find a new Secretary and Treasurer. Tom Jobling and Peter Anderson have both done sterling work but are unable to continue in these roles. Thank you gentlemen and well done.

Keith Lanyon

## ATC/AAFC BRANCH

### **VALE: Air Commodore (Chaplain) Reverend Mervyn Steve Box AM.**

Steve, as we all knew him, was our Branch Chaplain for many years and was well known for his amusing, rhyming and often topical Graces which he would recite at our meetings prior to our going off to lunch.

The Funeral Service was conducted on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October at St, Luke's Anglican Church in East Frankston with a capacity attendance which included representation by members of the Air Force Association, Air Force Band, Officer Commanding 4 Wing, WGCDR (AAFC) Shaun Young, Cadets and Staff of the Australian Air Force Cadets and the R.S.L. who also conducted their part of the Service.

Our sincere condolences to Gwen and the family on their sad loss of Steve who will be missed by many.

Our Branch held its final General Meeting for 2017 at the Box Hill RSL on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October. Numbers were down slightly lower once again which was somewhat disappointing, but it by no means deterred the spirits of those who afterwards enjoyed their lunch in the Bistro.

As a tribute to Steve, Past Vice President of our Branch, Murray McBain and his wife Carol penned a special Grace which was composed in similar form to that usually provided by Steve and with Gwen's approval, it was recited by Murray following the meeting, prior to our going to lunch. Our thanks to Murray and Carol for their thoughts and consideration in putting together this very special Grace in remembrance of Steve.

The final Air Force Band Concert for 2017 was, as usual, conducted at the magnificent Melbourne Town Hall on Sunday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of October.

The interest shown in attending was pleasing once again with 35 members responding, but on the day, possibly due to the weather being somewhat on the cool side, the number on parade dwindled to 22 as being present.

This concert, titled "Firebird", was the final one to be under the control of the baton of SQNLDR Mathew Shelley and the occasion

was suitably marked with an Address of Appreciation to Mathew given by AIRCDRE Geoffrey Harland AM CSC DSM, Senior Air Force Officer and Commander Air Force Training Group who also recognised the presence of our Air Force Association group.

Following the concert I had the pleasure of being introduced to the 2018 incoming Commanding Officer of the Band, SQNLDR Mark Pentreath and the new Musical Director, FLTLT Daniel Phillips who will, I believe, also be the Band's new conductor.

Both expressed their thanks to the Association and the members for their ongoing support. As the concert dates for next year become available, they will be advised again for expressions of interest.

The Association's Annual Pilgrimage and RAAF Nashos' Memorial Day Service is to be held at Point Cook on Sunday the 19<sup>th</sup> of November and no doubt some catching up amongst members will take place during lunch afterwards in the old Officers' Mess.

In closing, on behalf of the members of the ATC/AAFC Branch, we wish all members of the Association a very Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year.

Regards to everyone,

Laurie Bell.

## Coming events

**Air Force Association (Victoria Division)**  
Christmas Function Thursday 7 December,  
2017 (NOTE: the tentative date )

**77 Squadron and Friends** Christmas  
Function Wednesday 13 December, 2017

**The Events listed above are as known at time  
of publication . To confirm please go to  
[www.raafavic.org.au](http://www.raafavic.org.au)**

# ***2017 Annual Pilgrimage to the AFC Memorial***

On a beautiful Spring Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2017, around 180 people made the Annual Pilgrimage to the AFC Memorial RAAF Williams Point Cook to witness the unveiling of the Commemorative Plaque and remember those who served and those who serve.

In keeping with previous ceremonies, the commemoration was shared with the National Servicemen's Association.

This year also saw the unveiling of a Commemorative Plaque advising visitors of the two capsules that have been interred in the monument containing the names of the Fallen.



