



AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH



Newsletter February 2019

President : Noel Hutchins - 0439 929 322
Vice President : Leigh Harvey OAM
Junior Vice President : Peter Schoutens
Secretary : Rob Petty - 0407 891 281
Treasurer : Josie Reasons
Chaplain : Rev. Keith Lanyon - 0411 512 160

**REGULAR
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**
Ken Marsh
Brian Reasons
Michael Lake
Janet Bates

ELDER STATESMEN
Dr Tom Roberts OAM
Gordon Jarvis
Tom Jobling
Keith Pitman
Stan White
Newsletter Editor
Noel Hutchins

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Our monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month, **(except January)**, commencing at 1200 hours at the Lakers Football Club Rooms in Wendouree. Due to some redevelopment/ construction works, entry is currently off Dowling Street through the previous car park.

FROM THE PRESIDENT At our monthly meeting on 5th February we said goodbye to Tom Roberts as our President after his many years of service to our branch of the Air Force Association, and members voted me in as the new President. I have very big shoes to fill. In my address to the meeting as your new President, I referred to the term "Elder Statesman", the definition of which is "with experience and well respected". In the box headings above, you will see Tom's name along with the other Elder Statesmen of our Branch. Myself and the newly elected committee are now tasked with carrying on the good work that Tom and the other Elder Statesmen have put in over many years.

