



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH Newsletter



February/March 2023

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Annual General Meeting was held on February 23rd and as flagged last Newsletter, I have now formally taken on the role of President.

This year's committee is:

President/Treasurer: Peter Dowling

Vice President: Leigh Harvey

Secretary/Newsletter Editor: Sue Alexander

1WAGS Co-ordinator: Janet Bates

Librarian: Stephen Brown

Chaplain: Keith Lanyon

Committee Members: Bob McDonald, Ken Marsh, Ilona Fecso

At the February meeting, we had the opportunity to introduce APCO Alfredton - our new sponsor for the 1WAGS website. The website is an important historical record of people and activities involved in the Wireless/Air Gunners training school located in Ballarat during the 1940s. The site was compiled due to the combined efforts of AFA Ballarat members Janet Bates, Peter Schoutens and Tom Roberts. Over the past several years, Janet Bates has been responsible for maintaining and updating the content of the website, which has now had over 80,000 hits from Australia and all over the world. The cost of the website at around \$1000 per annum is quite an impost on our small association, so it is a significant

(Cont p.2)



IMPORTANT DATES COMING UP

Social luncheons are held on the second Tuesday of each month

Tuesday April 11

Monthly social luncheon at Hut 48. 11:45 for 12.



April's social luncheon will feature the classic 1940s black and white film "One of Our Aircraft is Missing" - the story of Bruce Clifton's miraculous survival after his Lancaster bomber was shot down in 1945.



ANZAC DAY 25 APRIL 2023

ATTENDEES FOR THIS YEAR'S MARCH WILL FORM UP AS 'GROUP A' AT LYONS ST NORTH AT 9.30 AM

If you need transportation to, or during the march, please contact Peter Dowling

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS—TRANSPORTATION

If you have a medical condition preventing you from self-driving or accessing transport, please contact Peter Dowling on 0418281775 to arrange transportation assistance.

(cont from p.1)

contribution and support to have these costs covered. We are indebted to APCO Alfredton for this support.

On another note, following the installation of our audio-visual equipment last year, we have aligned the content of our monthly social luncheon to concentrate on the provision of high quality and entertaining content instead of, or as well as, monthly speakers.

We are constantly seeking entertaining ideas involving relevant people, presentations and short videos or movies for our members and non-members who may be interested. If you have any ideas or wishes for topics, please contact the Secretary, Sue Alexander. I'd like to thank in particular Keith Pitman and Janet Bates, both of whom have been inspirational over the past several months. I also invite those of you who may not have attended in a while to come and enjoy a few hours.

Lastly, it is Anzac Day shortly and as usual BAFA has been invited to the annual March. I encourage those of you who have been members of the armed forces, as well as family of current or past members, to consider marching. Transportation is available to and from the march as well as during it. Please contact me if you would like to come but find mobility an issue.

Peter Dowling



WEBSITE SPONSORSHIP BY APCO ALFREDTON



At the February social luncheon and Annual General Meeting, we were pleased to receive and have a short presentation from the new Alfredton store owners Ivor Riesewyk and Olivia Bates.

Ivor and Olivia are Ballarat born and bred and are committed to supporting the local community by stocking and promoting top quality local produce

and forming relationships with local charities and organisations.

Olivia's grandfather, Reginald Barker, trained at 1WAGS and her mother, Janet, is a passionate BAFA committee member and current 1WAGS Co-ordinator. Olivia and Ivor are proud to honour Reggie's and other brave mens' legacy through APCO Alfredton's new partnership with 1WAGS.



1WAGS Co-ordinator Janet Bates, President Peter Dowling, APCO Alfredton owners Olivia Bates and Ivor Riesewyk

Following the social luncheon, Peter Dowling, Sue Alexander and Janet Bates were pleased to attend the opening of the new store at 47-99 Learmonth Road Alfredton and present Olivia and Ivor with a certificate of appreciation before enjoying a coffee at the 24/7 café, filling with fuel at unbeatable prices and shopping at the Express IGA on site.





1 WAGS REPORT

Sponsored by APCO Alfredton



Current Feature Story

The current feature story pays tribute to:



The Peter Armytage Story

Flight Lieutenant Peter Charles Tustin ARMYTAGE OAM

Flight Lieutenant Peter Armytage trained as a Wireless Operator at No.2 WAGS Parkes N.S.W and Gunner at Port Pirie South Australia. He became part of Bomber Command's 625 Squadron flying Lancaster aircraft in bombing raids over Germany.

On his last operation Peter's aircraft was shot down on the Dutch-German border. Peter was hidden by the Dutch underground but eventually became a POW. Repatriated back to Australia in 1945 Peter became a renowned horse racing identity.

He received an OAM for his service to horse racing and as an owner.

[Read more : 1wags.org.au](http://1wags.org.au)

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank Peter Armytage's sons Simon and Chas for generously allowing us to write their father's remarkable story. Also, our appreciation for access to photos, books and documents which make up this Feature Story. Flight Lieutenant Peter Armytage was the focus for the March 2023 Airforce Association Ballarat Branch Social Luncheon meeting. A highlight was an audio interview with Peter conducted by Steve Martin on the 11 November 2005, Remembrance Day. This interview delves into Peter's war and POW experience.