*AC Harland and GPCAPT Schiller  
unveil the Commemorative Plaque*



*The Commemorative Plaque*

After an aerobatic display by Squadron Leader Glen Coy in a Harvard aircraft, Master of Ceremonies, Mr Laurie Bell, Air Force Association (Victoria)'s ATC/AAFC Branch President, conducted the order of service:

After the official ceremony, a light lunch and beverages were served at the former Officers' Mess at RAAF Williams Point Cook.



*GPCAPT Schiller (ret'd) presents WGCDR  
Nigel Leurs with a framed picture of a  
Spitfire fighter*

At the lunch, Group Captain Schiller presented Wing Commander Nigel Leurs, the outgoing Commanding Officer No 21 (City of Melbourne)

Squadron, with a framed picture of a Spitfire fighter in recognition of his outstanding support for the Air Force Association (Victoria).

Air Force Association (Victoria) and many of its Branches; National Servicemen's Association (Victoria) and a number of its Branches; Air Force Training Group; No21 (City of Melbourne) Squadron; Air Force Band; RAAF Museum; No4 Wing (AAFC)

In addition to representatives and members of the official organisations, spouses, partners, children and grandchildren also attended what was a wonderful and thoughtful day at RAAF Williams Point Cook



*Message of Welcome: Group Captain Carl Schiller  
OAM CSM (Retd), President Air Force Association  
(Victoria) and President No2 Squadron Association*



*AC Geoffrey Harland AM CSC DSM,  
Senior Air F Officer Victoria and Commander  
Air Force Training Group*



## TETBURY – REMEMBERING THE AUSTRALIAN FLYING CORPS A CENTURY ONWARDS

By Carl Schiller

The rolling, green hills of the Cotswolds is hardly where you would imagine being a place that played a major role in the Great War, yet the historic market town of Tetbury in Gloucestershire, UK was home base to 1<sup>st</sup> (Training) Wing Australian Flying Corps between 1917 and 1919.

Remembrance Day 2017 marks the centenary year of the 1<sup>st</sup> (Training) Wing's arrival in Tetbury, and on this day Group Captain Carl Schiller OAM CSM



The initial Headquarters of the AFC

(Retd), presented on behalf of the Air Force Association a

bronze plaque paying tribute to the kindred relationship between the AFC airmen and the Tetbury townspeople, and commemorating the airmen who died during the Wing's operation from nearby Leighterton and Minchinhampton airfields.

Commanded by LtCol Oswald Watt, the Wing comprised Nos 5, 6, 7 and 8 Squadrons that formed an aerial combat training and resupply facility for the AFC squadrons deployed in the Great War.

The presentation took place in the town's historic Market House.



AFC graves at Leighterton

The day prior to Remembrance Day, the 'Australian Contingent' comprising Carl and Christine Schiller, and John Capp, OAM and Maureen Capp, OAM, were

shown the former AFC airfield sites, the cemeteries at Minchinhampton and Lasborough, and a tour of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Chavenage House where the AFC occasionally 'dropped in' on the back lawn for a 'cuppa' and conversation. John Capp's father was an Air Mechanic in the AFC. People who watch the popular TV series 'Poldark'

might recognise the house as being the Poldark's family home.



Carl Schiller presents the AFC Commemorative Plaque

The 11.00am Remembrance was held at the Market House followed by the presentation of the plaque at 3.00pm. The Australian National Flag was flown above the Market House in honour of the occasion. The Town Crier introduced Mrs Jane Haines (Chair of the History of Tetbury Society) and Mr Barry Barnes, local aviation artist and amateur mil-

itary historian, who was largely responsible for raising the awareness of the AFC's operation to the current generation of local and surrounding village people. Barry Barnes provided a history brief on the AFC's presence and its impact on the region.



Chavenage House

Jane Haines presented to the Air Force Association (Victoria) a bound book of the Service Records of the Fallen AFC airmen who perished in training accidents or died because of illness, including those that succumbed to the dreaded 1918 flu pandemic. Barry Barnes presented Carl Schiller with a painting of Captain Harry Cobby's brightly painted Sopwith Camel aircraft in flight.