Since the election on 5th February, the elected Vice President, Barry Turner, has needed to resign his position for personal reasons. At our first Committee Meeting on 7th February, the following adjustments to the committee were proposed. Leigh Harvey to become Vice President, Peter Schoutens to become Junior Vice President and Janet Bates to fill the vacancy as General Committee Member. These changes will need to be ratified by members at our March monthly meeting. *(Noel Hutchins, President)*

~~~~~

## **A Precis of AFA BALLARAT BRANCH 2019 AGM MEETING MINUTES Date: 5/2/2019 at Lakers Club Rooms**

Attendance: Attendees and apologies as per the Attendance List: \* 27 attendees \* 6 apologies \* 1 guest

**1200 Hrs** a. Meeting opened by Branch President, Tom Roberts. Ode and National Anthem. b. Presentation to retiring Chaplain, Rev John Furness. c. Grace and lunch.

**1245 Reports** a. Welfare report by Penny Roberts Moved : Peter Allen; Seconded; Noel Hutchins. Carried!  
b. Presidents report by Tom Roberts. Included overview of all events for 2018, and reasons for Tom's decision to retire as President of AFA Ballarat Branch. Finished with best wishes for incoming President and Commit

### **1315 President & Committee Elections**

a. President Tom Roberts gave overview of voting process. b. Two candidates for President being Noel Hutchins and Peter Schoutens. c. Members voted via paper slip for either candidate. d. Noel Hutchins elected as the new AFA Ballarat President with majority of votes. e. Committee as nominated elected to new positions.

### **PRESIDENT NOEL HUTCHINS ACCEPTANCE SPEECH**

a. President gave overview of his character and beliefs. b. President moved a motion to disband 1 WAGS Project Group. Moved by John Harley, Seconded by Peter Alan. Motion passed. c. President requested that Leigh Harvey accept change of position from General Committee member to Junior Vice President . He accepted, motion moved by Barry Turner and seconded by Ken Marsh. Motion carried.

d. President asked that Peter Schoutens accept position as a General Committee Member. Peter accepted, motion moved by Tom Nunn, and Seconded by Peter Alan. Carried.

**1400 Hrs** Raffle held and meeting closed at 1400 Hrs. Friendly chats between members following the meeting.

**Next Monthly Meeting will be held at same venue at 1200 hrs, Tuesday 5th March 2019.** (Rob Petty, Secty)

**Informal BYO lunch get-together 8 Jan 2019**

Member Ken Marsh has provided some photographs of our 8 Jan 2019 get-together at Lake Wendouree. What a great turn-out, thank you to all those that came out for what was a great day. Lovely to see several of our newer members chatting with and getting to know some of the established older members that have done so much over previous years to make the Ballarat Branch of the Air Force Association what it is today. Thank you for the photos Ken.



**Douglas DC3 Dakota (The Gooney Bird)**

In the November last newsletter I started a 'To be Continued' story on the old reliable and long-lived Douglas DC Dakota aircraft, how from an earlier commercial aircraft the DC3 went on to play such an important role as a military transport aircraft during WWII and was still in service with No 86 Wing at RAAF Fairbairne in Canberra when I arrived there off my rookies course on my very first posting in February 1957.



Having turned 18 years of age just 5 days before arriving there as a trainee clerk on 26th February 1957 I was positioned in the No 86 Wing Headquarters Orderly Room under Sgt Roy WILSON. Within a couple of days after my arrival I was required to take my personal documents into the Officer Commanding's Office. Among other things he asked me how I felt being on my first posting and I replied something along the lines that it felt a bit strange being in the Air Force when I had never been up in an aircraft. "We will soon fix that" he said and he picked up the phone and called to enquire what training flights were happening and then he advised Sergeant Wilson over the intercom that I was to report to the 38 Squadron crew room for some flight experience. It was at that crew room that I was taken under the wing of the co-pilot who I know was Flight Sergeant Charlton and the other crew member that I can be sure of was a Sergeant Coombe, a young signaller who didn't look much older than me. I was just blown away by the way I was being welcomed by these guys. A Flight Sergeant who was treating me like a real person. After what I had only just been through on my rookies course, you didn't expect that from a Corporal let alone a Senior NCO.

It was a great experience my first flight when, after take-off, the co-pilot asked me to come up and stand in the cockpit so they could tell me what was happening, feathering engines etc, and he got the navigator and the young signaller to explain their jobs to me. I got to know the young signaller Sergeant Max Coombe, (who I think they called 'Bluey'), as he came to the orderly room to see me at a later time and had arranged for me to go flying again when he was on SAR duty so I got to do night flying flight with him but I do not remember the other crew on that flight. I think I only got to do the one night flying but it looked like my friendship with the young signaller was going to get me more.

Moving into the following month bushfires broke out in outer areas from Canberra and Sergeant Wilson was required to make one of his staff available for the fire-fighting effort and I ended up out fighting bushfires, but mainly coming behind the fires and cleaning up any burning after the fires had passed through. The night before I was to be 'relieved' and taken back to Base, we were advised that there had been a fatal aircraft crash where one of our DC3 aircraft had crashed into Duntroon College grounds.

I was absolutely shattered on returning to base to find that DC3, A65-112 had crashed killing the entire crew of four. The crew that perished were, Flying Officer Neil MacDonald captain, Flight Sergeant Noel Charlton co-pilot, Sergeant Ian Mackrill navigator and Sergeant Max Coombe signaller. The young signaller Max Coombe was flown home to Taree NSW for burial and the other three aircrew were buried in Canberra on Friday 22nd March 1957. I was a member of the 'other ranks' cemetery party for the three Canberra funerals on that day.

Flight Sergeant Charlton was married and his now widowed wife was pregnant with their first child.

Each year since back then around late February/early March, my mind goes back to that terrible accident and how it had affected me as a young bloke at the time and I always get very emotional still. It was in 2011 that I decided to have a look on-line to see what reference there was today in respect of that accident when I noted "*A Statement to the Senate by Senator Ian Macdonald*" about the accident and, reading his statement, I found that the the captain of A65-112 on that fateful night, Flying Officer Neil Macdonald was Senator Macdonald's brother. I contacted Senator Macdonald and told him of my experience at No 86 Wing at the time and he asked for my permission for him to give my contact details to a lady that lived in Melbourne who he was sure would like to talk with me, I gave him the OK.

So in October 2011 I was contacted by a lady, Kim Best, asking to meet me and I subsequently met Kim at the cafe in the Convent Gallery in Daylesford. Kim is the daughter of Flight Sergeant Charlton, that unborn child of that co-pilot who 'took me under his wing' way back in February 1957. Kim and I have kept in touch and we met in Melbourne just a few months ago in 2018 when Kim was finalising her writing of her Dad's story which she wanted me to have a look at.

Kim studied her Dad's log book to come up with the date when it was that I had my first flight and that date came up as 28th February 1957. The aircraft that I flew in that day, A65-112.

Kim has now finalised the writing of her Dad's story and has given me a copy which I will donate to our AFA Branch Library when it is set up in our new offices at Ballarat Airport Hut 48..

I am now asking, through this article, if our National President Carl Schiller and our State President Max McGregor will do all that they can to have the lives lost in this terrible accident commemorated on a plaque on one of the pillars behind the AFC memorial at RAAF Point Cook where these four men did their training.

Over the years when Kim has been working to have established some sort of memorial relating to this accident she found that while those at the Duntroon College cared, she got the impression that the RAAF did not.

It would be nice if, on the 19th of March next, the Air Force Association could do something to show Kim and her family and the family members/descendants of the other crew members that perished that night, that the Air Force Association cares. I would appreciate that very much. (NH. Ed)

