



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH

Newsletter August/September 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.

From the President : How disappointing for the third year running to have to cancel our Battle for Australia Commemorative Service.

Having needed to cancel both our 2020 and 2021 Services due to Covid restrictions, things were looking good for a successful holding of our Service this year. The City of Ballarat were very much on board with us and ready to set-out areas for the marquees and other things on the Friday afternoon before the event.....but disappointingly, the parks and Gardens people needed to advise Council that there was no chance of them being able to set up the necessary infrastructure for the Service due to the completely soggy conditions of the lawn area in front of the memorial where the needed infrastructure would go.

We were advised by Council that we could still proceed with the Service without the infrastructure if we so wished, so I visited the site together with Peter Dowling, Janet Bates and Sue Alexander. What we found was that water was sitting right up to the grassed surface. It was as if the underground water-table level was sitting at the surface. It was decided that for us to proceed with the Service without the infrastructure would have been totally irresponsible of us. To proceed without the infrastructure would not only have been most uncomfortable for attendees but possibly dangerous for the more frail or less mobile attendees.

Another consideration was for the area itself, which is subject to Heritage Victoria overlay. To have hundreds of people there would have caused damage to the area. It was very disappointing for me to have to make the call to cancel the Service yet again.

However, we were able to proceed with our Pacific Ball on the Saturday night, and what a great success it was. Our Ball organiser Ann Petty once again did a superb job. Ann puts in so much work to make the event feel and look special; and special it was.

All 96 seats were snapped up early and Ann ended up with a waiting list of people hoping that there would be some cancellations so that they could get a seat.

Pages 2 and 3 carry some coverage of the Ball.

(NH, Pres)

The front page of our Ball Hand-Out/Dance Card...(with 'is' changed to 'was')

AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION BALLARAT BRANCH PACIFIC BALL



27th August 2022 ~ Brown Hill Hall



Our Pacific Ball was the opening event of our 2022

BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA WEEKEND

Our Battle for Australia Weekend is an acknowledgement of the service of all who took part in the Defence of Australia as the might of the Japanese forces headed South following their Bombing of the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii in December 1941 and the Fall of Singapore.

A series of World War Two battles, events, deployments, raids and actions which collectively make up the Battle for Australia saw our nation's Navy, Army and Air Force face major Battles with our War in the Pacific, in our own waters, on our own land and in the air.



DIRECT ATTACKS BY JAPANESE FORCES ON AUSTRALIA

DURING JUST THE FIRST YEAR, 1942 ~ 80 YEARS AGO ~ INCLUDED, AMONG OTHERS :

- ◆ The first and the most ferocious of the 64 Bombings of Darwin
 - ◆ Submarine attack on Sydney Harbour
- ◆ Bombardment from Submarine of the Sydney Eastern Suburbs
- ◆ Bombardment from submarine of Newcastle in a failed attempt to knock out the BHP Steelworks

THE BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA 1942 ~ 1945



ABOVE : The Pacific Belles during their first half-hour performance before changing into Pacific theme dresses for their second half-hour performance.



The lady who organised it all ~ Ann Petty, our Ball Organiser, pictured with The Pacific Belles. Ann's husband Rob acted as Master of Ceremony.



Johnny Johnson, (vocals & Guitar), of band Mantel, belting out another number with line-dancers on the floor.

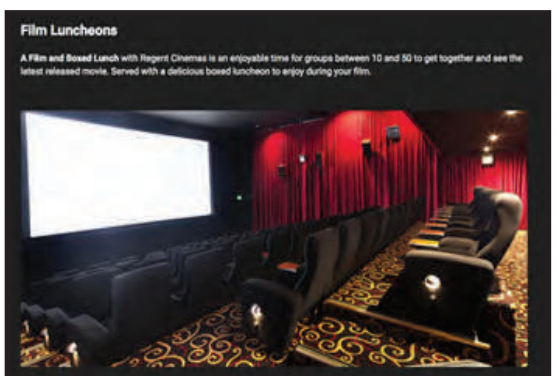


Noel Hutchins & Peter Dowling with The Pacific Belles girls.

