



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH

Newsletter February/March 2022



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Social Luncheon Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month commencing at 11.45 am (December meeting held closer to Christmas) **Committee Meetings** are held on the third Thursday of each month at 1 pm followed by a **General Business Meeting** at approx 2.15 pm to which all financial members are welcome to attend to ratify or otherwise the actions of the committee on that day and raise other matters.

COLDS, FLU ANDOMICRON : Here is your February/March newsletter, unavoidably very much later than intended. While we were able to start our year very well with both our Lake Wendouree picnic for January and our February Social Luncheon/AGM proceeding without the sort of disruptions that we have experienced over the past two years, unfortunately the weeks leading up to our March Social Luncheon meeting, and continuing, have seen Colds, Flu and Omicron impact the health of several of our general members as well as some committee members, including myself.

Thanks to Secretary/Treasurer Peter Dowling for looking after all matters relating to our March Social Luncheon meeting and for conducting the meeting in my absence. While many members were unable to attend the meeting due to illness or isolation requirements, I am aware that a smaller than normal attendance experienced a most enjoyable meeting. Thank you Peter. (NH, Pres)

GEARING UP FOR A MUCH BRIGHTER APRIL : At time of writing I seem to be getting to shake off most of my, (not Covid related), cold/flu symptoms and am optimistic that I will soon be firing on all cylinders again as we head towards a busy April and I wish all members that are 'under the weather' a bit at this time a speedy return to good health. We have a very interesting April Social Luncheon meeting coming up on Tuesday 12th April and of course Anzac Day on Monday 25th.

Paul Lamont, Manager of the Cressy aerodrome, (where the RAAF established airstrips and a RAAF base during World War Two), will be our guest speaker at our April 12th meeting to tell us all about the history of the Cressy airfield and RAAF Base and also what is happening there in present times. Paul will fly to Ballarat for our meeting in his own Tiger Moth "Millie", together with Millie's pilot Jason Cheney.

Make every effort to be at this meeting because not only will what we hear from Paul be most interesting and educative, but will also make members aware of just what a great place Cressy will be to go to this coming Anzac Day afternoon.

It is proposed that following our Ballarat Anzac Day morning Dawn Service and March we go as a group to the Cressy aerodrome for their Anzac Day afternoon activities. There will be opportunities for members to get "up close and personal" with some Tiger Moth aircraft and a variety of other aircraft. I am aware that some other inclusions are developing and Paul will tell us about that. It is expected that our Branch member Stephen Carter will also have his WWII era Ryan aircraft there. (NH, Pres)



These two photographs provided by Stephen Carter show activities at Cressy aerodrome on Australia Day this year.. The photograph at right shows Stephen Carter sitting in his WWII era Ryan aircraft. (Stephen did the flyover of the Sebastopol Memorial during our final Battle of Britain Commemorative Service in 2019).

We will discuss an **Anzac Day afternoon** excursion to Cressy aerodrome at our Social Luncheon Meeting on 12th April and members will be able to register their interest in attending, so be prepared to advise on that day whether or not you wish to be part of an excursion to Cressy aerodrome on 25 April.



LOOKING BACK TWO YEARS AGO, here is an excerpt from our March 2020 newsletter just before we needed to suspend all activities due to Covid restrictions. 2020 members should remember this item.

98 YO WWII BOMBER COMMAND VETERAN BILL COOK

was a most interesting guest speaker at our March (2020) Social Luncheon Meeting. Bill was among the first group of RAAF ground crew members to head to England for WWII duties. Arriving in England in 1941 he first served with 456 (RAAF) Squadron, a night fighter squadron stationed at Valley, North Wales. Next he was posted to 460 (RAAF) Squadron stationed at Binbrook, Lincolnshire. Serving at 460 Squadron as an Electrical Fitter he serviced Lancaster Bombers including the famed 'G for George' which is now a very much viewed exhibit at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



(2020) Branch Secretary Rob Petty looks on as WWII RAAF Veteran Bill Cook addresses the meeting

MOVING ON TWO YEARS TO 2022 AND BILL IS NOW 100 YEARS OLD

and Bill wanted to share with us his excitement and appreciation for something special that he has received acknowledging him as **a Centenarian Veteran on reaching his century last December in the same year as the Air Force Centenary**



NO 13 RADAR STATION INTERPRETIVE DISPLAY DEDICATION

There were eleven of us from Ballarat that attended the Dedication Ceremony of the RAAF No 13 Radar Station Interpretive Exhibition which is now an integral part of the Cape Otway Lightstation Heritage Precinct and effectively now in that Great Ocean Road Tourist Trail. I had the honour of being invited to conduct the formal dedication part of the ceremony in the absence, due to ill health, of our Air Force Association National President Carl Schiller. It was a great day, beautiful weather and a most enjoyable get together with quality people. *(NH, Pres)*



Above : View of the lighthouse from the Radar Station Doover Building



Right : Radar Branch President Chris Harneth conducted proceedings. (WWII Radar Veterans George Runting & David Westwood also spoke tributes to RAAF Radar personnel that served during WWII and Alex Perry MBE, Cape Otway lightstation coordinator, provided a detailed presentation on the Lightstation Precinct).