A further aspect of the event was the exchange of Lions' Club banners between Carl Schiller, on behalf of the Point Cook Lions' Club, and Mr Stephen Parr of the Tetbury Lions' Club. The occasion was attended by the town's dignitaries, including the Mayor of Tetbury, Chair of Feofees, members of the History of Tetbury Society, various church and ser-



John Capp, OAM & Maureen Capp, OAM

vice groups, representatives of the British Legion, and serving veteran British Army personnel from a nearby logistics regiment.

The following day, the 'Australian Contingent' attended a cross-denominational church service at St Mary's the Virgin in Tetbury, a magnificent 18<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic cathedral. The Rector, Rev Poppy Hughes, announced to the congregation of about 400 people that Australian Air Force Association representatives were present to pay their respects to the Fallen. Following the service, Carl Schiller participated in a march through the town and laid a wreath commemorating the AFC in the nearby St Saviour's churchyard.



Carl Schiller lays a wreath at St Saviour's Church

The occasion, was wonderfully organised by the History of Tetbury Society who are a dedicated team of local historians

whose fondness of the AFC's connection with the

town cannot be underestimated. Our 'Australian Contingent' was warmly received and highly regarded for its efforts to travel from Australia.

The Air Force Association has made an impact on the Tetbury townspeople and will be fondly remembered.

*(The trip to Tetbury was undertaken at the personal expense of the Schillers and Capps.)*



**RAAFA TIES AND SCARFS ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE.**

**THIS WOULD MAKE A BRILLIANT GIFT**

**THE TIES ARE AVAILABLE AT \$28.00  
STATE PREFERENCE WIDE OR NARROW  
SCARFS AT \$28.00**

*2017 Christmas  
function at  
RAAFA*

*MERRY CHRISTMAS*



Carl's welcome to members attending and his overview of the Tetbury memorial plaque presentation in the UK



Acting CO of 21 Squadron, Squadron Leader John Force Responding to Carls welcome on behalf of all gathered.



Winner of the main door prize Pat Lynch with Carl



# ***My flight in Liberator A72-176 on 22.5.1945***

***By R.K. White - Former FSGT RAAF***



This story started on 5 February, 1945.

On that day, the USS "Peter Sylvester", a Liberty ship bound from Melbourne, Victoria, for Colombo, Ceylon, was sunk by torpedoes fired from a German submarine in the Indian Ocean, some 820 miles from Fremantle, W.A.

The explosion from the first torpedo fired destroyed the ship's electrical system and radio. As a result, the ship's lifeboats and rafts were adrift in the wide expanse of the Indian Ocean, unknown to the outside world. One lifeboat drifted 1100 miles in a N.E. direction before being found. On 9 February, survivors from one of the lifeboats were picked up by a motor vessel, "Cape Edmont", on route from Colombo to Melbourne, which immediately radioed of its find.

The Royal Australian Navy received a signal from the "Cape Edmont" reporting the rescue of 15 survivors from the "Peter Sylvester" and immediately informed Western Area.

A full sea and air search for other survivors involving the Royal Navy, the United States Navy, the Royal Australian Navy, the Royal Air Force, the Fleet Air Arm and the Royal Australian Air Force, began at dawn the next day, 10 February.

B-24 Liberator aircraft from 25 Squadron (RAAF) based at Cunderdin, W.A. and Catalina flying boats from 205 Squadron, Royal Air Force, based at Crawley Bay, W.A., were immediately involved.

On 14 February, 1945, a Liberator B-24 aircraft A72-124, preparing to continue the air search, crashed on take-off. Five members of the crew died and the aircraft was destroyed by the resulting fire.

Following the crash of Liberator A72-724, the eleven man air crew, of which I was a member (captained by Flying Officer D.H. Bennett), was posted from the air base at Nadzab, New Guinea, to 25 Squadron at Cunderdin, W.A. to replace the crew of A72-124.

On 1 March, I arrived at 25 Squadron at Cunderdin and rejoined the other members of our crew.

