

Cut Short in His Prime  
Allan Cook: A Brief History

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Cut Short in His Prime. Allan Cook: A Brief History  
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## Contents

<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2 A Note on Sources</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 R. H. Middleton VC . . . . .	12
2.2 What's in a Name? . . . . .	14
<b>3 Early Days</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Ballarat . . . . .	15
3.2 A Move to Horsham . . . . .	18
<b>4 Education</b>	<b>20</b>
4.1 Primary School . . . . .	20
4.2 Horsham High School . . . . .	20
<b>5 Life in Horsham</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>6 The Empire Air Training Scheme</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>7 Enlistment</b>	<b>31</b>
7.1 Initial Training at Bradfield Park . . . . .	32
7.2 Flying Training at Narromine . . . . .	34
7.3 Canada . . . . .	41
7.4 Camp Borden . . . . .	43
7.5 Officer or NCO? . . . . .	52
7.6 To England . . . . .	54
<b>8 Attached to the RAF</b>	<b>57</b>
8.1 Operational Training at Pershore . . . . .	58
8.2 No. 218 Squadron, Marham . . . . .	66
8.3 On Operations . . . . .	70
8.4 What was an Operation Like? . . . . .	72
<b>9 Operations to Kiel and Emden</b>	<b>79</b>
9.1 Operational Details . . . . .	79
9.2 The Aircraft . . . . .	81
9.3 The Crew . . . . .	82
9.4 Results . . . . .	83
9.5 What Happened? . . . . .	85
9.6 SGT Drury . . . . .	91

<b>10 Your Son is Missing</b>	<b>95</b>
10.1 Sad News . . . . .	95
10.2 Confusion . . . . .	95
10.3 Other Messages . . . . .	99
<b>11 In Memoriam</b>	<b>102</b>
11.1 Medals . . . . .	102
11.2 Remembrance . . . . .	103
11.3 Memorials . . . . .	104
<b>12 Conclusion</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Appendix A Timeline</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Appendix B Australian Members of Course 24, No. 1 SFTS.</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Appendix C Canadian Members of Course 24, No. 1 SFTS.</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Appendix D Abbreviations</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Appendix E Air Force Ranks</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Appendix F No. 218 Squadron Flying Activity for October 1941</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>121</b>

## List of Figures

1	R. H. Middleton. . . . .	12
2	The Funeral of Flight Sergeant Rawdon Middleton. . . . .	13
3	Walter Cook's Engine Driving Certificate. . . . .	16
4	307 Mair Street in 2014. . . . .	18
5	Dana Street Primary School No. 33. . . . .	20
6	Horsham High School c1930. . . . .	21
7	No. 5 Andrew Street in 2010. . . . .	22
8	Staff outside Cook's Store in the late 1930s. . . . .	24
9	RAAF Recruiting Poster, c. 1940. . . . .	29
10	RAAF Reserve Lapel Badge. . . . .	30
11	Robert Iredale. . . . .	31
12	EATS Curriculum 1940-41. . . . .	33
13	RAAF Narromine in the Early 1940s. . . . .	35
14	Tiger Moths at an Elementary Flying Training School. . . . .	37
15	A Link Trainer at No. 19 EFTS in Canada. . . . .	39
16	EATS Airmen Marching to the <i>Awatea</i> . . . . .	42
17	The Elegant 1st Class Dining Room on <i>Awatea</i> . . . . .	43
18	<i>TSS Awatea</i> Passing Under Lions Gate Bridge, Vancouver. . . . .	44
19	Double bunks like those found at Camp Borden. . . . .	45
20	Aerial View of Camp Borden, 1941. . . . .	46
21	A <i>Harvard</i> cockpit. . . . .	47
22	<i>Harvards</i> and <i>Yales</i> on the Apron at Cape Borden. . . . .	48
23	The Sequence of Instruction Employed at Canadian SFTSs in 1941. . . . .	49
24	'Y' Depot, Halifax. . . . .	53
25	RMS <i>Ausonia</i> . . . . .	54
26	The River Clyde off Greenock in WWII. . . . .	56
28	J. Wellington Wimpy . . . . .	58
27	Aerial View of RAF Pershore, 1941. . . . .	59
29	Vickers <i>Wellington</i> Mk I. . . . .	60
30	Cutaway View of a <i>Wellington</i> . . . . .	61
31	Wellington Rear Fuselage. Note the <i>Elsan</i> Toilet on the Right. . . . .	62
32	Photograph of a Spitfire in a Bomber's Gun Sight. . . . .	64
33	Aerial View of RAF Marham, 1944. . . . .	67
34	Wing Commander Herbert Kirkpatrick. . . . .	68
35	Loading a 4,000 lb bomb. . . . .	71
36	Crews being briefed at RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk. . . . .	73
37	A <i>Wellington</i> being refuelled and 'bombed up'. . . . .	74
38	A Navigator Taking a Sight. . . . .	76
39	The Corkscrew Manoeuvre. . . . .	77
40	<i>Lancaster</i> crew being de-briefed. . . . .	78
41	Aerial View of Kiel Harbour . . . . .	80

42	Routes to Kiel. . . . .	80
43	Approaches to Kiel. . . . .	81
44	No. 218 Squadron <i>Wellington</i> R1448. . . . .	82
45	MF D/F Bearings with Error Limits. . . . .	86
46	Possible Course Flown by R1135 . . . . .	88
47	Surface Currents in the North Sea for 15 November 2010. . . . .	92
48	Grave at Stavne Cemetery in Trondheim, Norway. . . . .	94
50	Photograph in the <i>Sun</i> . . . . .	96
49	Letter from the Air Board to Mrs. Ellen Cook. . . . .	97
51	Allan's Medals . . . . .	102
52	Mothers' and Widows' Badge. . . . .	102
53	The Runnymede Memorial. . . . .	104
54	RAAF Sergeants with No Known Grave. . . . .	104
55	Horsham and District Cenotaph and War Memorial. . . . .	105
56	Bomber Command Memorial, Canberra. . . . .	106
57	The Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London. . . . .	108
58	Australian War Memorial, Commemorative Area, Panel 120. . . . .	109

## **Allan Cook**

was born on Tuesday 21 April, 1914 in the Western Victorian town of Ballarat. On Saturday 15 November 1941, still short of his twenty-eighth birthday, he took off from RAF Base Marham in Norfolk, England as pilot in charge of Wellington bomber R1135 for a bombing raid on Kiel, Germany.

He was never seen again.







# 1 Introduction

Of the almost 40,000 members of the Royal Australian Air Force who were despatched to the United Kingdom to serve alongside and within the Royal Air Force, nearly 10,000 flew with Bomber Command. Of these, 3,486 did not come back. Allan Cook was one of them.

The RAAF members in Bomber Command represented a little over 1 per cent of all Australians in uniform during World War II. However, they contributed over 10 per cent to Australia's total war dead. And yet, their contribution goes almost totally unnoticed when Australians remember World War II.

In his introductory remarks at the 1994 RAAF History Conference, the Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Ian Barrington 'Barry' Gration observed that:

... it is a sad reflection on our national short memory that their [airmen who fought in Europe in WWII] efforts in that war are not understood widely, or even known in some cases, among contemporary Australians... Next year, when the 50th anniversary of peace is celebrated in this country, we must ensure that people understand that the RAAF not only made its contribution to victory in the Pacific, but also, as we will hear today, to victory in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

Air Marshal David Evans, a retired Chief of the Air Staff, commented on Gration's remarks:

... Australians are really not aware of the contribution of the RAAF during World War II... It irks me to find that everyone that ever sets foot in this country knows about Gallipoli and Tobruk and we have a Prime Minister that makes sure they know about Kokoda.<sup>2</sup> But very few know about the RAAF's contribution—it was really quite massive.<sup>3</sup>

On the occasion of the dedication in June 2012 of the new Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London, the current Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Geoff Brown, observed:

<sup>1</sup>Air Marshal I.B. Gration. "Opening Address". In: 1994 RAAF History Conference - The RAAF in Europe and North Africa 1939-45. (Canberra, 20 Oct. 1994). Canberra, Australia: RAAF Air Power Development Centre. ISBN: 0 642 22475 7. URL: <http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/Publications/Details/201/RAAF-History-Conference-1994-The-RAAF-in-Europe-and-North-Africa-19391945.aspx#.U85BpPmSyrq> (visited on 29/09/2010).

<sup>2</sup>He was of course referring to the Prime Minister at that time, Paul Keating, who has championed the Kokoda campaign throughout his life.

<sup>3</sup>D. S. Evans. "Comments on: Two Faces of the Empire Air Training Scheme: The European Experience". In: 1994 RAAF History Conference - The RAAF in Europe and North Africa 1939-45. (Canberra, 20 Oct. 1994). Canberra, Australia: RAAF Air Power Development Centre. ISBN: 0 642 22475 7. URL: <http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/Publications/Details/201/RAAF-History-Conference-1994-The-RAAF-in-Europe-and-North-Africa-19391945.aspx#.U85BpPmSyrq> (visited on 29/09/2010).

Today, and in the future, Australians need to remember the steadfast resolve, camaraderie and courage of those who served in Bomber Command. If I may quote the Australian historian Dr. Alan Stephens: “No single group of Australians from any service did more to help win World War II than the men who fought in Bomber Command”.<sup>4</sup>

Responding to the dedication, Prime Minister Julia Gillard made an impassioned address to Parliament, acknowledging the Australians of Bomber Command:

So often, when we reflect on the history of the Second World War, we think of the remarkable men of Fighter Command who kept the Nazi forces at bay in the skies over England in that perilous summer of 1940, men rightly celebrated as ‘the few’. But we should also remember their brother pilots of Bomber Command, who could be said to be ‘the many’ in the ranks of the Air Force fraternity. There were 125,000 in all from the UK and around the Commonwealth, including 10,000 Australians. Sadly, more than one in three would never come home: 3,486 Australians were lost in action—a startling number—and another 650 died in training accidents. They endured exceptional danger and faced one of the highest casualty rates of any formation in the Allied armed forces. It is little wonder that Bomber Command yielded up 19 Victoria Cross winners. These men were the bravest of the brave.

