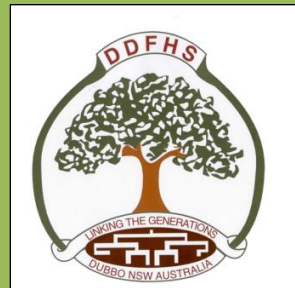


DUBBO & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC



Newsletter 52 – January-February 2021

Location: Ground floor – Two storey Community Arts Building Western Plains Gallery, Cnr. Gipps and Wingewarra Streets, Dubbo.

Opening hours: Tuesday 1.00-4pm, Thursday 2.00-6.00pm, Friday 10.00-1.00pm, Saturday 10.00-4.00pm

Society webpage: www.dubbofamilyhistory.org.au

Society email: info@dubbofamilyhistory.org.au

Postal address: PO Box 868, Dubbo. 2830 NSW

Society phone no: 02 6881 8635 (during opening hours)

Management Committee

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|------------------|----------|--|---------------------|
| Linda Barnes | 68878284 | martinandlinda@gmail.com | President/Librarian |
| Lyn Smith | 68850107 | baretsmiths@bigpond.com | Vice President |
| Ken Fuller | 68818128 | kfuller8@bigpond.com | Treasurer |
| Robyn Allan | 68844572 | rpallan@bigpond.net.au | Minute Secretary |
| June Wilson | 68825366 | juniwil1943@gmail.com | |
| Karlynn Robinson | 68855773 | karlynnrobinson@tpg.com.au | |
| Kathy Furney | 68825533 | kathyfurney47@gmail.com | Newsletter |
| Lesley Abrahams | 68822242 | ljabrahams@bigpond.com | |

Management Committee Meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 10am in DDFHS Library. Members are welcome to attend these meetings, or simply contact any of the committee listed above if you have anything you would like discussed at the meeting.

Newsletter Information Please share any interesting information, news of an interesting website, or maybe a breakthrough with your family history, with other members. Contact Kathy Ph.0427 971 232 or email kathyfurney47@gmail.com if you have anything that can be shared. We would love to print your item as it is exciting to hear about our members' research.

Website and Facebook Check out the website and Facebook regularly as there is often useful information on them. Regular updates, with information for our members, are being made to both, and always 'like' our Facebook page when you see something of interest.

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Society News

Welcome to the first issue for 2021. It is pleasing to see so many people renewing their membership with the society for this year, despite the drama of our past year with Covid-19.

Although we were unable to hold our usual Christmas party last year, many members gathered at the Cultural Centre Café for afternoon tea on the 3rd December. It was wonderful to see our **president Linda Barnes** presented with a beautiful bunch of flowers in appreciation of her efforts leading us through the last twelve months. **Secretary Robyn Allen** and committee member **June Wilson**, were awarded *Life Membership* for their never flagging support and work for the society. **Di Chase** became *Member of the Year* for taking on jobs big and small for the society. **Certificates of Appreciation** were handed to **Cathy Thompson** for tireless work in combining all our indexes and putting them on a hard drive, while **Karlyn Robinson** received her certificate for the work she has put into our Face Book page which has become popular with so many readers. Thank you to these recipients, and all of our volunteers for the work they do 'behind the scenes' to keep our society operating efficiently.



Linda



Robyn Allen & Linda



Some of the members at the a'noon tea.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission has unveiled a new website that allows you to discover and research over 1.7million names of men and women who died in the two World Wars. Visit the site at www.cwg.org

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John Gilbert, Engineer of Dubbo from 1953 to 1983 was not only a skilled and visionary engineer, he also had an interesting career during WW11. John joined the RAAF on 10th October 1942. He attempted to join the RAAF in 1941 immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbour, but failed on medical grounds. As a result of a childhood injury, he had a deformed neck and thorax which limited the ability to swivel his head. Undaunted he and his GP in Parkes sought out a Macquarie Street Specialist in April 1942, who was willing to operate on the major neck muscle involved. For the sum of “£15-15-00, plus anaesthetic fee” and a short stay at a Potts Point private hospital, he was then fit to pass a medical for the RAAF.



He did 3 months Initial Training at Bradfield Park in West Lindfield, Sydney; 3 months Air Observers training at Cootamundra; and 1 month of Air Navigation training at Parkes, graduating in June 1943 as a Pilot Officer. For two months after that he attended the Navigators General Reconnaissance course at Bairnsdale in Victoria. By the end of his training John had proven to be one of the RAAF's most promising bombardiers, and this would be his main functional area from then on.