Above : Ballarat Branch President Noel Hutchins during his Dedication Address



Above : Ballarat Branch member Margaret Bennett presents a gift package to Radar Branch President Chris Harneth. The package contained a printed copy of the distinguished career of Wing Commander James Eric Reynolds, Margaret's father, as it appears on Ballarat Branch's 1wags.org.au website. Also in the package was a copy of Len Ralph's "The Ramblings of a Wandering Radar Man". But most importantly the package contained thirteen large black-and-white photographs from Wing Commander Reynolds's World War Two involvement in RAAF Radar including one of the WWII Darwin transmitter and a great photo of the Mobile Radar Transmitter Vehicle used in the Northern Territory during WWII.

Right : Three of the Ballarat contingent with Marg and Ernie Chapman seated and Committee member Stephen Brown standing.



Below : Peter Dowling & others in the shade of the Radar Doover building.



The Cape Outweigh Radar event was held on Saturday 19th February and this happened to co-incide with a major military anniversary. That being the :

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BOMBING OF DARWIN

The following article on No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School RAAF Ballarat Course No 9 trainee Brian Winspear and his story relating to his presence at RAAF Base Darwin at the time of the first of the bombings of Darwin on 19th February 1942 is mostly a lift from the current "Feature Story" on our Branch's 1wags.org.au website. This article, and it's appearance on the website is due to the dedication and hard work of our 1wags.org.au website coordinator Janet Bates and the continuing support of the team at our Ballarat based website developer UBC Web Design. (Thank you Janet and UBC Team)

The 19th February 1942 saw the first and most ferocious of the bombings of Darwin



No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School RAAF Ballarat trainee, (and later to be Flight Lieutenant), Brian Winspear was there

WWII BOMBING OF DARWIN, AUSTRALIA 1942

One hundred and one year old Flight Lieutenant Brian Winspear was the guest of honour at the recent Commemoration of 80 Years since the Bombing of Darwin held on the 19th February 2022. Brian is one of the last WW2 airmen to see active service and witness the Bombing of Darwin.

Darwin, with its port and airfield facilities, was deemed vital in Australia's defences against Japanese forces during World War II. That day, just before 10am, about 188 Japanese aircraft launched a deadly air raid on Darwin, followed closely by a second attack destroying ships, airfields and reducing what was then a town to rubble.



Flight Lieutenant Brian Winspear - 101 years young



Darwin Library

About 235 people were killed, more than 400 people wounded, 30 aircraft destroyed, nine ships sunk, and many military and civilian facilities destroyed. Japan's first air raid, on February 19, remains the largest single attack ever mounted by a foreign power on Australian soil.

Born in Burnie, Tasmania, in 1920, a young Brian joined the RAAF 1939.

Following his initial training course at Somers, Victoria Brian then completed his Wireless Air Gunners as a member of Course No 9 at No 1 Wireless Air Gunners School RAAF Ballarat. Brian then completed his Gunnery Course at Evans Head , NSW.

Posted to No 2 Squadron at RAAF Base Laverton, Brian found himself headed to Darwin when No 2 Squadron was relocated to there and, at 101 years of age, retains the memory of that ferocious Japanese bombing eighty years ago.

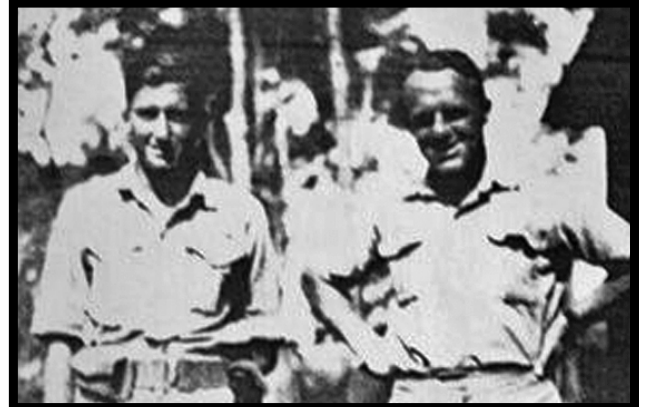
Brian talks of one of the raids :.....



RAAF Photo showing Service Number

"I remember all the details of the first bombing of Darwin. It's been tattooed onto my brain for 70, 80 odd years.