For decades, controversy over the nature of the strategic bombing campaign has obscured commemoration of the courage of these bomber crews—that is, until today. In a few hours time, amid the beautiful lawns and trees of Green Park in London, the Queen will unveil the new Bomber Command Memorial. This recognition is long overdue—recognition for the courage and dedication of men who fought a relentless 2,000-day campaign, who endured bitter cold and noise across distant and hostile skies, who flew planes often riddled with bullets or with engines shot away, who faced the ever present risk of fire and horrific burns, all in the long shadow of death, knowing that each take-off might be their last.

Now, 67 years after their final wartime missions, a wrong is corrected and honour is restored. A group of Australian Bomber Command crew will be at the ceremony later today. It will be a homecoming, a restitution and the final settling of a long-overdue debt. To them, to their mates here at home and those no longer with us, the nation says: ‘Thank you for your service and sacrifice. You gave

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<sup>4</sup>Air Marshall Geoff Brown. *Bomber Command Memorial Dedication – London*. RAAF Air Power Development Centre. June 2012. URL: [http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/UploadedFiles/General/2012\\_BomberCommand.pdf](http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/UploadedFiles/General/2012_BomberCommand.pdf) (visited on 20/07/2014).

your best years and, all too often, you gave your lives. Your valour will never be forgotten'.<sup>5</sup>

I hope that this account of the life and death of one of those who fought so bravely in Bomber Command will, in some small way, promote the further recognition of their contribution.



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<sup>5</sup>Julia Gillard. "STATEMENTS ON INDULGENCE: 70th Anniversary of the Operations of Bomber Command". In: *Australia, Debates, House of Representatives* 43 (28 June 2012). URL: <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22chamber/hansardr/38b26896-2425-4184-83c1-0584f5b1cf86/0111%22> (visited on 18/11/2014).

## 2 A Note on Sources

Like most members of the public, there are few sources available that provide any record of Allan Cook's early life, particularly before he left primary school. After the family's move from Ballarat to Horsham, Allan is the subject of an increasing number of reports in the local newspapers, but the record they provide is still quite sparse. The memories of family members do, of course, add to this picture, but all of his siblings have now passed away, so the stories are largely second hand.

The situation changes significantly once Allan decided to join the RAAF. The Australian Archives have preserved his Personal and Casualty Files,<sup>6</sup> and these provide considerable detail of his time in the Air Force. Unfortunately, none of Allan's personal letters, diaries or his Flying Log Book have survived. For much of the detail of his day-to-day life during this period, we must therefore rely on the descriptions of the lives of others who followed paths similar to Allan's. Fortunately, these are many and varied, but one in particular, R. H. Middleton, provides a wealth of relevant information.

### 2.1 R. H. Middleton VC



**Figure 1:** R. H. Middleton.

Only four Australian airmen have ever been awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest decoration awarded to Commonwealth Forces in recognition of exceptional acts of bravery in wartime. Pilot Officer Rawdon Hume 'Ray' Middleton, VC occupies a unique place in the RAAF's history as he was the only member of the RAAF who served in the European theatre to be awarded the Victoria Cross. His life is, therefore, well documented.<sup>7</sup> Importantly for this story, Ray Middleton enlisted in the RAAF at that same time as Allan Cook. They were part of the same intake of trainees, and trained together at Bradford Park and Narromine. They were both then sent to Canada to complete their training as pilots, both graduating successfully. Here their paths diverged as Ray had developed pneumonia just before they were due to leave for

<sup>6</sup>A9300, RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48. Cook, Alan: Service Number - 400696. National Archives of Australia, 1939-1948. URL: <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/NameSearch/Interface/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=5538489> (visited on 12/09/2010); A705, RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series. Cook, Alan (Sergeant) Service Number - 400696. File type - Casualty - Repatriation. Control Symbol: 163/98/360. National Archives of Australia, 1939-1948. URL: <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/NameSearch/Interface/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=1056265> (visited on 10/09/2010).

<sup>7</sup>See for example: Stuart Bill. *Middleton VC*. East Bentleigh, Victoria: Stuart Bill, 1991. ISBN: 0646003372; Alan Stephens. *The Royal Australian Air Force : a history*. South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press, 2006. ISBN: 9780195555417; Peter Firkins. *Heroes have wings*. Western Australia: Hesperian Press, 1993. ISBN: 085905179X; Laurie Woods. *Halfway to Hell*. Brisbane, Queensland: Boolarong Press, 2010. ISBN: 9781921555749.



**Figure 2:** *The Funeral of Flight Sergeant Rawdon Middleton (AWM).*

the UK. He followed his classmates eight weeks later. Once in the UK, Ray was assigned to the same operational training unit as Allan, but was then assigned to a different squadron, flying *Stirling* bombers.

The operation that earned Middleton his VC is described in *The Australian Experience of Air Power*:

On the night of 28 November 1942, the northern Italian city of Turin was bombed by 228 aircraft of RAF Bomber Command. The force included 47 four-engined *Stirling* bombers. Piloting one of these was former jackeroo Flight Sergeant Rawdon Middleton, who brought his aircraft down to 2000 feet for three runs to identify the target. An anti-aircraft shell exploded in the cockpit, seriously wounding Middleton, his copilot and wireless operator. Middleton was hit in the head and knocked unconscious. When he came to, Middleton was weak and had trouble seeing and speaking, but he attempted to fly his stricken aircraft back to Britain.

On reaching the English coast and realising that the aircraft

could not be flown much further he ordered his crew to parachute out. Five did so and survived, but Middleton and two others were still aboard when the badly damaged bomber crashed into the sea. For this heroic action, Middleton posthumously became the first member of the RAAF to receive the Victoria Cross.<sup>8</sup>

Two months after his death, Middleton's body was washed ashore. He was given a full military funeral at St. John's Church, Beck Row in Suffolk, UK.

## 2.2 What's in a Name?

There is some confusion about how Allan Cook's name should be spelled—whether it has one or two 'ls'. On his birth certificate Allan's name has two ls;<sup>9</sup> on his death certificate one.<sup>10</sup>

Allan himself does not appear to have been particularly concerned how his name was spelt. When he filled out his "Application for Air Crew",<sup>11</sup> he did so as "Alan Cook" and signed the papers as such. But when he joined the RAAF he did so as "Allan Cook". He signed his will as "Allan Cook". The Air Force official files are all named "Alan Cook",<sup>12</sup> but this usage is far from consistent—his discharge papers are for "Allan Cook".

For consistency, I have chosen to refer to him throughout this story by his birth name, "Allan Cook". When quoting particular sources however, I have used the form used by that source.

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<sup>8</sup>*The Australian Experience of Air Power*. Canberra, ACT: Royal Australian Air Force, 2007. ISBN: 1 920800 14 X.

<sup>9</sup>"Birth: Allan Cook". Registration Number 9344. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1914). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>10</sup>"Alan Cook: Probate". Unit 3762. In: *VPPRS 28/P3: Probate and Administration Files*. (1942). Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>11</sup>A9300, *RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48*.

<sup>12</sup>A9300, *RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48*; A705, *RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series*.

### 3 Early Days

Allan Cook was born in Ballarat on Tuesday 21 April 1914.<sup>13</sup> His parents were Walter and Ellen Ann (née Heyes). Walter was born in Ballarat on 4 May 1870 to Robert and Ann (née Jarvie).<sup>14</sup> Walter's parents were both recent immigrants, Robert arriving in Melbourne from Durham, England aboard the *Covenanter* in December 1852,<sup>15</sup> and Ann from Kirkintilloch, Scotland to Adelaide aboard the *Switzerland* in June 1855.<sup>16,17</sup> Ellen Ann was born in Sandhurst (now Bendigo) on 20 Jan 1875 to George and Jane (née Lomas).<sup>18</sup> George and Jane were both born in Lancashire, England. George emigrated with his brother John aboard the *Tudor*, arriving in Geelong in January 1857.<sup>19</sup> Jane followed two years later aboard the *Telegraph*, accompanied by the two youngest of their surviving children.<sup>20</sup>

#### 3.1 Ballarat

Walter had grown up in the family home at 337 Humffray Street, Ballarat East. He lived there with his parents and, until she married in 1895, his only surviving sibling, Annie. His father, Robert, had a job as a foreman with the Ballarat Water Commission from about 1863 until his death in 1893, so the family would have been fairly well off, if not rich. Walter's mother, Ann, died in 1888 and his father, Robert, in 1893.<sup>21</sup> Robert left no will, and his eldest child, Annie, was appointed executrix. His estate consisted of £170 in real estate (of which no detail survives) and £178 in personal property (consisting mainly of

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<sup>13</sup>"Birth: Allan Cook".

<sup>14</sup>"Birth: Walter Cook". Registration Number 6773. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1870). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>15</sup>"Robert Cook: Immigration". Fiche: 23, Page: 10. In: *VPPRS 7666: Microfiche Copy of inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) (1852–1923)*. Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>16</sup>*Ship Switzerland, 640 tons, Captain D. Doherty from Liverpool 16th June 1855, arrived at Port Adelaide, South Australia 12th September 1855. The Ships List. 1852–1923.* URL: <http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/australia/switzerland1855.shtml> (visited on 07/09/2009).

