



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH

Newsletter

Autumn 2025



PRESIDENT: Peter Dowling

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: Sue Alexander

Email: ballarat.afa@gmail.com

SECRETARY: Sue Alexander

Phone 0419696091

Email: ballarat.afa@gmail.com

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The first quarter of the year has found us very busy due to the commitment we have made to the Ballarat Heritage Festival week.

The airport will be the focus of Heritage Week this year under the theme “Entertainment of the Air”. We have received substantial financial and practical support from Ballarat Council for a fun-filled weekend on 17 and 18 May— see the details overpage. We also have great participation from other groups in the airport precinct, including the museums. As it is the 85th anniversary of the formation of 1WAGS, as well as the anniversary of the famous “Dam Busters” raid, there will be a display in the Aviation Museum commemorating both.

I'd like to particularly acknowledge a small but incredibly dedicated group of people who are working as a sub-committee of the Ballarat Branch AFA - Mark Pilkington, Sharon Carpenter, Steve Carter and Leigh Edmonds. This group has a strong interest in the Ballarat Airport and air history. With a view to creating ongoing interest in our heritage aspects of the airport, this year's “Entertainment of the Air” is hoped to presage annual events leading to the 100th anniversary of the airport.

This year's event could not have been achieved without them.

Peter Dowling

President



IMPORTANT DATES COMING UP

ANZAC Day March

Friday 25 April

10:30 am

Corner Lyons St North and Sturt St

Ballarat Heritage Festival

Entertainment of the Air

May 17&18

Bring yourself and your family to the airport precinct for great entertainment.



Social Luncheons

Social luncheons will continue throughout the year on every second Tuesday, commencing 12 midday..

MAY 17&18

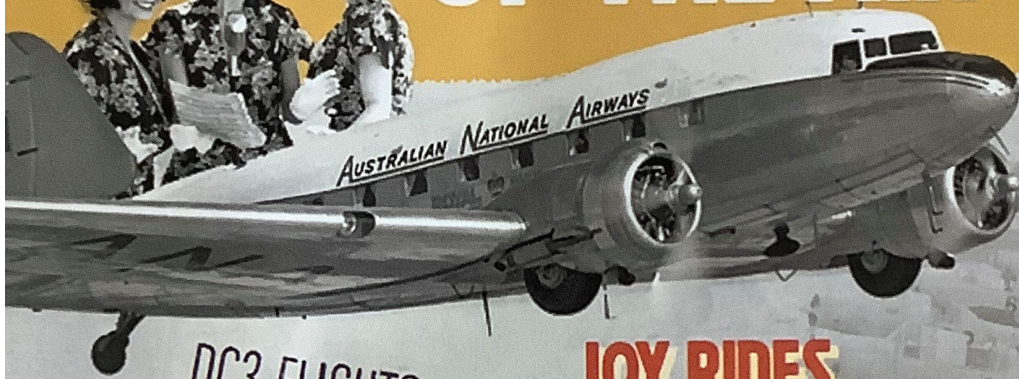
BALLARAT AIRPORT ENTERTAINMENT OF THE AIR



WHAT'S ON
AT THE AIRPORT



AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL AIRWAYS



DC3 FLIGHTS
MELBOURNE TO BALLARAT

MODEL
AIRPLANES

MODEL
RAILWAY
CLUB

JOY RIDES
DEMONSTRATIONS
LIVE ENTERTAINMENT
RE-ENACTMENTS
COOL AERONAUTICS
THE LEGENDS OF THE SKIES
MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

VINTAGE
PLANES

BALLARAT ENGINE
AND MACHINERY
PRESERVATION SOCIETY

TIGER
MOTHS



BALLARAT
HERITAGE
FESTIVAL

MAY 16 TO 25

FULL
FESTIVAL
PROGRAM



SOCIAL LUNCHEON EVENTS



The Last Post Ceremony

Each day, the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra holds a Last Post Ceremony, telling the story behind just one of the more than 102,700 names on the Roll of Honour recorded on the bronze panels that line the walls of the Commemorative Area. This tradition began in 2013 and it will take nearly 300 years to commemorate every person on the Roll of Honour.

Each of the 364 Last Post stories told each year is carefully researched and written by Australian War Memorial historians. The Memorial is committed to ensuring that each story will eventually be told.

The ceremony begins with the singing of the Australian National Anthem, followed by the poignant strains of a Lament, played by a piper. Visitors are invited to lay wreaths and floral tributes beside the Pool of Reflection. Men and women of the Australian Defence Force volunteer each day to read the story and recite the Ode. This is an important part of the ceremony and reminds us all that we are honouring the service and sacrifice of the men and women of Australia's military forces, including the ADF, and peacekeepers. The ceremony ends with the sounding of the Last Post.