By 10.3.45, all 143 survivors of the sinking ship were rescued and restored to good health.

On 14.5.45, because our crew had no experience flying Liberators at night, we were posted to 7 O.T.U. Tocumwal for night flying training, during which time, on 22 May, 1945, we flew in Liberator A72-176 from Tocumwal down to Tasmania and return. We took off at 1830 hours and landed at 2300 hours, a four and a half hour flight.

Sources:

*No. 25 City of Perth Squadron, compiled by Paul L. Mallard -  
published 1996. - Crew flying log book. 16.10.2017*

## **Royal Air Force Branch**

In September, as in previous years, we remembered the Battle of Britain with a service at the Shrine of Remembrance and a lunch at the Sofitel Hotel. Both events were very successful and well attended with 36 of us turning up for the lunch. We are grateful to the Air Force Association for helping to cover the cost of these events.

We are enjoying our membership of the AFA and on 9th November we took part in the gift packaging session at AFA HQ where over 700 gift parcels were made up to send to our comrades serving in the Middle East over Christmas. This was a busy but enjoyable session, made easy by the attendance of 17 members of 21 Sqn in addition to representatives from the Victorian branches. What was expected to be an all day job was finished by lunch time and we all enjoyed the excellent lunch arranged for the volunteers



The finished job.

The passage of time has caused us to lose three of number in recent months and we sadly miss our good friends Fred Gatt, Stan Birch and Charlie Baird. Charlie served with 103 Squadron in Bomber Command as a mid upper gunner on Lancasters and completed two full tours.

Our last remaining WWII aircrew veteran is Frank Meech, who was a mid upper gunner on Liberators. Frank gave our Branch Meeting address in December on "My War Years". Frank, a tall lad, lied about his age and managed to get his father to certify that he was 17 years old when he joined the RAF at only 15 and half. He served both on land and in the air and when he was discharged at the end of the war was still too young to drink in a pub. He still has a distinct air of youth about him.



Frank

On Sunday 19th November we attended the Point Cook Pilgrimage and laid a wreath on

behalf of the RAF.

The last RAFA Branch Meeting of the year is Dec 7th and as usual we will have a Xmas Lunch at Stella Maris. Unfortunately this date clashes with the AFA Christmas lunch so that we will be unable to attend. We send our apology.

Ted Hayes, President RAF Branch.

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## **Catalina Branch**

### **Activities**

**Membership.** We currently have 27 financial members. This includes Catalina Veterans and Associate Members. The Branch recently lost our Tasmanian Veteran, Charles Saville. Several of our Veterans are now in Aged Care facilities, due to age and health problems.

'Get Together' for Veterans and Members was hosted by the Branch Committee at RAAFA on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October. Although only a few were able to attend, it was a very pleasant time. A big 'Thank You' to Barbara Stallard at RAAFA for all her help.

'Remembrance Day' Service at Repat Hospital was held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> November, (brought forward from 11<sup>th</sup> November), and was well supported.

Catalina Branch Christmas Luncheon will be held at ANZAC HOUSE, City on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November and no doubt will be a success as in previous years. We are anticipating that 20 will attend. The Guest Speaker is Warren Kemp from RUSI

The Catalina Branch Committee is determined to continue for as long as possible with social events for the benefit of the Veterans, Widows and Members.

On behalf of the Catalina Branch we wish all Members of RAAFA, Vic a very Happy and Safe Christmas and New Year.

Ron Kirk

Hon.Sec



## RAAFA (Vic) Engineer Branch

### RAAFA (Vic) Engineer Branch Fellowship End of Year Luncheon 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017

*On behalf of the committee members:*



**We wish you the members, your family, friends and loved ones a very Merry Christmas 2017 and a healthy, happy and fulfilling 2018.**

Once again we held our annual lunch on

Oaks Day or Ladies Day in Melbourne on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November in the rooms of the Batman's Hill on Collins Melbourne. The facility is centrally placed being opposite the new look Spencer street railway station and is well serviced with transport links, amenities and services.