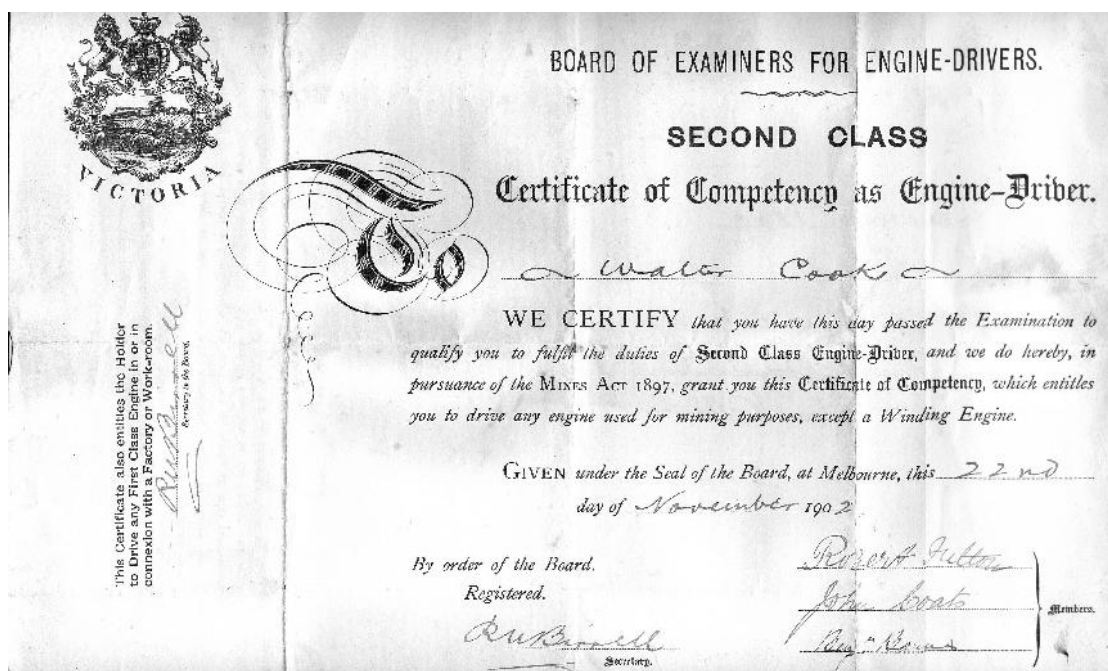
<sup>17</sup>Ann first arrived in Port Adelaide, South Australia, where she married Stephen Elsome. In about 1858, the couple moved to Port Melbourne, where Stephen and one of their two children died in 1860, probably from the effects of an influenza epidemic rampant in Melbourne at that time.

<sup>18</sup>"Birth: Ellen Ann Heyes". Registration Number 5230. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1875). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>19</sup>"George Heyes: Immigration". Fiche: 119, Page: 3. In: *VPPRS 7666: Microfiche Copy of inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) (1852–1923)*. Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>20</sup>"Jane Heyes: Immigration". Fiche: 166, Page: 8. In: *VPPRS 7666: Microfiche Copy of inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) (1852–1923)*. Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>21</sup>"Death: Ann Cook". Registration Number 8431. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1888). Department of Justice, Victoria; "Death: Robert Cook". Registration Number 385. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1893). Department of Justice, Victoria.



**Figure 3:** Walter Cook's Engine Driving Certificate (Author).

household effects).<sup>22</sup> The estate was divided equally between Walter and Annie.

In 1895 Annie married Thomas Taylor,<sup>23</sup> and the newly weds moved in with Walter at the house in Humffray Street.

Walter made his living as a saddler. Where and when he learnt the saddlery trade is not known. Neither do we have any knowledge of where or when he started to earn his living as a saddler. In 1902, he had passed the examination to qualify as a Second Class Engine Driver (see Figure 3) which entitled him to drive "any engine used for mining purposes, except a Winding Engine". It also entitled him to drive "any First Call Engine in or in connexion with a Factory or Work-room". However, according to the 1903 Electoral Roll,<sup>24</sup> his occupation was 'saddler', and this is repeated in the Ballarat and District Directory for 1904.<sup>25</sup>

Ellen Ann moved from Sandhurst to Ballarat with her mother, Jane, following the death of her father, George, in 1900. The 1903 Electoral Roll,<sup>26</sup> and the

<sup>22</sup>"Robert Cook: Probate". Unit 653; in: VPPRS 28/P0: Probate and Administration Files. (1893). Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>23</sup>"Marriage: Annie Cook and Thomas Taylor". Registration Number 1138. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1895). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>24</sup>"Division of Ballarat, Victoria". In: *Australian Electoral Rolls* (1903). Australian Electoral Commission.

<sup>25</sup>Harry Tulloch. *Ballarat and District Directory 1904*. AU 7501 - Ballarat Compendium 1. Australia: Archive CD Books, 2007.

<sup>26</sup>"Division of Ballarat, Victoria".



Ballarat and District Directory for 1904 both list her as living in Bond Street, Ballarat with her mother.<sup>27</sup> Her occupation is listed as 'saleswoman'.

Walter and Ellen Ann were married in the Manse of the Methodist Church, Armstrong Street North, Ballarat on 25 September 1905 when Walter was 35 and Ellen 30.<sup>28</sup> They moved to a house at 7 Webster Street, Ballarat. The house had a frontage of 50 feet (15 m) on Webster Street and was a "double-fronted weatherboard house containing six rooms and outbuildings".<sup>29</sup> Ellen's mother, Jane, moved in with them, and this arrangement continued until Jane's death in 1916.

Walter and Ellen wasted no time in starting a family. Ellen Ann Cook was born in July 1906 but died on 16 April 1907 aged just 8 months.<sup>30</sup> Walter William was born on 25 October 1907,<sup>31</sup> and was followed by three daughters, Jean on 21 April 1909,<sup>32</sup> Grace on 4 September 1910,<sup>33</sup> and Nancy on 1 July 1912.<sup>34</sup> Allan was next born and his younger sister Verna, who was born on 29 March 1917, completed the family.

In their latter years Walter's children described their childhood as a happy one. Nancy remembered her father with affection, but intimated that the family's finances were somewhat stretched during her years at school, and always regretted having to leave school when she turned fourteen. Curiously, Walter had an encounter with the court system when in November 1908 he was brought before the East Ballarat Court of Petty Sessions for not having his son, Walter William, vaccinated.<sup>35</sup> He was before the same court for the same offence in May 1915 and again in December 1917. On the latter two occasions he was fined £2 with costs of 2/6.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Tulloch, *Ballarat and District Directory 1904*.

<sup>28</sup>"Marriage: Walter Cook and Ellen Ann Heyes". Registration Number 5015. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1905). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>29</sup>"Walter Cook: Probate". Unit 2305. In: *VPPRS 28/P3: Probate and Administration Files*. (1931). Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>30</sup>"Birth: Ellen Ann Cook". Registration Number 3487. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1907). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>31</sup>"Birth: Walter William Cook". Registration Number 23946. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1907). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>32</sup>"Birth: Jean Cook". Registration Number 7886. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1909). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>33</sup>"Birth: Grace Cook". Registration Number 24532. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1910). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>34</sup>"Birth: Nancy Cook". Registration Number 17183. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1912). Department of Justice, Victoria.

<sup>35</sup>"Ballarat East Courts". Unit 48: Petty Session Registers 1899-1900. In: *VPRS 290: Court of Petty Sessions Cause List Books (1858-1888); Court of Petty Sessions Registers (1888-1921)* (1899-1900). Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>36</sup>"The Ballarat Courier." In: *The Ballarat Courier* (15 May 1915), p. 2. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/73339648> (visited on 14/07/2013); "The Ballarat Courier." In: *The Ballarat Courier* (22 Dec. 1917), p. 2. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/73339648> (visited on 14/07/2013).



**Figure 4:** 307 Mair Street in 2014 (Google).

About 1909–10, Walter established a saddlery business at 307 Mair Street, Ballarat. Bartholomew Tierney had conducted a saddlery business at this address from around 1903,<sup>37</sup> and did not leave the district until at least 1914.<sup>38</sup> The relationship between Walter and Bartholomew is not known. Did Walter work for Bartholomew? Were they partners? Or did Walter buy the business from Bartholomew? Whatever their relationship, Walter was clearly the senior partner, if not the owner of the business by 1912.<sup>39</sup>

The business appears to have continued up until the middle of 1928.

### 3.2 A Move to Horsham

The modest revival of prosperity in Victoria that followed the end of WWI was sustained into the 1920s. But by 1928, there were signs of an approaching depression. By that time also, the in-

creasing popularity of the motor car meant that the call for saddlers was in serious decline.<sup>40</sup> Presumably these considerations had an influence on Walter's decision to move the family to Horsham in May 1928.

In Horsham, he purchased a controlling interest in the successful general store conducted by Edwards and Co. in Firebrace Street. This business had been started by J. R. Edwards and H. Teague in 1911 when they opened a small shop in the Allan's building.<sup>41</sup> The business developed to become one of the largest and best known in the district, taking over a grocery store run by Messrs. Twidle and Co. in 1924,<sup>42</sup> and moving to their premises in Firebrace Street. The partnership between Edwards and Teague was dissolved in

<sup>37</sup>*Sands & McDougall's directory of Victoria*. Melbourne, Victoria: Sands and McDougall, 1912–1939.

<sup>38</sup>"Division of Ballarat, Victoria". In: *Australian Electoral Rolls* (1914). Australian Electoral Commission.

<sup>39</sup>*Sands & McDougall's directory of Victoria*; "Lost and Found." In: *The Ballarat Courier* (12 June 1914), p. 8. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73305899> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>40</sup>In 1920 there was one car for every 55 people in Australia; by 1929 this had increased to one for every eleven people.

<sup>41</sup>"A Partnership Dissolved". In: *The Horsham Times* (7 Jan. 1927), p. 4. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73081108> (visited on 12/10/2015).

<sup>42</sup>"Business Change." In: *The Horsham Times* (4 Jan. 1924), p. 6. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74520969> (visited on 12/10/2015).

January 1927, the business continuing to trade as Edwards and Co.<sup>43</sup>

On 5 June 1928, an advertisement in the Horsham Times stated:

### **NOTICE**

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We wish to announce to the public of Horsham and District that we have purchased the GROCERY BUSINESS of MESSRS. EDWARDS and CO., Firebrace Street, Horsham. The business will be carried on under the name EDWARDS & CO., and the same staff will be employed, including Messrs. E. J. Edwards and H. Teague.

We trust that the public will accord the same measure of patronage as in the past.

**W. COOK & CO.**<sup>44</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the business began trading under the name W. Cook & Co.

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<sup>43</sup>"A Partnership Dissolved".

<sup>44</sup>"Advertising." In: *The Horsham Times* (5 June 1928), p. 3. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72627487> (visited on 13/11/2013).