FILM LUNCHEON ~ 19 OCTOBER 2022

One of the many local Ballarat businesses that supported our Pacific Ball was the Regent Theatre.

We are going to return that support with a booking for twenty five people to attend one of their **LUNCH AT THE MOVIES on Wednesday 19th October**. As you all know, this was an outing planned at the time when Covid came on the scene and has restricted our activities for the past couple of years. Well it is time for us to get back to these activities. While we were, at our July Social Luncheon meeting, able to enjoy the movie The Glenn Miller Story on our large TV screen, which was excellent and a most enjoyable day, Lunch at the movies at the Regent Theatre will provide us with more sumptuous surroundings and more comfortable seating and be more of an 'outing' and enable us to support a local business that has supported us with our Ball in both 2021 and 2022. We will provide some part subsidy to this, enabling members and their partners to attend for just \$15 each, and non-members for \$20 each. This is a daytime event in a lovely warm theatre, so no "Too Cold" excuses to not take part in this. Members need to book and pay for this outing at our September meeting on Tuesday 13th September, or else you are likely to miss out.



Film Luncheons
A Film and Bored Lunch with Regent Cinemas is an enjoyable time for groups between 10 and 30 to get together and see the latest released movie. Served with a delicious boxed luncheon to enjoy during your film.

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**OUR JULY AND AUGUST SOCIAL LUNCHEON MEETINGS were very much enjoyed by members and the following two pages covering those meetings were prepared and supplied for inclusion in this newsletter by our Newsletter Co-Editor Sue Alexander....Thank you Sue ..... excellent reports. (NH, Pres)**



## JULY SOCIAL LUNCHEON

The July social luncheon featured a special screening of "The Glenn Miller Story" with our members enjoying lunch at the movies.



All will be familiar with the story. Following various degrees of success, Miller finally formed his Big Band, with the establishment of the "Miller Sound".

He achieved interna-

tional success touring with his band in support of the Allies in WWII.

Glenn Miller met his death when the plane in which he was flying was lost over the English Channel in 1944.



James Stewart had recommenced his acting career following his experiences in WWII and was given the leading role in the film as Glenn Miller.

What is less well known is that James Stewart was a decorated US pilot who flew 20 combat missions over Germany. He had over 400 flight hours as a civilian pilot when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in 1941 and became an instructor for both the B-17 and B-24. He was 33 years old.

According to the National Aviation Hall of Fame, Major Stewart flew 20 dangerous combat missions as a B-24 command pilot, wing commander or squadron commander, earning the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Oak Leaf Clusters, The Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters and the French Croix de Guerre with Palm.

Colonel Stewart remained in the US Air Force Reserve and was promoted to Brigadier General in 1959.

During his two weeks of active duty in 1966, Stewart request



ed a combat assignment and was duly sent on an inspection tour of Vietnam, where his stepson, 1Lt Ronald McLean had recently been fatally wounded at the age of 24. Stewart insisted on participating in a strike against VC targets, flying a mission at the controls of B-52F 57-0149.

After 27 years of service, he retired in 1968 and was awarded the United States Air Force Distinguished Service Medal.

He passed away on July 2, 1997 aged 89.



## AUGUST SOCIAL LUNCHEON

In August, we welcomed a presentation by local photographer and historian, Gordon Harvey.

Gordon gave us some of the early history of the Ballarat Airfield.

An early visitor to Ballarat was Maurice Guillaux, a Frenchman who arrived in Sydney in 1914. He spent his first fortnight assembling his Bleriot and performed aerial displays to the crowds in Sydney, Melbourne and many regional centres.

Guillaux crashed the Bleriot in Sydney and was hospitalised with serious injuries. In his haste to return to France to take up his Reserve Commission in 1914, he left the Bleriot behind.

In 1915, Ballarat garage proprietor Robert Carey heard about the deserted and famous aircraft and he and his friend Edwin Prosser purchased the plane.

Once he mastered the Bleriot, Carey underwent his flying test and received the first pilot's certificate issued to a civilian in Australia and Carey was also the first Australian born pilot to obtain an official flying permit,

As a legally qualified pilot, he opened the Ballarat Flying School with Edwin Prosser his Chief Instructor.