Glen Gould volunteered to be our Master of Ceremonies for the event (armed with his many jokes) and our guest speaker was Dr Paul Callus Senior Research Scientist in the Advanced Composite Technologies Group Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG-the old DSTO). John Clarkson and Noel Hadfield as usual, supported by other members, provided the "back room support".

Paul provided a very informative and interesting presentation on the new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft which he has been heavily involved with. We had a "full house" of enthusiastic attendees which was very satisfying in that for many years now we still managed to hold our numbers and obviously, our member's interests. The function ran very well and the standard of staff service and the meal were of a high standard and appreciated by all who attended.

Dr Paul Callus graduated with a Bachelor of Applied Science in Metallurgy from the South Australian Institute of Technology in 1986 and a PhD in Materials En-

gineering from Monash University in 1993. He worked for four years with CSIRO developing electrode coatings for ceramic fuel cells then two years at RMIT investigating the mechanical behaviour of textile composites. He joined the Defence Science and Technology Organisation in 1997 where he focused on the mechanical behaviour of advanced fibre composites, the manufacture and airworthiness certification of composites and multifunctional aircraft structure.

### 2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Bi-monthly committee meeting for committee members at the Mail Exchange Hotel which is on the corner of Spencer and Bourke streets.

First Monday in the month commencing February 2018 unless we decide otherwise due to a conflict in dates/activities.

Monday 5 Feb 2018

Monday 2 April

Monday 4 June

Monday 6 Aug

Monday 1 Oct

Monday 3 Dec

Mid year lunch at Batman's Hill on Collins 1200 Hrs Wed 13 June 2018

End of year lunch at Batman's Hill on Collins 1200 hours Thursday 8 Nov.

Anzac Day-same as past years but to be finalised.

[Note: All dates subject to change and to be confirmed throughout the year].

### Point of Contact (POC)

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We look forward to seeing you all in 2018 in good health.

*Ron Ledingham*

For Kingsley McRae and the Committee Members



### **CONTACT EDITORIAL AND DISTRIBUTION DATES for 2018**

Autumn 2018

Contributions close 28 February 2018

Publication March 11 2018

Winter 2018

Contributions close 30 May 2018

Publication June 17 2018

Spring 2018

Contributions close 29 August 2018

Publication September 16 2018

### **VALES**

*The following members have passed away since the last publication.*

*May they rest in peace.*

*Lest we forget*

Rev. Steve Box AM ATC/AAFC Branch  
5/10/17

Mrs Mary Mullahy WAAAF Branch  
24/10/17

Mr Charles Saville Catalina Branch  
10/11/2017

### **Vietnam Veterans Branch**



Our former long- serving Secretary and life-time Branch member Rick Holmes has decided to stand down from the committee. Rick has been a valued member of our team for many years and with all his experience, I'm glad that he has offered to stay in touch and be available to offer advice on the curly questions that arise from time to time.

December is the month when our Branch, in conjunction with the Air Force Association Foundation will again be considering the award of bursaries to eligible dependants for education or training courses. This year, for the first time, we are promoting the availability of bursaries to all branches of the AFA Victoria. Winners of the bursaries will be announced in late January and awarded at our Branch AGM on the 11 January 2018.

The Vietnamese-Australian community (led by the Vietnamese Community of Australia – Victoria Chapter (VCA-Vic)), in a final gesture to mark forty years of settlement in Australia, have expressed the desire to create a memorial to honour the 521 Australians who died during the Vietnam war. The memorial is being constructed in the Kevin Wheelahan Gardens, adjacent to the Sunshine RSL, Dickson St, Sunshine. At the recent 'Turning of the Sod' Ceremony, 521 white crosses, bearing the name of each of the fallen veterans, an Australian Flag and a Poppy of Remembrance, were placed in tribute. A Dedication Ceremony will be held at 1100 on 16 December 2017 and members of our Branch will be attending to show support for this initiative.