**Figure 5:** *Dana Street Primary School No. 33 (Author)*

## 4 Education

### 4.1 Primary School

All of the older Cook children had attended the Dana Street primary school in Ballarat, and Allan was no exception. The school, established in 1857 and still operating, is Ballarat's oldest Government primary school. Allan attended Dana Street from 1920 until 1927. In 1928 he enrolled at the Ballarat High School in Sturt Street, but was there for just three months before the family moved to Horsham.

### 4.2 Horsham High School

From June 1928, Allan attended Horsham High School. The school was founded in 1912 in the buildings previously housing the Working Men's College in Urquhart Street. The school grew quickly and in 1926 opened new buildings designed to house up to 250 students on a new site at the corner of Dimboola



**Figure 6:** *Horsham High School c1930 (SLV).*

Road and Remlaw Road.<sup>45</sup> Today, it is known as the Horsham College.

From all accounts Allan was a bright student who did well at school. In 1928, he sat the examination in Temperance Physiology held by the Independent Order of Rechabites to determine the winners of a scholarship worth £64. While Allan did not obtain the highest marks (or the scholarship), his results were nevertheless quite good.<sup>46</sup>

In 1930, Allan sat for his Intermediate Certificate. His results were excellent. He obtained passes in nine subjects (English, History, Commercial Principles and Practice, Maths, Drawing, Algebra, Geography, Geometry, French).<sup>47</sup> This equalled the best results in the school, and Allan featured in the awards for his class at the High School Speech Night.<sup>48</sup>

With the depression deepening and his father's health deteriorating, Allan, now 15, was required to help in the family business. He did however sit for and pass the examination for the Leaving Certificate in Commercial Principles.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Simone Dalton. *A notable century indeed : snapshot of public secondary education in Horsham 1912 - 2012*. Horsham, Victoria: Horsham College, 2012. URL: [http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/primo\\_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=MAIN&reset\\_config=true&docId=SLV\\_VOYAGER2547662](http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=MAIN&reset_config=true&docId=SLV_VOYAGER2547662) (visited on 24/11/2013).

<sup>46</sup>"Temperance Physiology." In: *The Horsham Times* (19 Oct. 1928), p. 1. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72679299> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>47</sup>A9300, *RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48*.

<sup>48</sup>"High School Speech Night." In: *The Horsham Times* (18 Dec. 1931), p. 6. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72655259> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>49</sup>"Horsham Students' University Successes." In: *The Horsham Times* (12 Jan. 1932), p. 2. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72596934> (visited on 25/01/2015).



**Figure 7:** No. 5 Andrew Street in 2010 (Google).

## 5 Life in Horsham

When the family moved to Horsham, Walter purchased a block of land at 5 Andrew Street, and built a fine family home. Family members recall that the house was built by “an uncle”, perhaps one of Ellen’s brothers. Regardless of who built it, the house was extremely well built, exhibiting workmanship of the very highest order.

Walter and Ellen both worked in the shop. Ellen worked in the drapery area with Nancy, while Walter Jnr. and Grace ran the grocery section. Jean and another woman ran the office. It did not take long for Walter to realise that shopkeeping was not for him. By May 1929, he was advertising his availability as a saddler, with the announcement that “Canvas work will also be undertaken for any class of machine”.<sup>50</sup>

Walter had been in indifferent health since shortly after the move to Horsham and his health now began to deteriorate rapidly, culminating in his being admitted to the Cambrai private hospital in Geelong West. He died there, rather unexpectedly, of “pneumonia and heart failure” on 3 June 1931, aged 61.<sup>51</sup> He

<sup>50</sup>“New Saddlery Business.” In: *The Horsham Times* (), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72608448> (visited on 08/02/2012).

<sup>51</sup>“Death: Walter Cook”. Registration Number 5261. In: *Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages* (1931). Department of Justice, Victoria.



was buried in the Horsham cemetery and remembered at a church service the following Sunday.<sup>52</sup>

Walter's will bequeathed all his household furniture and effects to his wife Ellen. The residue of his estate, which included his interest in the shop, he bequeathed to his six children, to be held in trust for them by his Trustees, his wife Ellen and son Walter, until they reached the age of 21.<sup>53</sup> Probate was granted to Ellen and Walter on 13 July 1931.<sup>54</sup> His estate included the house and land at Webster Street, Ballarat (valued at £550), life policies and shares (£421) and "Debts due to the Estate" amounting to £1557-10-0. The house and land at Andrew Street was held jointly by Walter and Ellen, and therefore passed directly to Ellen.

Allan had joined the staff of the shop when he left school at the end of 1930. He was employed as a delivery boy, and would make deliveries around the town by bicycle. In September 1932, he appeared before the Horsham Police Court charged with riding his bicycle on the footpath in Baillie Street West while delivering orders.<sup>55</sup> The Bench, having admitted that the roads were muddy and in a bad state, fined Allan 2/6.

Allan and his sister Nancy were very close. They were much the same age, and shared a love of parties, dances and balls. Allan would accompany the vivacious Nancy to functions in nearby towns and ensure that she returned home safely.

He was also heavily involved in the life of the town, being active in the Church of England and a number of sporting and service clubs. In 1933, when not yet 19, he was elected as the Secretary and Treasurer of the newly formed Horsham Basketball Association,<sup>56</sup> and he remained active, both playing and as an official, for many years.<sup>57</sup>

He contributed to Horsham's Church of England community in a number of ways: he was a committee member and ultimately a Vice-President of the Men's Society (CEMS);<sup>58</sup> he was a committee member of the Tennis Club;<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>"Dual in Memorium Service." In: *The Horsham Times* (9 Jan. 1931), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72634427> (visited on 02/12/2012).

<sup>53</sup>"Walter Cook: Will". Unit 868. In: *VPPRS 7591/P2: Wills*. (1931). Public Records Office Victoria.

<sup>54</sup>"Walter Cook: Probate".

<sup>55</sup>"Bicycle Riding on Footpaths." In: *The Horsham Times* (9 Sept. 1932), p. 4. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72612148> (visited on 25/01/2015).

<sup>56</sup>"Winter Basketball." In: *The Horsham Times* (31 Mar. 1933), p. 2. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72658795> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>57</sup>See for example: "Basketball." In: *The Horsham Times* (5 July 1938), p. 8. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73180907> (visited on 25/01/2015).

<sup>58</sup>"Horsham C.E.M.S.". In: *The Horsham Times* (15 Dec. 1933), p. 7. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72577783> (visited on 12/11/2013).

<sup>59</sup>"Church of England Club." In: *The Horsham Times* (15 Sept. 1933), p. 5. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72574481> (visited on 12/11/2013).



**Figure 8:** Staff outside Cook's Store in the late 1930s. From left to right: Harold Lehmann, Herb Collins, Duncan McIntyre, Grace Cook, Jack Trounce, Lindsay Page, Jessie Harrison, Jean Cook, Alan Cook and Walter Cook Jnr. (J. Latimer).

and he was elected auditor of the Cricket Club.<sup>60</sup> On the occasion of a visit by the Ballarat Archdeacon, Allan presided at the CEMS meeting in the absence of the vicar.<sup>61</sup> He taught a class in the Sunday School,<sup>62</sup> and was a leader in the Boy's Society.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to a busy social life, Allan regularly played basketball, tennis, football and cricket for CEMS or local town teams. He also tried his hand at golf and carpet bowls. He found time to contribute to the local Apex Club, and

<sup>60</sup>"Cricket: Church of England for A Grade." In: *The Horsham Times* (11 Sept. 1936), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74610208> (visited on 30/01/2015).

<sup>61</sup>"Ballarat Archdeacon's Visit and Address." In: *The Horsham Times* (31 Aug. 1937), p. 4. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72592921> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>62</sup>"Church of England School." In: *The Horsham Times* (6 Nov. 1934), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72640122> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>63</sup>"Boy's Society in Camp." In: *The Horsham Times* (15 Jan. 1935), p. 4. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72616385> (visited on 12/11/2013).



was elected to the portfolio of "Commissariat" in 1936.<sup>64</sup>

Allan had developed an interest in cars and in particular, fast cars. He was involved in at least four accidents involving the car he was driving or in which he was a passenger. The earliest recorded accident was reported by the Horsham Times in February 1934:

**HORSHAM RESIDENTS HAVE  
REMARKABLE ESCAPE**

When the steering failed on a car which they were travelling in near Mansfield on Thursday, Messrs. Alan Cook and George Latimer, both of Horsham, had remarkable escapes from serious injury. The car somersaulted down a 20-foot embankment and was heavily damaged. The two occupants kept their seats, but received severe shaking and bruises. They were fortunate, however, to escape with such light injuries.<sup>65</sup>

George Latimer was later to marry Allan's sister Grace, and appears to have provided Allan with something of a father figure (he was 12 years older than Allan).

Family anecdotes suggest that at some time in the 1930s, Allan became the proud owner of a Buick 'Straight Eight' Coupé. This was a luxury car, with a new price in 1936 of almost £500. Second-hand prices for a 1934 model were still quite high at around £300–£350. This was at a time when £1000–£1500 would buy a six-roomed house in one of the better suburbs of Melbourne. How could have Allan afforded to buy such a car? By 1935, the worst of the depression was over, but unemployment rates were still high. Allan had a steady job with Cook and Co. at the shop, but the economic conditions would have precluded paying him a wage sufficient for such a purchase. According to Maurice Lenton (who was Nancy's husband) Alan was a keen, and successful, punter.<sup>66</sup> Apparently he subscribed to a Melbourne syndicate that provided useful tips. Perhaps the proceeds of his betting went towards the car?

Towards the end of 1938, the Vacuum Oil Company (later to become Mobil) appointed a new manager for the Horsham District. His name was Robert

Talk to John Latimer  
about photo of Allan's  
crashed Buick

<sup>64</sup>"Apex Club Officials." In: *The Horsham Times* (16 Oct. 1936), p. 4. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article74611392> (visited on 25/01/2015).

<sup>65</sup>"Horsham Residents Have Remarkable Escape." In: *The Horsham Times* (20 Feb. 1934), p. 4. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72579975> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>66</sup>Ray Jerrems. *Personal Communication*. 21 Sept. 2014.

