



# AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA BALLARAT BRANCH Newsletter



April/May 2023

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

There has been plenty of activity over the past months.

I attended the AFA-Victoria Annual General Meeting which was held on 25 May. At this meeting, Max McGregor stepped down as President, the new President being John Clarkson CSC. I and the Committee look forward to working with John in the future.

The Ryder-Cheshire Support Group successfully held their Bi-annual General Meeting and Conference at Hut 48 in April, with the support of BAFA and consent of U3A, our co-tenants at Hut 48. Ryder-Cheshire loved using the facility and in particular valued the connection between their founder WWII British Pilot Leonard Cheshire VC and the air force.

Anzac Day saw another successful march, with a good representation of our members marching behind our banner. We exercised the recent practise of laying a book as an alternative to a wreath, as this has lasting value to local school children.



## IMPORTANT DATES COMING UP

**Social luncheons are held on the second Tuesday of each month**

**Hut 48. 11:45 for 12**



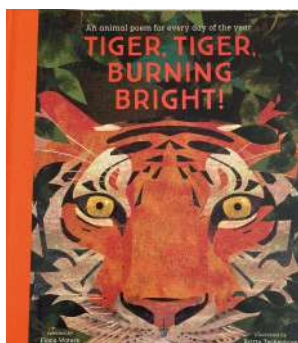
### Tuesday June 13

A celebration of Ballarat Heritage:

- Born in Ballarat, the stories of the Ballarat-born trainees at 1WAGS
- Living in Ballarat 1901-1941 documentary

### Tuesday July 11

1WAGS Trainee Richard Shennan and 460 Squadron



## BATTLE FOR AUSTRALIA BALL

7:30 PM Saturday 26 August

Brown Hill Hall

## 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 p1)*

The annual Battle for Australia Ball will again be held at the end of August. Details are provided under upcoming events, so shine up your dancing shoes.

Many of you will be aware that the Ballarat BMI hosts Wednesday evening twilight talks throughout the year. In observation of Ballarat Heritage Week, I was requested to present a History of 1WAGS, as many in Ballarat are unaware of this history. There was some 70 people in attendance.

Representatives of BAFA were recently invited to the re-opening of the Pt Cook RAAF Museum, which included an aerial display by 2 aircraft.

Reciprocating the interest in the Pt Cook Museum, BAFA will host the Friends of Pt Cook RAAF Museum for lunch during their excursion to the Ballarat museums in July.

*Peter Dowling*

*President*



The movie was nominated for 2 Oscars and features an almost unrecognisable young Googie Withers and Peter Ustinov amongst the cast of characters.



## SOCIAL LUNCHEON

**APRIL 11**



The April social luncheon featured the story of another WWII Veteran.

Bruce Clifton enlisted in the RAAF in the middle of 1942 and trained as a pilot at No. 8 EFTS, Narandera and then at No. 6 SFTS, Mallala.

Posted to England he was introduced to Wellingtons at No. 14 OTU, and after converting to Lancasters was posted to No. 57 Squadron RAF at East Kirkby.

He was shot down by Swedish flak whilst on an operation to Politz in February 1945. His story is about how he got out of the aircraft and was featured in the 1942 movie "One of Our Aircraft is Missing", which we screened at the lunch.

## SOCIAL LUNCHEON

**MAY 9**



For a different type of luncheon in May, having overheard them practising from time to time, we invited the U3A ukelele group from our co-tenants at Hut 48, U3A, to entertain us.

Group leader Sue McLachlan and team selected a series of songs with an "Australiana" theme and gave a thoroughly professional and entertaining 40 minutes of musical fun. It was difficult not to sing along and everyone enjoyed the performance immensely.

*Luncheon attendees enjoying the performance by the U3A ukelele players.*



Special guests at the luncheon included Di McGrath and several members of the Ryder-Cheshire Support Group, who thanked BAFA for support for their Bi-annual Conference and presented BAFA with a Certificate of Appreciation.



*Ryder-Cheshire Support Group President Di McGrath presenting Peter Dowling with a Certificate of Appreciation (above) and (below) BAFA member Gordon Harvey is thanked by Di McGrath for his "Anzac Cookies" donation to Ryder-Cheshire*



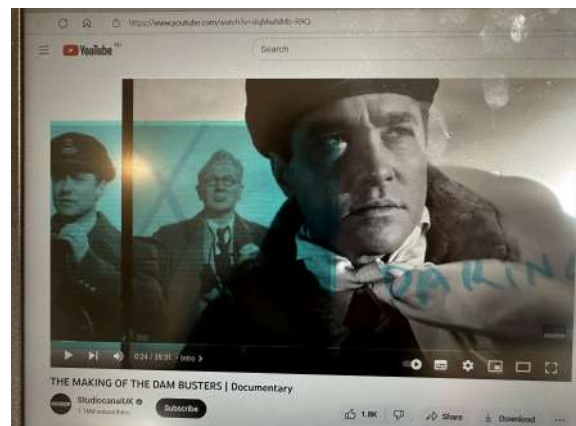
For the second part of the luncheon, Janet Bates made a short presentation on 1WAGS trainee Frederick Michael Spafford, who was one of the famous "Dam Busters" crew.

Spafford was posted to No. 50 SQN RAF in which he flew in Manchesters and Lancasters as a specialist bomb-aimer. He was awarded the DFM for his skill and praiseworthy example. After a tour of 30 Operations, Spafford joined the elite RAF SQN No. 617 for a special mission against dams in the Ruhr and Weser Valleys. He flew with Wing Commander Guy Gibson who regarded Spafford [Spam] as the best bomb-aimer there is. The operations were successful with Spafford being awarded the DFC and Gibson the Victoria Cross.