On the 18th January John's crew flew a training mission with conventional bombs from Charters Towers, which they dropped on North Brook Island, off the coast about 130 kms north of Townsville. However, on the 21st January they were told they'd be dropping mustard gas bombs on the same target. Despite voicing misgivings and quoting the Geneva Conventions about chemical weapons being illegal in warfare, the US CO made it very clear they'd be court-martialled for failing to obey orders if they did not carry out their mission. The Australians were very concerned there were to be Australian volunteers on the island to assess the effects of the mustard gas, and this only fuelled their concerns further. Nevertheless, John and the crew duly dropped their bomb load on target as ordered.

It later transpired that for this test, at least, no Australian service personnel volunteers were considered to have suffered ill-effects. The test was actually to see that the protective clothing and respirators the Australian military had on hand would sufficiently protect wearers in tropical conditions. No-one was actually on the island when the raid occurred, but the volunteers were sitting in a landing craft just offshore waiting for the bombers to depart. They then went ashore in their protective gear and proceeded to undertake a pre-arranged series of "normal" working activities while mustard gas fumes were still strong on the ground. It was deemed important to assess how effective military units could be if the Japanese ever resorted to the use of mustard gas, as they had done in China but not so far in Southeast Asia. Fortunately, neither side chose to take that risk at any stage. On the 3rd February the Australian crews joined the 65th Squadron of the US 43rd Bombing Group at Dobodura. The squadron's nickname was *The Lucky Dicers*. Over the next two months (February and March 1944) John flew 12 combat missions against airstrips, anti-aircraft and anti-naval gun batteries, fuel dumps, ammunition dumps and other general military stores. Targets ranged from offshore islands such as New Ireland and the Admiralty

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Islands to locations on the New Guinea mainland such as Kavieng, Tadjil and Wewak. On one mission John spoke of their plane having a front row seat to the invasion of Manus Island while General MacArthur watched proceedings from a destroyer offshore. Half way through his tour of duty (12th March) the 65th Squadron moved further west to Nadzab outside of Wewak after that town had been captured by Australian and American land forces.

The most important mission John took part in while in New Guinea was the bombing of Hollandia. This mission took place on 31st March and targeted the airfield and several hundred Japanese planes which had been dispersed there. Because Hollandia was 800 kms behind the front lines the Japanese commanders did not believe the Allies could or would mount such an attack. However, MacArthur had by now adopted his strategy of "island hopping" and an amphibious landing by 15,000 troops was planned for April. By equipping the available US fighters at Wewak and Nadzab with disposable extra fuel tanks the bombers were able to get to Hollandia and still have about 15 minutes of fighter cover over the target.

The mission was a resounding success, with full surprise achieved and over 300 Japanese planes destroyed either on the ground or in the air by the Allied fighter planes. The landing, when it came about three weeks later, was a complete success and Japanese power in New Guinea was essentially destroyed from that time onwards. *(Second instalment of this story in the next issue of the newsletter)*

Ancestry Library Edition If you are a member of the Macquarie Regional Library please be aware that you can access Ancestry Library Edition as a remote user through your Macquarie Regional Library card and password. The library has advised that they are extending this service to members until 31 March 2021.

'Best love to all': the life and war service of Alfred Cecil Gain is a short "e book" based on the letters written by Sapper Cecil Gain. He served in WW1 with the 18th Battalion before moving to the 2nd Divisional Signal Company, where he was mainly stationed at 5th Brigade HQ as a signaller. Cecil was a very intelligent young man, with a curiosity of the world that began in his schooldays. He became a leading barrister in Sydney until his tragic death in 1938. Not bad for a small country town school!

Permission to use Cecil's letters, photos, drawings and postcards was provided by Gai Winton, Cecil's niece, in conjunction with the AWM who now hold the collection.

Interested members can read this 121-page "e book" story by going into our rooms and opening the USB which contains all the journals received digitally. You will find it under "Gain – best love to all". The majority of our journals from other societies are now received this way, so if you are interested in news from other centres, both Australian and overseas, go through the contents on the USB. It hangs on a hook near the hard copy journals in our second room.

We have kindly received this free e copy from Graeme Hosken of FFFAIF (Friends & Family of First AIF) who helps produce 'Digger' magazine, which we receive in our rooms. If you have access to a similar collection of material from WWI, they would love to hear from you. See the hard copy of Digger in our rooms for contact information or check out their website at www.ffaif.org.au

Ancestry information Many of our members would regularly access Ancestry or be a member. The January 2021 edition of UK Family Tree has an informative article on "A guide to Ancestry Trees", covering how to set them up, correct, delete and much more helpful information.

Opening hours have now been increased to three days a week. **Tuesday and Thursday 1pm-4pm** and **Saturday 10am-1pm** so come in and use all the facilities available to our members. Don't forget membership is also due, \$40 Single, \$45 Joint and \$48 Family. This can be paid on line or when you come into the rooms, however we do not have eftpos facilities.