(Bob) Iredale. Bob Iredale was to have a significant impact on Allan's life. He shared Allan's love of fast cars. He was a good sportsman, playing tennis at a very high level as well as football.<sup>67</sup> He was a horse racing enthusiast, being elected as the Horsham representative of the Edenhope Racing Club in August 1939.<sup>68</sup> He, like Allan, was an active member of the local Apex Club.

Allan and Bob formed a strong friendship, spending a good deal of time together. It almost led to disaster.

At about 10:00 p.m. on the evening of Tuesday 5 December 1939, they were involved in a serious car accident while returning from Rupanyup. As they approached Murtoa "the steering wheel failed and the car, out of control, swung off the road and completely overturned, finally ending up on its wheels".<sup>69</sup> The car was extensively damaged, but fortunately neither occupant was seriously injured.

Some time after Bob Iredale arrived in Horsham he was joined by his sister Meredith (Merri). It has been suggested that Merri was suffering from tuberculosis and had come to Horsham's warm, dry climate seeking a cure, but I have been unable to find any documentation to support this. Nevertheless, Merri and Allan began a friendship, which was to develop into a romance. Allan helped Merri get a position as the manager a cosmetic salon, a job that she continued for some months.

All in all, I find Allan something of an enigma. On the one hand he was well educated, a stalwart of the Church, a good sportsman and a willing contributor to activities in his local community. An all-round good citizen. On the other hand, he drove about in fast cars, was a very keen punter and enjoyed a full and active social life. He could certainly be described as something of a 'man-about-town' if not a larrikin. There is little doubt, however, that he was now in the prime of his life.

As the end of 1939 approached, Australia found itself in the middle of a phoney war. While Prime Minister Menzies had declared war against Germany on 3 September 1939, there was a total lack of major military operations by the Western Allies against the German Reich. Allan, now aged 25, was in the comfortable position of having a regular job, a full social life and a steady girl friend. What would his future hold?

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<sup>67</sup>"Poorly Attended Meeting of Football Club." In: *The Horsham Times* (24 Oct. 1939), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73143575> (visited on 07/02/2015).

<sup>68</sup>"Edenhope Racing Club's Annual Meeting." In: *The Horsham Times* (29 Aug. 1939), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article73140585> (visited on 07/02/2015).

<sup>69</sup>"Car Overturns; Passengers Escape Injury." In: *The Horsham Times* (8 Dec. 1939), p. 4. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/73144163> (visited on 11/11/2013).

## 6 The Empire Air Training Scheme

The outbreak of war with Germany found Australia completely unprepared. The form and size that its contribution to the Allied effort might take was an unknown quantity. This was particularly true for the RAAF, where for most of the 1920s and 30s, the Air Force's existence had been justified by training and national development rather than contribution to national security. Nevertheless, as noted in the official history of the RAAF:

...based on the British Government's suggestion that an expeditionary force for service in Europe would be welcome, the RAAF Headquarters in Melbourne commenced planning for the creation of the air component. Little more than two weeks later a scheme had been developed for the dispatch of an air contingent of six squadrons, organised in two bomber wings and one fighter wing, a group headquarters and ancillary units. As Australia lacked any modern aircraft, it was expected that Britain would supply machines and other necessary equipment when the force arrived in Europe.<sup>70</sup>

While the RAAF was formalising these plans, the British Government reassessed the form of assistance that the Dominions could provide. The ensuing proposal from the British provided an insight into their disparaging (but probably correct) assessment of the operational capabilities of Dominion air forces.

Historians now agree that English aviation remained hopelessly underdeveloped in the inter-war years, so that when war broke out, Britain was seriously under prepared. Having ignoring the many advances in aviation technology, Britain now failed to match German rearmament in the air. Urgent action was required to redress Britain's alarming vulnerability to German air power. The solution to the problem of providing men and machines and coordinating a large technical organisation was found in the creation of the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS).<sup>71</sup>

The genesis of EATS can be found in inconclusive discussions held in London in 1936 on the possibility of creating an Empire-wide air training scheme. Proposals from this conference were rejected by the 1937 Imperial Conference.<sup>72</sup> Further discussions in early September 1939 led to a proposal from Britain to the Canadian, Australian and New Zealand governments to form an Empire Air Force. The major objective was the training of 50,000 air crew each

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<sup>70</sup>*The Australian Experience of Air Power.*

<sup>71</sup>In Canada, the scheme was always referred to as the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), reflecting the different attitude towards "the Empire" extant in Canada.

<sup>72</sup>Imperial Conferences were periodic gatherings of government leaders from the self-governing colonies and dominions of the British Empire between 1887 and 1937, before the establishment of regular Meetings of Commonwealth Prime Ministers in 1944.

year. It was estimated that Britain could provide only four-ninths of this total, the remaining five-ninths needing to be found from the three Dominions.

A conference was held at Ottawa, Canada in October 1939, to discuss the proposal. After several weeks of bargaining, an agreement was signed on 17 December 1939. Under its provisions, airmen from Canada, Australia and New Zealand would receive their basic training at home. For the Australians, 2/9 would undertake advanced courses in Canada and a lesser proportion in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), while the remainder completed their training in Australia. The majority were then to be sent to the UK to complete their operational training and ultimately for service with the RAF. The Australian Government agreed initially to provide 28,000 men to EATS over three years (978 aircrew every four weeks). This represented 36 per cent of the total of aircrew to be trained under the scheme in that period.

As noted in *The Australian Experience of Air Power*,<sup>73</sup> this presented an incredible logistical challenge for the RAAF:

At the start of World War II, the RAAF had only 27 flying instructors and a total of 200 aircraft. To meet its EATS commitment, the Service underwent a seven-fold increase in aircraft strength, an eleven-fold increase in total manpower and established more than 40 schools in air navigation, bombing and gunnery, flying, and technical training for ground staff.

Given the difficulty of expanding their training programs quickly, the RAAF, were unable to absorb anything like the number of men volunteering for service. Yet the RAAF was still obliged to engage in a full-scale recruiting campaign. Posters such as that in Figure 9 appeared across the country. The Minister for Air, Mr. James Fairbairn, observed in an answer to a question in Parliament:

With regard to air crews, the problem is rather the reverse to the fitter problem, but it is equally important. Here the problem is to persuade men who have the qualifications and the inclination to serve as air crews to be patient until such time as it is possible for them to be taken in for training. If we could take all who wished to serve into training, immediately, I have no doubt that we could get the 30,000 men who will be required during the first three years of the scheme to come forward within a few weeks; but owing to the fact that there is already a waiting list of more than 2,500 who have been selected, and another list of some thousands awaiting selection, many are apt to become so impatient and disheartened by the delay that they enlist to serve in some other capacity. If some thousands should do this the result will be disastrous, as the 30,000

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<sup>73</sup>*The Australian Experience of Air Power.*



**Figure 9:** RAAF Recruiting Poster, c. 1940 (AWM).

men needed to undergo training within three years must approach the Commonwealth's capacity of young men who have both the qualifications and the inclination to serve as air crew, and there may well be difficulty later in getting a sufficient number of men of the type required.<sup>74</sup>



**Figure 10:** RAAF Reserve Lapel Badge (Tamora Aviation Museum).

As this problem became more sharply defined, a very practical, if incomplete, answer was provided by the Air Member for Personnel, Air Commodore Russell, who recommended in February 1940 that men enlisted should be placed in a RAAF reserve, given a special badge to wear, and provided with pre-entry instruction. In this way the Air Force attempted, with appreciable success, to maintain the interest of those enlisted but not called up, and at the same time to attract new recruits.

The creation of EATS was a truly remarkable feat of co-operation within the British Empire, and was justly considered to be fine example of what could be achieved. In its early days, the scheme was held in extremely high esteem, Prime Minister Menzies describing it as "... the most spectacular demonstration of Empire co-operation that the war has produced".<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup>J.V. Fairbairn. "Answer to Question". In: *Australia, Debates, House of Representatives* (10 May 1940). URL: <http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id:%22hansard80/hansardr80/1940-05-10/0072%22> (visited on 14/07/2014).

<sup>75</sup>Robert Menzies. *Broadcast: Empire Air Training Scheme. Australia Plays Her Part*. 11 Oct. 1939.

## 7 Enlistment

Why did so many men volunteer for duty as aircrew? There were probably as many reasons as there were volunteers: duty and patriotism; the chance to travel; the novelty, adventure and glamour of flying. The men of 1939 had grown up with First World War stories of aces dog fighting in their wire and fabric aircraft over the Western Front. The pioneer aviators, Ross and Keith Smith, Bert Hinkler, and Kingsford Smith and the travelling barnstormers kept the spirit of adventure alive through the 1920s and 1930s. And they had grown up on the exploits of fictitious heroes: Captain James Bigglesworth, ex-Royal Flying Corps, had flown his Sopwith Camel through the first Biggles volume in 1932 and there were another 14 Biggles volumes published before 1939.<sup>76</sup>

But there were additional reasons for wanting to join up as aircrew: they had heard too many of their fathers and uncles telling them to keep out of the trenches. Airmen, the old diggers said, had less mud, and no bayonets. They also enjoyed hot meals and warm beds at airfields beyond the range of artillery. The young men of the early 1940s were a generation much more cynical about war propaganda than their fathers had been, much less inclined to “flock to the colours”. But they did flock to the Air Force, because there you could be paid to learn to fly.



**Figure 11:** Robert Iredale.

Allan would have been influenced by all of these considerations, but perhaps the biggest influence might have been the intention of his mate Bob Iredale to join the RAAF. Bob applied to join the RAAF as aircrew in mid-May 1940. Allan quickly followed suit, applying to join on 21 May.