*Frederick Michael Spafford DFC*

Following, a fascinating documentary on the making of the film "The Dam Busters" was screened. It is anticipated that the movie itself will be screened at a luncheon later in the year.

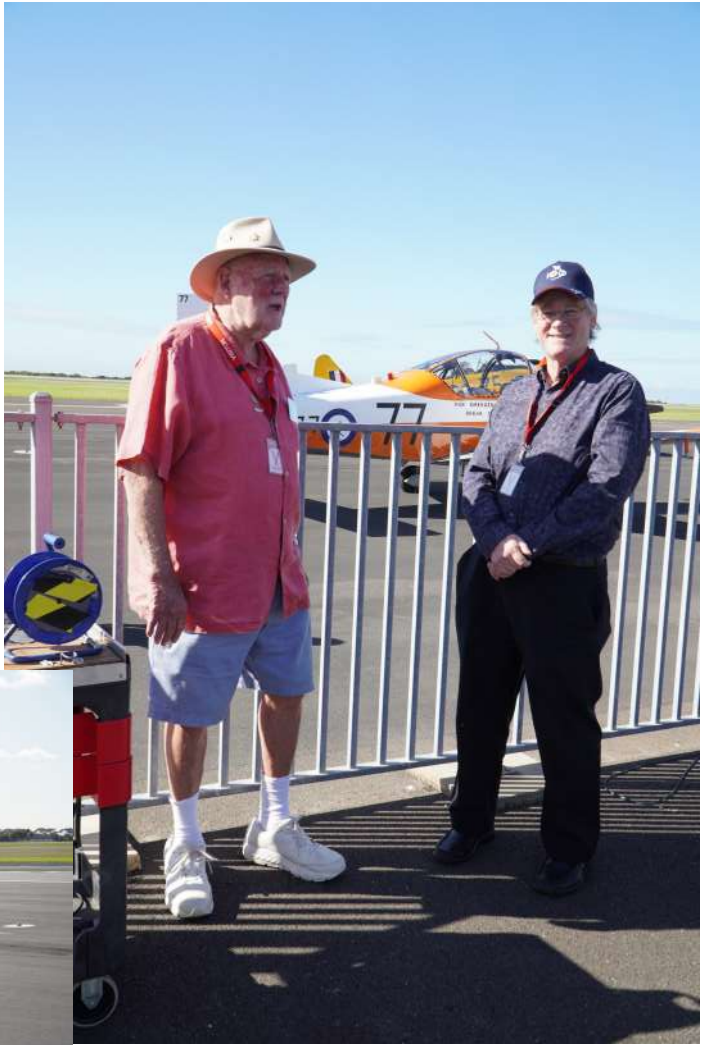


## RE-OPENING OF THE PT COOK RAAF AIR MUSEUM

In April, Mark Pilkington, President of the Friends of Pt Cook RAAF Museum, invited BAFA President Peter Dowling and Secretary Sue Alexander to attend the soft opening presaging the re-opening of the museum.

The Air Force Museums have now nationally come under the auspices of SQN 100.

We were treated to an aerial display by a WWII former RNZAF "Harvard" Trainer and a 1970s-1990s RAAF CT-4 "Airtrainer".



*Peter Dowling with President of Friends of Pt Cook RAAF Museum Mark Pilkington*



*RAAF CT-4 Airtrainer (above left) and WWII RNZAF Harvard Trainer (left)*





*Aerial display and SQN 100 pilots (above and right).*

*Orion aircraft on display and internal display within the Pt Cook RAAF Museum.*



# LUNCH AT THE MOVIES



On May 31, 30 BAFA members and friends attended a special lunch screening of the film “A Man Called Otto”.

The film was highly enjoyable with another classic Tom Hanks top performance as the titular Otto.

This event was held in support of our local theatre, the Regent, in acknowledgement of their ongoing support for BAFA through the Battle for Australia Ball.





# 1 WAGS REPORT

Sponsored by APCO Alfredton



## Current Feature Story

The current feature story was created to align with Ballarat Heritage Week and features the stories of the nine Ballarat-born 1 WAGS trainees who were killed in action or active service in WWII and the three who survived and were discharged. They were:

Killed -

- Fl/Sgt Lloyd George Freeman
- Fl/Sgt Stanley Charles Kitchen
- Sgt John McNeill
- W/O Herbert Gordon Parker
- Sgt Maurice Bert Proven
- Fl/Sgt Patrick Fraser Stanley
- Sgt Donald Thomas Thomson
- Sgt Robert Gordon Tyler
- Sgt Robert William Westcott

Discharged -

- W/O David Maxwell Gribble
- Sq/Ld Merrick Sadlier Holgate DFC
- F/O Francis Noel Miller Petch

The stories of these individuals will be covered in the June Social Luncheon and their full stories can be found on the 1WAGS website.

1WAGS Co-ordinator Janet Bates met with Victoria Rushton of Integra to create a series of posters for display in the Lucas Shopping Centre over the Heritage Week.

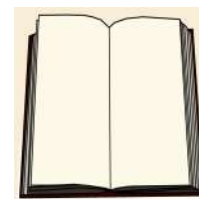


*Janet Bates - 1WAGS Co-ordinator*



*1WAGS Co-ordinator Janet Bates with Integra's Victoria Rushton (left) and poster display at Lucas (above)*

**FROM THE  
TOM ROBERTS  
LIBRARY**



Don't forget about the availability of the many books and literature in our library focussing on Ballarat, the airport, individuals and aircraft.