~~~~~

DID YOU KNOW? In 1928, Australia formed the world's first air ambulance , The Royal Flying Doctor Service.



VALE ~ John (Jack) Henry NETHERWAY

A funeral service for the late Jack Netherway was held on 1st February 2019.

Jack served in the RAAF from 29th May 1942 until 30th January 1946.

Jack was a former member of our branch of the AFA.

Jack trained on Tiger Moth and Wirraway aircraft but was apparently not too good at it once he was off the ground, so they gave him a Link Trainer course and he became a Link Trainer Instructor

REST IN PEACE JACK

17/4/1924 ~ 20/1/2019

~~~~~

**DID YOU KNOW?** RAAF No 75 Squadron was founded in Townsville Qld on 4th March 1942 and would go on to forge an illustrious history as one of the most famous units of the RAAF. Source : "44 Days" by Michael Veitch. Sadly, when I was the young Corporal in charge of the No 75 Squadron Orderly room in the early 1960's I had no idea of my units illustrious past, though I was the one compiling the Unit History Sheets of the Squadron for the time that I was there. (NH Ed)

~~~~~

YOUR NEW COMMITTEE

Your new committee held it's first meeting on the evening of Thursday 7th February. Some of the things that came out of that meeting are :

Some initial "allocation of responsibility" for committee members were made with more to be arranged.

Welfare Carers to be : Chaplain Keith Lanyon, Rob Petty and Josie Reasons.

Members to accompany the President at the **1200 hours 26th February Luncheon marking the completion of restoration work to date on ex RAAF airport buildings**, if able to attend are : Keith Pitman, Tom Roberts, Stan White, Peter Schoutens and Robert McDonald. Note: Leigh Harvey unable to attend due to the day of the week.

Terminology for the former officers mess building to be as Council now describes as "Airport Hut 48".

It has become clear that the only room at Airport Hut 48 that is exclusively for our use is the small room, with the larger meeting type room to be shared with other tenant/s. It was determined that the door to our exclusive room be signed with the Air Force Association Crest and wording ; "Air Force Association Committee Room" and "The Tom Roberts Library".

Discussion was held around what our rooms are about and determined that they are essentially our Branch's Office and Meeting Rooms and are not a 1 WAGS shrine. The trainees that went through No 1 WAGS RAAF Ballarat will be commemorated on a live website titled "No 1 WAGS Memorial Site" , and all k.i.a No 1 WAGS trainees will be commemorated, in time, on a solid memorial the type and location of which will be discussed at a later time, but that it is premature for such discussion at this stage, but that the time for that might not be too far away.

Activity will soon commence to prepare our rooms for an official opening with a very special guest speaker. It is anticipated that this very special gala event will be held in the second-half of March. (NH. Pres)

~~~~~

**DID YOU KNOW :** (1) The Code Name for the Allied Landing on Normandy on 6th June 1944 was "Operation Overlord". (2) During the extended period of preparations for Operation Overlord, three Spitfire Squadrons were formed at RAF Tangmere in March 1941 under the command of Wing Commander Douglas Bader, Later Sir Douglas Bader, the subject of Paul Brickhill's book "Reach For the Sky" and the movie of the same name which starred Kenneth More as Bader and Murial Pavlow as Bader's wife Thelma. (3) This year is the 75th anniversary of D Day, 6th June 1944. (4) Our member Margaret Wood was there, one of the teenage Birdham Girls working with building and preparing landing craft to be used as part of the D Day landing. Margaret was based at HMS Sea Serpent, Birdham. (NH Ed.)