By the end of March 1940, 11,550 men had applied to join the RAAF as aircrew, and less than one in five had been selected. Given the demand, the selecting officers could afford to be very discriminating. Those chosen were likely to have been sportsmen, had probably been captain of a team, were educated well above the average level, had an air of confidence, spoke fluently and indicated some interest in flying—or at least in motor cars or motor bicycles. In 1940, 92% of aircrew graduating from EATS had four years or more of

secondary education. At that time, such a qualification was much less common than a degree is today. Allan would have scored well in all of these areas, but there was one that definitely counted against him: his age. Australian airmen were likely to be no more than 22 or 23 when recruited. Nelson observes that:

... in the training schools the youngest did better even than those

<sup>76</sup>*Biggles*. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Biggles> (visited on 27/01/2015).

aged 23, and much better than those aged 27.<sup>77</sup>

Allan must have impressed the selection panel as outstanding on the other criteria to make up for his age (26) for he was selected and, having passed the stringent aircrew medical examination, joined the RAAF Reserve as Number R4665, completing the formalities at the RAAF office in Wendouree Parade, Ballarat on 29 May 1940.

For most potential aircrew, the time spent as reservists amounted to many months. This time was not wasted however. They were required to undertake the 'Twenty-one Lessons', a course of training in mathematics, basic physics, and navigation designed to bring the recruits, especially those who had been out of school for some time, up to the required level. Instruction was carried out by 1,300 voluntary tutors in 313 centres throughout Australia, under the supervision of an RAAF education officer in each state. Additionally, reservists had to learn the Morse code.

After what must have seemed an extraordinarily long time, Allan was called up and attended the No. 1 Recruiting Centre in Ascot Vale, Victoria on 13 October 1940 where he joined the RAAF as an Aircraftman Second Class (AC2) with the Service Number 400696.<sup>78</sup> On joining the RAAF, he attested that:

I swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord and King in the Air Force of the Commonwealth of Australia for the term of the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed or removed; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will, in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

SO HELP ME GOD<sup>79</sup>

Immediately following his appointment, Allan was posted to No. 2 Initial Training School (ITS), Bradfield Park, NSW.

### 7.1 Initial Training at Bradfield Park

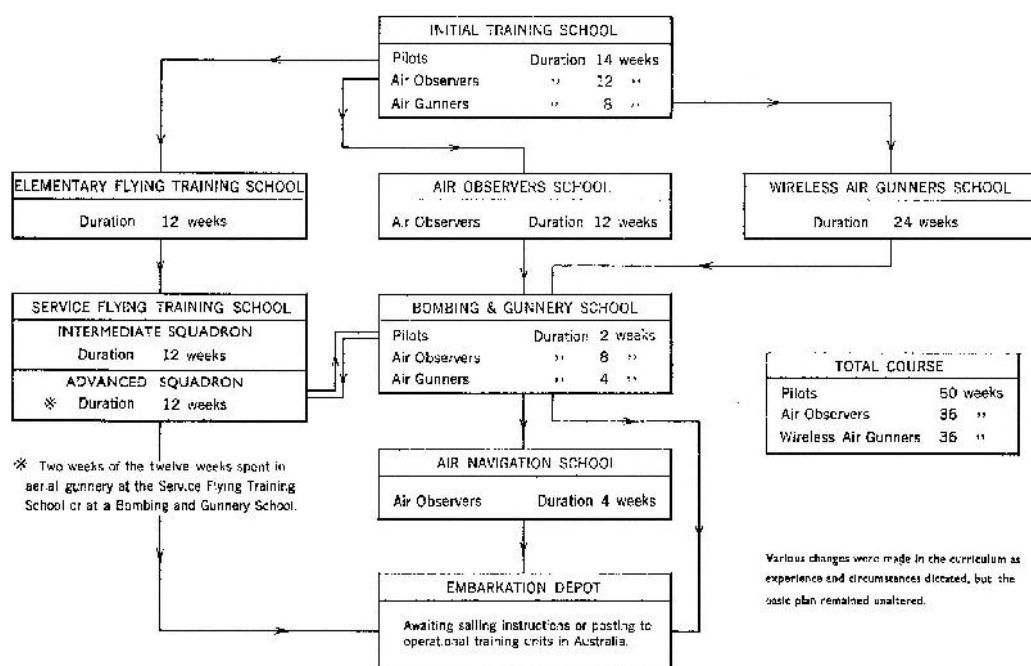
It was the job of the ITS to indoctrinate the new recruits into Air Force life. Instruction lasted for ten weeks and covered a wide range, from basic drill,

<sup>77</sup>Hank Nelson. "A different war: Australians in Bomber Command". In: 2003 History Conference - Air War Europe. (Telstra Theatre, Australian War Memorial, 15 Nov. 2003). Canberra, Australia: Australian War Memorial. URL: <http://www.awm.gov.au/events/conference/2003/nelson/> (visited on 03/04/2014).

<sup>78</sup>RAAF Service Numbers were allocated starting from 400,000 with blocks of numbers allocated to each State.

<sup>79</sup>A9300, RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48.





**Figure 12:** EATS Curriculum 1940-41 (AWM).

aptitude tests and physical training to classes on mathematics, physics, navigation, armament, air force law and organisation, defence against gas, meteorology, signals, health and hygiene, and aircraft recognition. Recruits ran between classes, and saw no actual aeroplanes at all.

Allan arrived at Bradfield Park on 14 October, one of the 180 recruits that made up Course 7. He was issued with his 'Best Blue', the formal air force tunic and trousers, and his 'goonskin', the baggy overalls that were worn by the trainees throughout the day.

Days began with physical training and drill. The physical training for Course 7 was provided by Gerald Backhouse who had represented Australia at the 1936 Olympics in the 800 m and 1500 m. The remainder of the day was filled with theory classes, a typical day consisting of:

0700-0730	Breakfast
0730-0800	Parade
0800-1200	Lectures
1200-1300	Lunch
1300-1700	Lectures
1700-1800	Tea

and whenever the trainees had time off from formal classes, they were expected to study.

There was considerable pressure on the trainees to perform well. At the end of their initial training a Category Review Board placed all recruits into one of two streams: those who were ineligible to be pilots were categorised as observer (navigator), bomb-aimer, wireless operator or air gunner and sent the appropriate school; the remainder were categorised as 'PNBW Trainee' (pilot, navigator, bomb-aimer, wireless operator trainee) and were sent to an elementary flying training school (EFTS). As indicated by the name, categorisation as a PNBW Trainee was no guarantee of becoming a pilot; it was just the first of many steps along a long road.

The vast majority of EATS recruits wanted to be pilots, preferably fighter pilots. Everyone understood the order of merit. Pilots were the glamorous 'knights of the air', while navigators were regarded as the 'brains' of a multi-crew aircraft. In contrast, wireless operators and air gunners were considered to be distinctly second best, and many trainees were bitterly disappointed when they found themselves consigned to these categories.

The coveted rating as PNBW Trainee could be lost for any number of reasons. As Leslie Jubbs remembers:

A drill instructor Corporal duly introduced us to the mysteries of folding up blankets and straw mattress and assembling any other pieces of equipment that was needed for the daily inspection. Woe and behold any one who did not meet the standard that was expected. It was quietly introduced [into] our vocabulary that you could be 'scrubbed' from Air Crew for hinted at misdemeanours. This threat was to be held over us throughout all our training.<sup>80</sup>

Allan managed to impress the Category Review Board, and was categorised as a PNBW Trainee. On 7 December 1940 he was promoted to Leading Aircraftman (LAC) with an accompanying almost doubling of his pay, from 6/6 (\$0.65) to 10/6 (\$1.05) per day. After a week's leave, Allan was posted to No. 5 EFTS, Narromine, NSW. Leave between schools was known, inevitably, as 'inter-course leave'.

## 7.2 Flying Training at Narromine

No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School was formed at Narromine, NSW, on 30 June 1940.<sup>81</sup> It grew very quickly and by the end of December 1940 it had almost 500 on strength. At first, facilities at the school were rudimentary.

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<sup>80</sup>Leslie R. Jubbs. *The Un-wanted Bomber Pilot. A Personal Memoir of my early days, and the Royal Australian Air Force Pilot Period.* 2008. URL: <http://www.futurepd.org/les/Documents/Unwanted%20Pilot.pdf> (visited on 25/11/2013).

<sup>81</sup>*Units of the RAAF. Volume 8 - Training Units.* Canberra, Australia: Australian War Memorial, 1995. URL: [https://www.awm.gov.au/histories/second\\_world\\_war/AWMOHWW2/Air/Vol13/](https://www.awm.gov.au/histories/second_world_war/AWMOHWW2/Air/Vol13/) (visited on 10/02/2014).



**Figure 13:** RAAF Narromine in the Early 1940s (Narromine RAAF Museum).

All runways were grass, and flying was general conducted either early (4:30–7:30 a.m.) or after 4:00 p.m. to avoid the strong winds during the middle of the day. Living conditions were “bleak and depressing”, with the cold weather producing a heavy incidence of influenza. Heat and dust storms were a problem in summer, the dust insinuating itself into everything inside the unlined huts. The conditions at the base were of some concern to the Medical Officer who included in his report for January 1941:

In the third week an outbreak of mild gastro enteritis occurred and is continuing. Fourteen cases were seen during the month and the number appears to be increasing. The outbreak of gastro enteritis coincided with a sudden and marked increase in the number of houseflies. As the cookhouses are not yet fly-proofed, it is not possible to keep flies completely away from the food. Inspections have been made by the Medical Officer with the Barracks Officer to ensure that there is minimum exposure of food to flies before it reaches the tables. Net covers are being provided to cover food exposed on the mess tables. All personnel on the unit are being circularised with

information as to the mode of spread of the infection and the precautions to be observed to limit this as the possibility should not be great.<sup>82</sup>

The following month, he reported that:

The average number of personnel per day attending Sick Parade was 15. This is an increase of 3 per day over JANUARY, and is due to the number of cases of Gastro-enteritis. Net fly-covers for food have now been provided and are in use. The epidemic of Gastro-enteritis, which commenced at the end of January, was concentrated in the first two weeks of FEBRUARY. Altogether, 43 cases were seen in the month. The disease ran a short and mild course in nearly all cases, and no case was seriously ill. Most persons affected were off duty for one day only.