Maurice Guillaux and his Bleriot

Merz's Caudron aircraft failed over the desert and he was presumed killed by Bedouin Beni Malek Tribesmen.

Merz was the first Australian airman to perish in WWI.



Another story of interest was the intrigue surrounding some of the WAAAF who trained to join Sigint in its interception of Japanese communications in WWII. The story is described in Jack Bleakley's book "The Eavesdroppers."

The huge task for Allied intercept operators was to learn the 71 kana Morse symbols, as opposed to the 36 symbols of the International Code. They then had to learn to cope with the great speed of Japanese operators of up to 40-50 words per minute.

In mid June 1941, 11 RAAF kana operators arrived to join the original 6 at No. 1 wireless school Townsville. Their training had been held in secret in classrooms at the Melbourne Showground. On 6th July, the 13 members of the first WRAAF kana class completed their training at the Showground and were posted to Point Cook where they intercepted point-to-point Japanese army and navy signal traffic from areas to the north and north-west of Australia.

Upon discharge, all operators were sworn to secrecy, this silence maintained until Bleakley's book research in about 1985.



In the mid 1980s, George Merz moved to Ballarat with his family. Merz was dux of his school and won a scholarship to study medicine at the University of Melbourne.



Merz learned to fly at the first Australian military flying school at Point Cook in 1914.

Although planning to head to war as a regimental medical officer, Merz was recruited as an aviation trainer at Point Cook. In 1915 he flew to Mesopotamia to fulfill the Indian government's request to the Australian government for airmen and aircraft for aerial reconnaissance.

**DAYS OF COMMEMORATION IN AUSTRALIA :** August and September is a busy time when it comes to Commemorative days officially recognised in Australia. Of the eleven Days of Commemoration formally recognised by the Australian Federal Government, August and September include :  
15 Aug : **Victory in Europe (VE) Day**; 18 Aug : **Vietnam Veterans' Day**; 31 Aug : **Malaya Borneo Veterans Day**;  
3 Sep : **Merchant Navy Day**; 1st Wednesday in September : **Battle for Australia Day** ; 14 Sep : **National Peace-keepers Day**. So six of the eleven listed commemorative days are during August/September.

For **Vietnam Veterans Day** both myself and Senior Vice-President Leigh Harvey OAM attend the Ballarat based Service and Leigh, who is a Vietnam veteran, laid a wreath on behalf of our Branch of the Air Force Association. For **Malaya Borneo Veterans Day** I attended the Melbourne Service at the Shrine of Remembrance last Wednesday as a Malaya Borneo veteran and member of the MBVAA.

So next comes **Merchant Navy Day**, observed on 3rd September; we don't hear too much about that do we. I had prepared to cover the Battle for Australia contribution of the Merchant Navy with my prepared speeches for our subsequently cancelled Battle for Australia Service.

The Merchant Navy of the whole British Empire, which included the Australian Merchant Fleet, suffered proportionately the highest casualties of any of the allied services in the Second World War. Thirty thousand two hundred and forty eight British Empire merchant seamen who served at sea under the red ensign lost their lives doing so. The Australian Department of Veterans Affairs nominal roll records 3,500 Australian merchant seamen serving in World War II in Australian registered ships.

The Australian War Memorial has placed the names of 845 of them, who are known to have died on war service during World War II, on the commemorative roll. The true number of Australian born merchant seamen lost on all the world's oceans will never be known as these 845 do not include the hundreds of unrecorded Australian seamen killed while serving in British merchant ships and in the ships of the International Seamen's Pool.

In addition to the three Australian Navy warships sunk in Australian waters during WWII, 53 Merchant navy vessels, including hospital ships, were sunk by either German or Japanese surface vessels or submarines.

For **Battle for Australia Day** I have been invited to attend the Melbourne Service at the Shrine of Remembrance on Wednesday 7th September where I will be representing our Branch of the Air Force Association.

**THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN :** Now while a Battle of Britain Day is not included in the eleven Australian recognised Remembrance Days, the 15th September each year is a day that we normally do remember those brave fighter pilots who turned away the powerful Luftwaffe and gained air superiority, turning the tide against the Germans.