I remember clearly what they were doing, how they were doing the dive bombing and what the zeros were doing shooting up our aircraft and setting fire to the aircraft. The dive bombings and the zeros came in. They were very very close to my trench and I could see their faces in their helmets and I'm sure they were smiling. "



Brian Winspear, (Left), New Guinea 1943 Aged 23

"I looked up and the sun glinted on the side of the bombs," he said.

"There were thousands of them. They were directly overhead. I stuck a cork in my mouth to help stop concussion from the bomb blasts and got right down in the bottom of a trench". "I was lucky to only sustain bomb-splinter injuries to my hands and an eye."

Flight Lieutenant Winspear's squadron was later posted to the Indonesian city of Kupang in West Timor where it provided air cover for 1500 Tasmanians of the ill-fated 2nd/40th Battalion and flew reconnaissance missions.

He was discharged in November 1945 with 600 flying hours in his log book.

After the war, Brian Winspear successfully fought to get recognition for his squadron's actions in Darwin and Indonesian theatres during 1942-43, with the squadron awarded a US Presidential citation. No. 2 and No. 13

Hudson Bomber Squadrons were all but wiped out in their World War II operations. The two squadrons were in Darwin from 1941 to 1943, losing 200 aircrew and 9 out of their 12 aircraft.

Brian settled in Bicheno, Tasmania, and became a well-known business owner, tourism developer and community figure. In 1993, he was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to the tourism industry and the community.

Brian is the author of 'My Back Seat War', based on diaries he kept during the war and he recently gifted one of the last copies of his book to the Air Force Association Victoria's No 2 Squadron Branch. How wonderful that at 101 years of age he was Guest of Honour at this year's 80th Anniversary of that terrible day in Australia's history.



FUTURE NEWSLETTERS/MEMBERSHIPS : Great to see the good number of members who have renewed their Air Force Association membership for 2022. There are however still a few members that have not yet affected their renewal. If you are one of those, please get your membership renewed asap. For the \$35 annual membership, you are entitled to the four quarterly issues of the National "Wings" magazine which is equal to your \$35 payment without the quarterly issue of AFAVic "CONTACT" magazine and your six bi-monthly Ballarat Branch newsletters, not to mention the socialisation and camaraderie of your own local Ballarat Branch. Yes, the last two years have been difficult for us all with Covid related restrictions affecting a lot of what we wanted to do and with some members feeling alienated by some of the restrictions imposed.

Being optimistic, I look forward to a great year for our Branch. The City of Ballarat Council are right behind our 2022 Battle for Australia Commemorative Service at the Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial and they have budgeted for this to provide the infrastructure needed for this occasion in 2022 and each year going forward. Your AFA Ballarat Branch membership will provide you with **your own reserved seat under marquee cover for this very special occasion.**

Please, if you haven't yet done so, get your membership renewed. **Our April/May newsletter will only be forwarded to 2022 financial members.**

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**AS PER OUR DECEMBER/JANUARY 2021-2022 NEWSLETTER AND REITERATED AT OUR JANUARY LAKE WENDOUREE PICNIC AND AT OUR FEBRUARY/AGM AND OUR MARCH MEETINGS,  
OUR MONTHLY SOCIAL LUNCHEON MEETINGS ARE HELD ON  
THE SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH**

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THE REMAINDER OF YOUR 2022 CALENDAR : (With additions as required each month)

- APRIL :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 12th April at 1145**
Monday morning 25th, Anzac Day Dawn Service and March
Monday 25th, Anzac Day afternoon activities at Cressy aerodrome
- MAY :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 10th May at 1145**
(Possible bus trip to B24 hangar Werribee (TBC))
- JUNE :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 14th June at 1145**
- JULY :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 12th July at 1145**
- AUGUST :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 9th August at 1145**
Air Force Association Ball : Saturday Night 27th August at 1930
Battle for Australia Commemorative Service : Sunday 28th at 1100
Battle for Australia Day activities & displays Airport Hut 48 at 1400
- SEPTEMBER :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 13th September at 1145**
- OCTOBER :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 11th October at 1145**
- NOVEMBER :** **Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 8th November at 1145**
- DECEMBER :** **Long Room Christmas Function : Tuesday 13th December at 1145**

WHEN WE SEE LESS INFECTIONS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND A FULL RETURN TO NORMALITY WE WILL LOOK AT ADDING SOME SOCIAL OUTINGS AND EVENTS. IT WOULD BE NICE TO GET BACK TO OUR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AT THE MIDLANDS BALLARAT RSL AND SPORTS SERVICES CLUB. ALSO SOME MOVIE THEATRE "LUNCH BOX AND MOVIE" OUTINGS TO BE CONSIDERED, BUT JUST A LITTLE TOO MUCH INFECTION IN THE COMMUNITY AT PRESENT, CONSIDERING OUR AGE GROUP.