In the Operations Record Book for the month of December, the Commanding Officer reported that No. 5 EFTS was suffering from shortages in Link Trainers (one in place, another required), parachutes (47 held, 49 more required), headphones for wireless telegraphy instruction (32 required) and blind flying hoods (seven more required). He also reported deficiencies in the barracks in the areas of "cool chambers, fly blinds, hut linings, tennis courts and a gymnasium", all of which were urgently required. In particular, "All huts need lining badly to counteract the heavy dust conditions. This has been represented for a considerable time. All huts need fly wire fittings to doors and windows".

It was in this, rather grim, environment that Allan and the remnants of Course 7, now reduced to just 60 potential pilots, began their elementary flying training on 12 December 1940. They were joined by six others whose training programs had been disrupted by injury or sickness, three from Course 5 and three from Course 6.

Their first month was spent in lectures, covering many new topics including the Theory of Flight, airmanship, navigation, aerodrome layout, airframes and engines and aircraft recognition. Proficiency in Morse code was developed using both sound and the Aldis lamp. Most importantly, the trainees were issued with their flying gear: leather helmet; MKIV goggles; leather gauntlets; 'Sudcot' flying suit; and flying boots, and undertook about 10 hours of flying training in Tiger Moths.

The Tiger Moth II, or DH.82A, designed by Geoffrey De Havilland, was selected as the basic trainer for EATS and the first RAAF aircraft, A17-1, was

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<sup>82</sup>A9186, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Elementary Flying Training School 1 to 7. Control Symbol: 375, Barcode: 1359940. Jan. 1939-Aug. 1945. URL: <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=1359940&isAv=N> (visited on 14/11/2014).



**Figure 14:** *Tiger Moths at an Elementary Flying Training School (AWM).*

delivered in May 1940.<sup>83</sup> The Tiger Moth is a two-seat elementary training aircraft. It is of composite wood and metal construction with a fabric covering. In Australia, the local de Havilland Company built 1,085 Tiger Moths of which 732 were delivered to the RAAF and the remainder were shipped overseas to other training schools. As well as acquiring a number of RAF-serialled Tiger Moths, the RAAF also impressed 21 civilian versions. Altogether 861 Tiger Moths appeared on the RAAF register.

The Tiger Moth proved to be an ideal trainer, simple and cheap to own and maintain, although control movements required a positive and sure hand as there was a slowness to react to control inputs. Some instructors preferred these flight characteristics as they quickly showed up the inept student.

Students at an EFTS were expected to attain their first solo flight within an initial 10 hours of flying. For Allan's course, the average flying time before first solo was  $9\frac{3}{4}$  hours.<sup>84</sup> Going solo was a very big occasion for these new pilots. It

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<sup>83</sup>Each aircraft in the RAAF is allocated a unique identity or tail number of the form A17-1. The A indicates an aircraft (in the RAAF vocabulary of stores), 17 is the number assigned to the type of aircraft, and the -1 indicates the individual aircraft's position in the sequence of aircraft of that type.

<sup>84</sup>A9186, *RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Elementary Flying Training School 1 to 7.*

was often also more than a little scary! John Boland (61 Squadron) remembers his first solo flight:

So when I had 5 hours instruction up, I got in the aircraft and did a circuit and the instructor got out of the front seat, took the pilot stick out and said, "Righto, take it around again" and I got the shock of my life. I got that big a shock, that when I come around to land, I was that nervous, the instructor had confidence that I could land it, and as I come in to touch down the tail hit the ground first and it bounced.<sup>85</sup>

After a successful solo flight, training continued with some new aspect being introduced almost every day. Engine failure was a constant threat, so forced landings were practised in every conceivable circumstance. Spinning and spin recovery were next, followed by cross-country flying and aerobatics, including stall turns and slow rolls. All these were first practised under the guidance of an instructor before the trainee was sent off to repeat the same manoeuvres on his own. The exception was low flying, which was conducted in a special area, and always accompanied by an instructor.

Ground-based lectures continued every day—over 100 hours in total for the course. Map reading skills, essential for cross-country flying, required plenty of concentrated effort along with considerable pre-flight planning and plotting. The trainees only time off was half a day on Sunday. However, David Evans remembered his time at Narromine:<sup>86</sup>

That is not to say that life was all despondency. We did enjoy the comradeship that was ever present amongst the students. We did go into the town, a 20-minute walk, on a Friday night and on Saturday. There was the open-air movie theatre, a dance on Saturday nights and the Greek milk bar for a steak and eggs.<sup>87</sup>

In preparation for the next step, night flying, the trainees spent time in a Link Trainer, a device created to provide a safe way of teaching new pilots how to fly 'blind', using instruments alone. After entering the Link Trainer, a large hood was brought down, completely enveloping the pilot. The controls in the Trainer were connected to a desk at which an instructor could view and chart the movements of the student and communicate via a headset.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>85</sup>Adam Purcell. *Something Very Big. The Search for the Story of Lancaster B for Baker*. 2010. URL: <http://somethingverybig.com/> (visited on 29/07/2014).

<sup>86</sup>David Evans was later to become Air Marshal D. S. Evans, AC, DSO, AFC, Chief of the Air Staff (RAAF)

<sup>87</sup>D. S. Evans. *Down to Earth. The autobiography of Air Marshal David Evans, AC, DSO, AFC*. Canberra, ACT: RAAF Air Power Development Centre, 2011. ISBN: 9781920800598. URL: <http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/admin/productfiles/publication/materials/439/down%20to%20earth.pdf> (visited on 04/08/2014).

<sup>88</sup>The RAAF aircraft type number A13 was allocated to the Link Trainer, supposedly to avoid problems with a flying type carrying the 'unlucky' number 13.



**Figure 15:** A Link Trainer at No. 19 EFTS in Canada (Collections Canada).

Leslie Jubbs described his first experience of night flying:

No flood lights were used for night flying. A primitive kerosene lamp, shaped like a garden watering can, with a wick shoved into the pouring spout was lit and gave off a smouldering feeble flame that just managed to illuminate a small circle of the ground. A number of these 'lights' were set out in the form of a 'T'. All that could be seen from the air was this line of faint light that told us where Mother Earth was because you certainly could not see it.<sup>89</sup>

By the end of the eight week course, Allan had completed 25 hours of dual and 25 hours of solo flying. Of the dual hours, 5 hours were spent under instrument flying conditions.<sup>90</sup> He had also spent 4.3 hours in the Link Trainer. To get to this stage, Allan must have successfully passed one test at the end of the first month, and another after 20 hours of flying. He was now faced with

<sup>89</sup>Jubbs, *The Un-wanted Bomber Pilot*.

<sup>90</sup>A9186, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Elementary Flying Training School 1 to 7.

the ultimate test, his final assessment by the Flight Commander. For this test the examining officer:

... expected the students to be able to carry out all normal aircraft manoeuvres 'confidently and satisfactorily', to land consistently well, to fly by the aid of instruments alone, and to complete a cross-country flight designed to test his skill in map reading and navigation.<sup>91</sup>

In other words, to demonstrate that they were competent, if inexperienced, pilots.

The standard of the trainees in Course 7 was quite high. In his February report, the Commanding Officer noted that:

It is gratifying to note that the general standard of air crew selected for flying training is still being maintained at a high level and equal in every way to pilot trainees who entered elementary flying training school last April.<sup>92</sup>

Their average score for examinations in ground subjects was 81.6%, the highest average since Course 1, who averaged 83.1%. Allan was among the 53 trainees who successfully graduated on 6 February 1941. He graduated 20th in the class, with a ground subject examination average of 86.8%, well above the average. (Middleton did somewhat better in 14th place, with an average examination score of 87.3%.) Thirteen trainees did not complete the course. They found themselves:<sup>93</sup>

Repeating the course	3
Re-mustering to observer or WAG	9
Discharged	1
Total	13
Total entering Course 7	66
Percent wastage	19.7

This was typical of EFTS courses at that time. Up until the end of 1940, total wastage from all EFTSs in Australia was due to:<sup>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup>F.J. Hatch. *Aerodrome of Democracy. Canada and the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan 1939-1945*. Ottawa, Canada: Directorate of History, Department of National Defence, 1983. ISBN: 0-660-11443-7.

<sup>92</sup>A9186, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Elementary Flying Training School 1 to 7.

<sup>93</sup>A9186, RAAF Unit History sheets (Form A50) [Operations Record Book - Forms A50 and A51] Elementary Flying Training School 1 to 7.

<sup>94</sup>AA1966/5 Records collected by the Historical Section of the Department of Air. *National Archives of Australia*. Dec. 1940. URL: <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/SearchNRRetrieve/Interface/DetailsReports/ItemDetail.aspx?Barcode=1351357&isAv=N> (visited on 02/09/2014).



Deaths	6
Repeating the course	80
Re-mustering to observer	150
Re-mustering to WAG	13
Re-mustering to ground crew	5
Discharge	30
Total	284
Total entering EFTS	1321
Percent wastage	21.3

Of those who did pass, four were headed for Service Flying Training Schools (SFTS) in Australia, while the remaining 49, including Allan and Middleton, were bound for No. 1 SFTS in Ontario, Canada, where they would continue their training as pilots.

Before heading for Canada, the trainees were granted a week's leave. Allan chose to spend the time with his family in Horsham. While there, he was presented with a wallet bearing the seal of the Horsham Town Council (and containing a little cash).<sup>95</sup> He also announced his engagement to Miss Meridith Iredale.<sup>96</sup>

### 7.3 Canada

On 22 February 1941 Allan reported to No. 2 Embarkation Depot, Bradfield Park, NSW. The following day, they were taken by bus to the docks, where at 11:15 a.m. they boarded the TSS *Awatea*. In the late 1930s, this elegant trans-Tasman liner was the fastest and most luxurious merchant ship in the Southern Hemisphere.

TSS (Turbine Steam Ship) *Awatea* was a ship of 13,492 tons built for the trans-Tasman route between Sydney and Auckland/Wellington.<sup>97</sup> She was built by Vickers-Armstrong in Barrow-on-Furness for the Union Steam Ship Company and had a cruising speed of 22 knots and a maximum speed of 26 knots. She was completed in July 1936 and entered trans-Tasman service in September of that year. She carried 151 First Class, 151 Tourist Class and 38 Third Class passengers whose needs were tended to by a crew of 242. Her captain, A.H. Davey was the father of Jack Davey, the popular post-war comedian, entertainer and quiz show host.

