



# Air Force Association Victoria

Ballarat Branch Newsletter

**AUTUMN 2026**

## From the President

---

The past few months have been quite action-packed for the Ballarat Branch, as we wished to capitalise on the preparatory work for the 2025 Ballarat Heritage Week, during which we highlighted the airport with the visit of the DC3.

The Ballarat Branch has committed to the preservation of the history of Ballarat Airport and is a part of the endeavour to be “centenary ready” in 2041. As Ballarat Airport expands and is modernised, it is also important that the remaining buildings from the original World War II training airport are, at the minimum, preserved.

This year the Ballarat City Council changed the format and staged a Heritage Weekend, rather than week. In this format, the Air Force Association took a stand in a shared space in the Town Hall, in order to further promote the heritage elements of the airport. Please refer to the article later in the newsletter but I’d like to particularly acknowledge and thank Mark Pilkington, Sharon Carpenter, Steve Carter, Leigh Edmonds and Janet Bates for their support and activity for Heritage Weekend.

*Peter Dowling*

*President*



## New Look Newsletter

---

I hope you enjoy the new format of the newsletter. The retirement of the “Publisher” program previously used has forced a rethink.

*Sue Alexander – Newsletter Editor*

## ANZAC Day 2026

---



Once more, our loyal and devoted member Janet Bates made many hours available to the sale of pens and badges to raise funds for ANZAC Day.

Due to unfortunate circumstances, some of the items available for sale were very limited this year and stock kept running low or out altogether.

Not to be found lacking, Janet enterprisingly

kept buying unsold stock from the adjacent Woolworths display, which was going wanting for customers. Admittedly, not much profit was made from these particular sales but Janet was able to keep her customers happy and helped raise over \$9000, with thanks to the Lucas and Alfredton communities.

On ANZAC Day, President Peter Dowling marched as usual in front of the Ballarat Branch banner. Peter is, in addition, the President of the Sunderland Branch, New South Wales Air Force Association. This year, he and Marilyn Marrows Voullaire also marched in front of the Sunderland 10 and 461 SQN banner, representing the Sunderlands in Victoria this year. Marilyn is the daughter of distinguished veteran Flight Lieutenant Dudley Marrows DSO DFC of 461 SQN (see Article on p.7) and Peter is the son of Flight Lieutenant Kenneth Littlejohn Dowling, who passed through 1WAGS training course no. 6.

Peter Dowling (far left) and Marilyn Marrows Voullaire (2<sup>nd</sup> from left)



## Upcoming Events – Battle for Australia Ball

---

For the past 5 years, the Air Force Association has been proud to sponsor the Battle for Australia Ball on the last Saturday in August.

This year, once more the ball will be held at the Brown Hill Hall, featuring Charlie Gaylard “Australia’s Answer to Elvis”.

Anyone wishing to purchase a ticket should contact Peter Dowling (0418 281 775).



## Ballarat Heritage Weekend

---

As mentioned, the opportunity for the display of heritage at the airport was governed by Ballarat Council’s format for the Heritage weekend.



This year, the Air Force Association manned a colourful stand on Saturday and Sunday – Peter Dowling and Janet Bates on Saturday and Keith Lanyon, Steve Carter and Leigh Edmonds on Sunday.

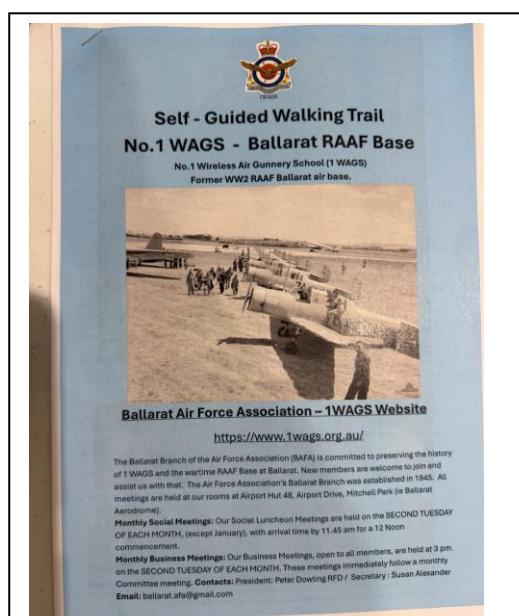
For the occasion, Mark Pilkington assembled a self-guided walking train of No. 1 WAGS – Ballarat RAAF Base. The history of the airport includes:

- 19-14-1915 – pilot training
- 1934 – formalisation of the airport with a tin hangar
- 1940-1945 – Establishment of No. 1 Wireless Air Gunners School (1 WAGS) as part of the Empire Training Scheme
- 1946-1961 – The RAAF retained the airfield as its School of Radio
- 2007 – listing of the aerodrome on the Victorian Heritage Register

The aerodrome continues to perform an important role in emergency services operations, civil operations and flight training and as accommodation for many community groups and organisations.

The Ballarat Aviation Museum is located at the airport, as is the Friends of the Avro Anson Museum.

Former Officers Mess Hut 48 is now the headquarters for Air Force Association Ballarat Branch.



# 1WAGS Report

---



Sponsored by APCO Alfredton

As of the 1 June 2026 there have been 2,012,703 Individual browsers worldwide. We are humbled for this continued support.