The 15th September is recognised as Battle of Britain Day in England. Canada commemorates the day on the third Sunday in September each year.

**The 15th September 1940**, is the day on which a large-scale aerial battle in the Battle of Britain took place.

In June 1940, the the German Armed forces had conquered most of Western Europe and Scandinavia. At that time, the only major power standing in the way of a German-dominated Europe was the British Empire and the Commonwealth.

After having several peace offers rejected by the British, Adolf Hitler ordered the Luftwaffe to destroy the RAF in order to gain air superiority or air supremacy as a prelude to launching Operation Sea Lion, an amphibious assault by the Wehrmacht (German armed forces) onto the British mainland. In July 1940, the Luftwaffe started by closing the English Channel to merchant shipping. In August, Operation Adlerangriff (Eagle Attack) was launched against RAF airfields in southern England. By the first week of September, the Luftwaffe had not gained the results desired by Hitler. Frustrated, the Germans turned towards the strategic bombing of cities, an offensive which was aimed at damaging British military and civil industries, as well as civilian morale.

On Sunday 15 September 1940, the Luftwaffe launched its largest and most concentrated attack against London



in the hope of drawing out the RAF into a battle of annihilation. Around 1,500 aircraft took part in the air battles which lasted until dusk. The action was the climax of the Battle of Britain. RAF Fighter Command defeated the German raids; the Luftwaffe formations were dispersed by a large cloud base and failed to inflict severe damage on the city of London. In the aftermath of the raid, Hitler postponed Sea Lion. Having been defeated in daylight, the Luftwaffe turned its attention to The Blitz night campaign which lasted until May 1941.

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FEATURED STORY

The Featured Story this month from our 1wags.org.au website is about the Crompton Brothers. With thanks to Janet Bates, here is part of their story :

THE CROMPTON BROTHERS

RAAF brothers Charles Frederick Crompton 404138 and George William Sergio Crompton 404207 trained as Wireless Operators/Air Gunners at No. 1 Wireless Air Gunners School in Ballarat, Victoria.

This training formed part of The Empire Air Training Scheme to supply England with aircrew to support Britain's RAF in their battle against Germany during WW2.

Charles completed Course 2 [intake 27 May 1940] and George George Course 3 [intake 25 July 1940].

Both boys received their gunnery training at No. 1 Bombing Air Gunnery School Evans Head New South Wales.

George William Sergio Crompton Wireless Operator / Air Gunner was killed 30 July 1942 serving in the Middle East with the RAF 458 Squadron.

Charles Frederick Crompton was posted to the Middle East where for a time he served in the South African 24 Squadron carrying out bombing missions.

After his tour of duty Charles trained as a pilot and flew Spitfires both in the Middle East and the Pacific.

TO READ MORE OF THEIR STORY GO TO : 1wags.org.au



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**RYDER -CHESHIRE AUSTRALIA (RCA)** is a registered charity. Their mission is *....the relief of suffering without discrimination.*

RCA supports two overseas homes, one in India and another in Timore-Leste. In addition to these they support two Australian homes, one in Mt. Gambier and one in Melbourne. RCA will be holding their Biennial International Conference on 6th May 2023 and our Branch of the Air Force Association will be hosting them in our Airport Hut 48 rooms to facilitate that conference being held in Ballarat. **It is pleasing that Di McGrath from the RCA Ballarat Support Group will be our guest speaker at our upcoming September Social Luncheon Meeting on Tuesday 13th September to tell us more about their foundation. .... Bring a friend**

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THE REMAINDER OF YOUR 2022 CALENDAR

- 13TH SEPTEMBER :** Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 13th September at 1145
- 11TH OCTOBER :** Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 11th October at 1145
- 19TH OCTOBER :** Lunch at the Movies ~ Regent Theatre ~ Wednesday 19th October at 1130
- 8TH NOVEMBER :** Social Luncheon Meeting : Second Tuesday 8th November at 1145
- 13TH DECEMBER :** Long Room Christmas Function : Tuesday 13th December at 1145