Commemorating Charles Edward Suffren DFC

Charles Edward Suffren, DFC was the son of Charles Edward and Euphemia Mabel Suffren, of Ballarat, Victoria, Australia.

An Australian RAAF navigator, his plane was hit by German anti-aircraft fire and crashed near Ale on 10th April 1944. Of the aircraft's crew of seven, five were killed at the crash site. Charles Suffren was so badly hurt that he died some months later. The only other survivor Stanley Hodge survived and returned to Australia after the war.

Charles Suffren was found 3 to 4 hours after the crash in a critical condition. He was treated by a doctor who ordered him to be sent to the municipal hospital in Horsens. At the examination it was



Charles Suffren DFC

found that Suffren had incurred a fracture of the vertebral column together with other serious injuries. The doctors struggled to save his life.

Some 2 to 3 days after he had been admitted to the hospital the Germans demanded Suffren to be surrendered. The doctors refused to do so because the young Australian could not be moved without endangering his life. When the Germans maintained their demand Suffren turned his head towards the doctor and said "This is the war. They don't know what they are doing those idiots"

When Charles Suffren was taken away the doctors and the nurses formed a lane in honour of this brave soldier and they gave him chocolate and flowers.

The German abduction of Charles Suffren was soon known in Denmark and it aroused a storm of indignation. This caused the Germans to insert a picture in the local papers and from the accompanying caption it appeared that Charles Suffren was not dead but had received proper treatment.

Charles Suffren died on 16th February 1945 as a prisoner of war in a hospital near Frankfurt Germany. His name together with the rest of the crew is engraved on a monument later erected near Ale Denmark.

Article adapted from a contribution by Graham Padget to the Australian Virtual War Memorial

SOCIAL LUNCHEON EVENTS (cont.)



Happy 90th Bob McDonald!

During our March social luncheon, we celebrated the 90th birthday of our great stalwart Bob McDonald.

Bob has been a tireless and active member of the association for many decades. We acknowledged



Bob for these years of service in the last Newsletter but have now cheekily adapted his service picture as a birthday card.

Feature - Winston Churchill

The feature video for our March luncheon was on the life of Winston Churchill.

Sir Winston Churchill (1874–1965) was a British statesman, writer, and orator who served as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom during World War II (1940–1945) and again from 1951 to 1955¹. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century.

Winston Churchill was born on November 30, 1874, at Blenheim Palace, the ancestral home of the Dukes of Marlborough². His father, Lord Randolph Churchill, was a British politician, while his mother, Jennie Jerome, was an American socialite³.



Winston Churchill aged 6 with his aunt Lady Leslie, 1880.

Churchill's early years were shaped by privilege but also distance from his parents. He was primarily raised by his nanny, Mrs. Elizabeth Everest, whom he deeply adored. His parents were often preoccupied with social and political affairs, leaving Churchill to form a close bond with his caregiver⁴.



Winston Churchill Officer of the Hussars - India 1896

SOCIAL LUNCHEON

EVENTS (cont.)



He attended Harrow School, where he struggled academically but excelled in history and writing². Later, he enrolled at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, where he trained as an officer². His early education and military training laid the foundation for his future career in politics and leadership.

He held various government positions, including First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Minister of Defence². His leadership during World War II was instrumental in rallying Britain against Nazi Germany, delivering powerful speeches that inspired resilience and determination.

Beyond politics, Churchill was also a prolific writer and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1953 for his historical writings¹. His legacy includes his steadfast leadership, his role in shaping post-war Europe, and his contributions to literature and history.

Winston Churchill played a pivotal role in shaping modern Britain through his leadership, policies, and vision for the country. His influence extended beyond World War II and into the post-war era, where his decisions helped define Britain's global standing and domestic policies:

Leadership During World War II – Churchill's resolute leadership during the war was instrumental in Britain's survival and eventual victory against Nazi Germany. His speeches and unwavering determination inspired the British people during their darkest hours⁵.

Post-War Reconstruction – Although Churchill lost the 1945 election to Clement Attlee, his ideas influenced Britain's post-war recovery, including the establishment of the welfare state and the National Health Service (NHS)⁶.

Foreign Policy and the Cold War – Churchill was a strong advocate for European unity and played a key role in shaping Britain's stance during the Cold War. His famous "Iron Curtain" speech warned of Soviet expansion and helped define Western policies against communism⁷.



Winston Churchill circa 1950

Decolonization and the British Empire – Churchill was a staunch defender of the British Empire, but his tenure saw increasing pressure for decolonization. His policies influenced Britain's gradual transition away from colonial rule⁶.