A new story features on the 1WAGS website:

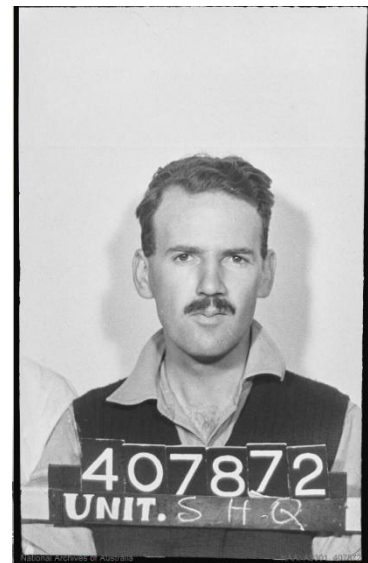
## 'Missing Medals Found'

PETERS (DFM), Kenneth William  
McIntosh

1 WAGS Course 12

Discharged 11-09-1945

As per the Adelaide 7 News April 2026, Ken Peters' medals including a DFM (Distinguished Flying Medal) were located in a Melbourne Op Shop. The medals had been missing for decades. After much research by the South Australia RSL, it was discovered Ken served as a tail gunner flying sorties over Berlin, for which he was awarded the DFM. Eventually, relatives of Ken were located and the medals were returned on ANZAC Day 2026.



News Video as per 1 WAGS website Profile Page -

PETERS (DFM), Kenneth William McIntosh

*Janet Bates - 1WAGS Co-ordinator*



## Celebrating our Nonagenarians

---

In April, we were proud to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Dot Grundell who, along with husband Kevin, attends almost every monthly luncheon.



Dot celebrating her recent 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and her husband Kevin.



Kevin is one of the six other nonagenarians who regularly attend the monthly social luncheons. These include Keith Pitman, Tom Roberts, Bob McDonald, Margaret Bennett and David Turner. Ernie Chapman will join the nonagenarians later in the year.



Long serving members Keith Pitman and Past President Dr Tom Roberts

Of our members, Margaret Bennett has the longest association with the Airport site. Margaret lived in the Wing Commander's Hut with her family for several years from 1949. Her father was Wing Commander James (John) Reynolds. Margaret married Past President Flight Lieutenant Arnold (John) Bennett, formerly of the RAF, in 1953.



Margaret Bennett



Rev David Turner

In contrast, David Turner is one of our more recent members, looking forward to the entertainment and connections he has made at the monthly meetings.

Another nonagenarian and long-term member is Bob McDonald, who can still be found tinkering with engines or at the end of a broom helping to clean up after each luncheon. Bob has been recognised for his many years of membership.



Bob McDonald

## Dudley Marrows' Story

---

### **Flight Lieutenant Dudley Marrows DSO, DFC — A Commemorative Tribute**

Flight Lieutenant **Dudley Marrows** stands among that small, shining company of Australian airmen whose courage was matched by an uncommon humanity. His story is not simply one of wartime gallantry, but of character — the kind that endures long after the guns fall silent.

#### **A Life of Service and Resolve**

Born in Bendigo in 1917, Marrows came of age in a world sliding toward conflict. When war arrived, he answered without hesitation, training through the Empire Air Training Scheme and mastering one of the most demanding aircraft of the era: the **Short Sunderland** flying boat. With **No. 461 Squadron RAAF**, he flew long, lonely patrols over the Bay of Biscay — a place aircrews grimly called *“the most dangerous stretch of water in the world.”*

Flight Lieutenant  
Dudley Marrows



#### **The Battle of 30 July 1943**

It was here, on a summer morning in 1943, that Marrows etched his name into the history of the Atlantic war. Confronted by a wolfpack of surfaced U-boats exchanging fire with Allied aircraft, he pressed home an attack through a storm of anti-aircraft fire. His depth charges struck true, and **U-461** — in a remarkable twist of fate — was destroyed by Sunderland “U” of 461 Squadron.

But it was what followed that defined him.

Seeing German sailors struggling in the water, Marrows ordered a dinghy dropped to help them survive until rescue arrived. In the midst of war’s fury, he

chose compassion. Decades later, he would meet U-461's captain, **Wolfgang Stiebler**, and the two men forged a friendship that lasted until Stiebler's death — a testament to the decency that outlives conflict.

### **Courage Under Fire**

Only weeks after the U-461 action, Marrows and his crew were attacked by six Ju 88s. Their Sunderland was riddled with fire and forced into the sea. Eleven men crowded into a single dinghy, clinging to life until rescue arrived. For his leadership and bravery in these actions, Marrows received the **Distinguished Flying Cross** and later the **Distinguished Service Order**.

### **A Quiet, Lasting Legacy**

After the war, Marrows returned to Australia, building a peaceful life as a citrus grower in Victoria. He lived to 101, passing away in 2019 — one of the last living links to the great maritime air war of the Atlantic.

Today, his legacy endures through the **Dudley Marrows Trophy**, awarded annually by the Sunderland Branch of RAAF NSW to recognise excellence in maritime aviation. It is a fitting honour: a reminder that skill, courage, and compassion can coexist in the same man.

### **In Remembrance**

Dudley Marrows' story resonates because it reflects the best qualities of those who served: **endurance, mateship, moral courage, and humanity even in the darkest hours**. His life reminds us that heroism is not only found in the heat of battle, but in the choices made afterward — the choice to help an enemy, to forgive, to build, and to live well.

For his courage and leadership, Marrows received the **Distinguished Flying Cross**, the **Distinguished Service Order**, and later the **French Legion of Honour**.

After the war, he returned to Victoria, building a quiet life as a citrus grower — a gentle contrast to the ferocity of his wartime service. He lived to the age of **101**, passing away in 2019, honoured by generations of aircrew who followed him and a full flyover by the RAAF at his funeral.

For a longer description of Dudley Marrows sorties, please refer to the Virtual War Memorial Australia: <https://vwma.org.au/collections/home-page-stories/an-outstanding-pilot---dudley-marrows-dso-dfc>