As I reflect on the significant aspects of the past year, I am conscious of the passing of three members of our Association – Lee Scully, former President of our Branch, our Patron, Peter Issacson and most recently, Brent Espeland, National President of our Association. I'm sure we are all saddened by the passing of these three Association members but heartened by the example and contributions they each made.

Chris Hudnott

President



# 2017 Merz Lecture: Remembering the RAAF Phantom F4 E

by Tony De Brabander

On Saturday, 18 November 2017, the Friends of the RAAF Museum hosted a lecture on the RAAF Phantom F4 E. The lecture was part of the annual Merz series of lectures and was held in the former Officers' Mess RAAF Point Cook.

The guest speakers were AVM (Retd) Dave Rodgers, AM (pilot) and WGCDR (Retd) Lance Halvorson, MBE (navigator) who shared their experiences as crew members on the F4-E Phantom aircraft



*Phantom silhouettes on the opening slides*

The Friends of the Museum extended an invitation to all members of the Air Force Association to attend and a generous crowd of 60 guests attended,



*A full house for the 2017 Merz lecture*

representing a cross-section of members of the Friends of the Museum, the Air Force Association and museum volunteers.



*WGCDR (Retd) Lance Halvorson and AVM (Retd) Dave Rodgers*

Guests assembled in the Mess at 1200hrs for tea and coffee before the lecture started at 1230hrs.

Proceedings were kicked off by the President of the Friends of the RAAF Museum and the speakers were introduced by the Director RAAF Museum before a most interesting 'dog and pony show', highlighting the aircraft itself and Dave Rodgers' and Lance Halvorson's own experiences.

The lecture and question time finished at 1415 and was followed by light refreshments and then a visit to the Phantom F4 E currently residing in the Museum.

If anyone is interested in images and history of the Phantom, Dave Rodgers recommended Googling: Angelfire RAAF Phantoms.



# AFA (Vic) Volunteers Despatch 705 Care Parcel to deployed Air Force personnel for Christmas

On 9 November a team of Air Force Association Victoria volunteers gathered at the Association's Hawthorn office to assemble and dispatch 705 care parcels for deployed Air Force personnel in the Middle East and elsewhere.

This year the AFA team was joined by volunteers from 21 Squadron, led by their Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Nigel Leurs. As past recipients of the AFA's Care Parcel Program, the 21 Squadron members know how important it is to receive a little something from home at Christmas.

AFA (Victoria) has been running this program for several years and while in recent times the majority of deployed Air Force personnel have originated from NSW, Queensland and the ACT, our Victoria Division continues to drive the program on behalf of the national Air Force Association.

"Any duty that separates us from our loved ones is challenging for members and for those at home – especially at Christmas," said AFA Victorian President, Carl Schiller, OAM, CSM.

"Air Force personnel have a proud history of meeting operational demands overseas and the Association is immensely proud of our deployed members' commitment and professionalism. We see the Care Parcels as an expression of support and pride in their endeavours."

The parcels weigh approximately 1kg and include a range of personal and confectionery items catering for both men and women.

The Care Parcel Program has received numerous positive responses from recipients of the parcels, indicating the program is having a positive impact on the morale of deployed personnel.

Thank you to all the following volunteers who gave up their time to support our serving members overseas – you did a wonderful job:

John McCrystal, Max McGregor, Paul Rourke, Bruce Lovett, Di Hoopert, Peter Wilson, Cheryl McCrystal, Carol (Back), Chris Hudnott, Barb Stallard, Ron and Allana Kirk, Adrian Catt, Alan White, Bob Gannaway, Ted Hayes, Graeme Dodd, Deb Lewis, Peter Kelly, Alan Alcock, John McDonald, 21 Squadron personnel.



Members and friends involved in packaging.



Volunteers from 21 Squadron



A mountain of goodies to go into the AFA (Victoria) Care Parcels for our serving members overseas



Volunteers hard at work preparing care Parcels for our serving members overseas