Legacy in British Politics – Churchill's leadership style, oratory skills, and strategic thinking set a precedent for future British leaders. His contributions to literature, including his historical writings, further cemented his legacy⁵.

1. www.britannica.com
2. en.wikipedia.org
3. www.captivatinghistory.com
4. www.nationalchurchillmuseum.org
5. www.havefunwithhistory.com
6. anglotopia.net
7. worldhistoryedu.com



Operation “Manna”

During our April luncheon, we noted the anniversary of “Operation Manna”.

Operation Manna was a humanitarian mission carried out by the Royal Air Force (RAF) and other Allied forces in April-May 1945 to deliver food to the starving Dutch population in German-occupied Netherlands during the final days of World War II.

The Hunger Winter (Dutch: *Hongerwinter*) was a devastating famine that struck the German-occupied Netherlands during the harsh winter of 1944–1945, near the end of World War II. It was caused by a German blockade that cut off food and fuel supplies to the western provinces, leaving 4.5 million people struggling to survive.

Daily rations dropped to less than 580 calories per person by February 1945, and many resorted to eating tulip bulbs and other unconventional food sources. The famine led to an estimated 18,000–22,000 deaths, mostly among the elderly.

The operation was named after the biblical “manna from heaven” and involved dropping thousands of tons of food over Dutch cities, including Rotterdam, The Hague, and Gouda. The United States Army Air Forces also conducted a similar mission called Operation Chowhound.

Despite ongoing hostilities, the German forces agreed not to fire on the Allied aircraft, allowing the food drops to proceed safely. The mission was crucial in saving countless lives. The famine ended with the liberation of the Netherlands in May 1945.

It was a remarkable example of wartime compassion and cooperation and remains a significant event in Dutch history.



A Shout Out to our Volunteers

The RSL's ANZAC Day Appeal is a significant annual campaign aimed at supporting veterans and their families. Funds raised through this appeal provide essential services such as medical support, social programs, and employment assistance. The campaign also emphasizes the importance of commemorating ANZAC Day, encouraging Australians to honor the sacrifices of service personnel.

Local member Keith Pitman has been a tireless volunteer for the RSL for many years and has personally raised over \$80,000. While he is just a little short of his 90th birthday, he is now reducing his volunteer hours.

Janet Bates, who wearing her other hat as the 1WAGS Co-ordinator already volunteers many hours in support of the Air Force Association, has stepped in to relieve Keith. Keith, Janet and Janet's husband Peter have all been spending many hours in the Ballarat shopping centres selling badges in support of the RSL Appeal.



Above - Keith Pitman and below - Janet Bates



Ex-POW Memorial Service

The Australian Ex-Prisoners of War Memorial in Ballarat is a deeply moving tribute to the resilience and sacrifices of Australian servicemen and women who endured captivity during various conflicts, including World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. Located within the serene Ballarat Botanical Gardens, the memorial features a long granite wall etched with the names of over 35,000 Australian POWs.

Unveiled on February 6, 2004, the memorial serves as a place of reflection and remembrance, honouring the hardships faced by POWs, including deprivation, brutality, and disease. It also commemorates the 8,600 prisoners who died in captivity and remain buried on foreign shores.

The association was represented at the 21st anniversary of the ex-Prisoners of War memorial in February.



L-R Keith Pitman, Bob McDonald, Peter Dowling





1 WAGS REPORT

Sponsored by APCO Alfredton



As of April 6, 2025, there have been 481,003 individual browsers of 1wags.org.au worldwide.

Commemoration of the Dambusters Raid

The Feature Story on the 1 WAGS website commemorates the anniversary of the Dambusters Raid in May 1943, code named Operation Chastise.

Operation Chastise, commonly known as the Dambusters Raid, was an attack on German dams carried out on the night of 16 /17 May 1943 by 617 Squadron RAF Bomber Command, later called the Dam Busters, using special bouncing bombs developed by Barnes Wallis. Thirteen Australians took part in the raid including pilot Harold 'Mick' Martin, gunner Flying Officer Thomas 'Tammy' Simpson DFC, DFM and bomb aimer Flying Officer Frederick 'Spam' Spafford DFC, DFM. Simpson and Spafford both trained at 1 WAGS Ballarat, Courses 8 and 6. Frederick Spafford flew with Squadron Leader Guy Gibson as a 'bomb aimer' and Thomas Simpson with Australian pilot Micky Martin as a 'gunner'. Read the complete story on the website.

Posters of Simpson and Spafford plus the Dambusters raid have been created for display at the Ballarat Aviation Museum for the Heritage weekend.



Frederick Spafford



Thomas Simpson



The Bouncing Bomb

Janet Bates - 1WAGS Co-ordinator