Additions to our database

We recently acquired the details of two STAFF members of No. 1 Wireless Air Gunners School 1940-45.

WAAAF Rita Annie Harris Service No. 104069
Flight Sergeant Ernest Leslie Albertson Service No. 36259

Rita Annie Harris was part of the Women's Auxiliary Airforce. She was posted to 1 WAGS on the 27 September 1942. She served as an Airforce Driver. Rita drove trucks as well as staff cars for Officers.



Service Number: 104069
Rank: Aircraftwoman
Wife of Ernest Leslie ALBERTSON



Service Number: 36259
Rank: Flight Sergeant
Husband of Rita Annie HARRIS

Fl/Sgt Ernest Albertson became an instructor and Wireless Operator on the 22 April 1941. He was posted to 1 WAGS Ballarat to teach Morse Code. Rita and Ernest met at 1 WAGS and married on the 16 December 1944. Ernie remained with the Airforce until he was discharged on the 22 January 1946 from the Air and Ground Radio School. Rita was discharged from the Airforce on compassionate grounds in December 1944, the year they married.

Janet Bates - 1WAGS Co-ordinator

SOCIAL LUNCHEON

MARCH 14



To coincide with the feature story on the 1WAGS website, the March social luncheon was dedicated to presenting Flight Lieutenant Peter Armytage's experiences after surviving the crash landing of his Lancaster bomber in Germany in 1945, and his subsequent incarceration as a prisoner of war.

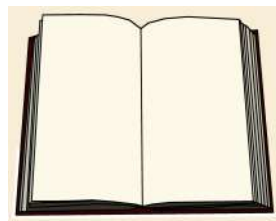
The presentation revolved around the 2005 interview of Peter Armytage by Ballarat ABC's Steve Martin, with a visual component taken from the publication of Peter's life story.

The attendees at the luncheon were delighted by the representation from Peter Armytage's family and friends and were entertained by sons Chas and Simon's insights and recollections.



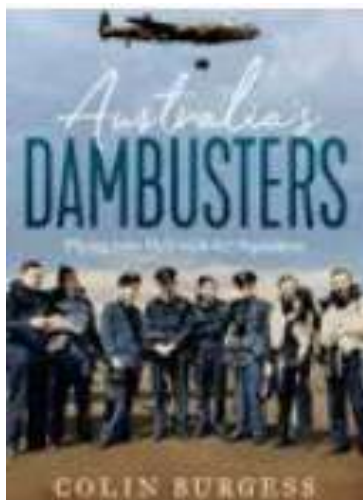
Simon Armytage, Chas Armytage, John Molesworth, James Molesworth

FROM THE TOM ROBERTS LIBRARY



The Tom Roberts Library houses an eclectic selection of books and literature focusing on Ballarat, the airport, 1WAGS, wars, people and aeroplanes. Our librarian, Stephen Brown, brings you a short review of some of the many titles available to peruse.

Australia's Dambusters. The men & mission of 617 Squadron. Burgess, Colin (2003) Loftus, New South Wales; Australian Military History Publications



Tells the story of the Australian pilots and air crew who served in 617 Squadron, and the events of 16/17 May 1943, the dam buster raids.

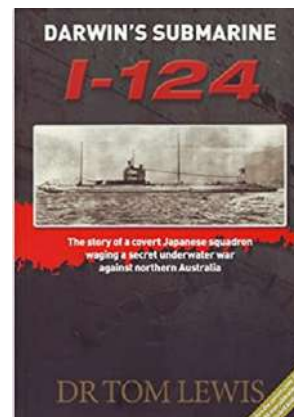
The book includes a list of all aircrew who took part in the raid including RAAF crew members.

617 Squadron undertook 95 operations between May 1943 and April 1945 including attacks on Tiritz, U-Boat pens at Hamburg, a list of which appear in a glossary at the back of the publications along with the Roll of Honour of Australian Air Crew.

Illustrated with numerous photographs of the airmen, their machines and war time operational photographs.

This book gives faces and voices to the Australian airmen who served in one of Britain's most famous squadrons and well worth a read by anyone interested in Australia's contribution to air operations in the European theatre 1939 - 45.

Darwin's Submarine 1-124: Lewis, Tom (2010) Kent Town South Australia: Avonmore Books



Details the first attacks on Australia by four Japanese submarines in 1942. Sunk with all hands, the submarine 1-124 remains outside Darwin today.

The book details the attacks by naval and air force assets to track, engage and then defeat the Japanese submarines outside Darwin Harbour.

For those readers interested in The Battle for Australia this makes for interesting reading as it details the defences of Darwin Harbour at a time when the town was under attack from the air by the Japanese air force

The book also details the lengthy attempt to salvage and later to commemorate the site as a war grave of the crew.

Stephen Brown—Librarian