<sup>95</sup>"Personal." In: *The Horsham Times* (14 Feb. 1941), p. 2. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72689273> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>96</sup>"Reported Missing." In: *The Horsham Times* (21 Nov. 1941), p. 1. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72697430> (visited on 14/07/2013).

<sup>97</sup>M. L. Grace. *Cruise Ship History - T.S.S. Awatea*. Cruising the Past, California, USA. URL: <http://cruiselinehistory.com/cruise-ship-history-%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%93union-steam%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%99s-luxurious-tss-awatea-was-the-%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%93only-way-to-cross%C3%A2%C2%80%C2%9D-the-tasman-sea-from-australia-to-new-zealand-in-the-late-1930s/> (visited on 19/06/2013).



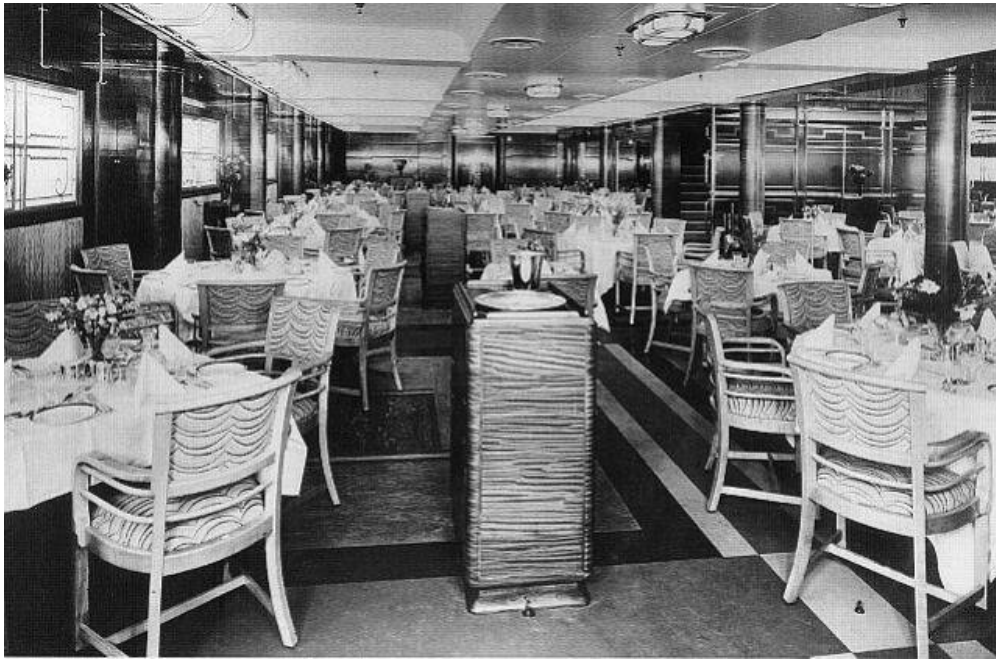
**Figure 16:** *EATS Airmen Marching to the Awatea (AWM).*

*Awatea* was commandeered by the government to take over the Pacific service, sailing from Sydney, via Auckland, Suva (Fiji) and Hawaii to Vancouver Canada. She departed on her first voyage to Canada on 10 September 1940 carrying the first tranche of Australian and New Zealand airmen bound for advanced EATS training in Canada.

As the complete civilian crew of the *Awatea* had elected to stay on board, conditions would have been very different from those experienced in the rough and ready service quarters at the training camps. Even third class cabins would have seemed luxurious by comparison. The dining rooms were the height of elegance, even if the food itself was not quite up to the standards expected on a trans-Tasman crossing.

The cruiser HMAS *Hobart* escorted the *Awatea* on its three day voyage to Auckland, where they picked up trainees from the RNZAF. When they sailed from, Auckland on 27 February, the armed merchant ship RNZS *Monowai* took over escort duties. They arrived in Suva, Fiji at 9:30 a.m. on 2 March and left the next day, now with the Canadian frigate HMCS *Prince Rupert* as escort. Finally, after 23 days at sea, they reached Vancouver at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday 16 March 1941.

Officially, the trainee pilots had been attached to the RCAF from the time



**Figure 17:** *The Elegant 1st Class Dining Room on Awatea (Cruising the Past).*

that they boarded the *Awatea*. Now, having arrived in Canada, this became significant as the RCAF was fully responsible for their movements, their upkeep and their discipline. Following a march across the city, they departed Vancouver by train at 10:00 p.m. on the same day that they arrived.

They travelled across the Rocky Mountains all that night and much of the following day, arriving at Jasper at 5:00 p.m. on 17 March. A quick stop in Calgary to deposit trainees attending courses in that area was followed by a long trip across the prairies to Winnipeg. While not quite the depths of winter, the whole trip was through snow covered countryside with outside temperatures down to  $-4^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $20^{\circ}\text{C}$ )—more than a little different from the conditions they had left at Narromine in high summer! According to Middleton, the food on the train was very good while the toilet facilities were primitive.<sup>98</sup>

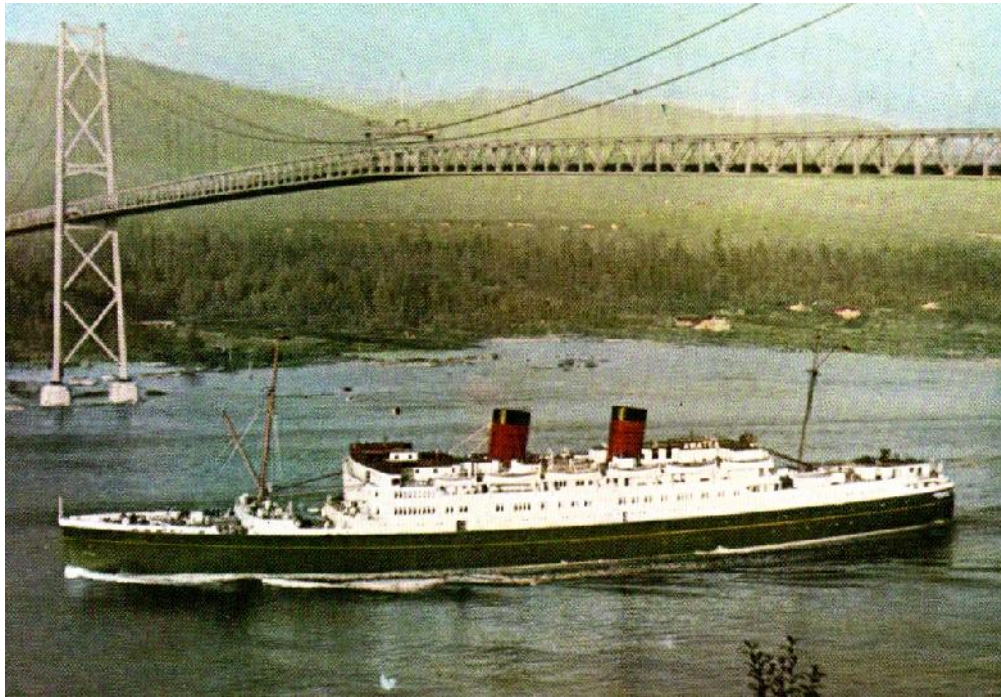
They arrived at North Bay at 9:00 a.m. on 20 March and finally arrived at NO. 1 SFTS, Camp Borden at 6:00 p.m. The following day, they were issued with gloves and an overcoat!

## 7.4 Camp Borden

At the completion of elementary training, students who were to continue their training in Canada were divided into two groups. Those recommended as potential fighter pilots were posted to a service school equipped with *Harvards*

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<sup>98</sup>Bill, Middleton VC.



**Figure 18:** TSS Awatea Passing Under Lions Gate Bridge, Vancouver (*Cruising the Past*).

while the others, better oriented towards bomber, coastal, or transport operations, would move on to twin-engine schools and learn to fly *Ansons*, or *Cranes*. Personal preference was taken into consideration in making this selection, but as most students, inspired by the exploits of the flying aces of the First World War and the heroes of the Battle of Britain, opted for the fighter role, service requirements became the overriding determinant. In 1941 when *Harvards* were relatively plentiful and *Ansons* were scarce, most pilots were necessarily receiving their training on the single-engine types. Given the increasing losses in Bomber Command, many bomber pilots reached the operational training units in the United Kingdom without any experience flying a twin-engined aircraft. Regardless of whether they had been recommended for fighters or bombers, everyone on Allan's EFTS Course who had passed the final assessment found themselves at Camp Borden where they would continue their training on *Harvards* and *Yales*.

Camp Borden is located in the Province of Ontario in the middle of Canada, quite close to Lake Huron. In 1941 it was quite remote from the civilian population, the nearest town, Barrie, being about 15 miles (25 km) away. Toronto was the closest city, about 50 miles (85 km) to the south-east. Although primarily an Army base, home to several thousand Army personnel, Camp Borden had been used for flying training since the early days of the First World War,



**Figure 19:** Double bunks like those found at Camp Borden (*Canadian Military History*).

25 years before. Camp Borden was selected in 1917 as a military aerodrome, becoming the first flying station of the Royal Flying Corps of Canada. During the inter-war period, the aerodrome was used as the training location for the nascent Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) and was renamed RCAF Station Borden. By 1924 it had become the largest air station in Canada.

It is interesting to note the differing reactions to the facilities provided at Camp Borden. Middleton remembers “facilities of a high standard and food much better than in Australia”,<sup>99</sup> while Canadian Bill McRae, who was at Camp Borden in the Course before Allan’s remembers:

... we were housed in ancient WWI barracks, taking our meals in an equally ancient mess hall in which cockroaches outnumbered diners ten to one.<sup>100</sup>

This reflects the quality of the facilities provided at EFTSs in each country. EFTSs in Canada were run by civilian flying clubs, who also provided the instructors. This lead one Canadian to observe that:

... life in the relaxed civilian atmosphere of the elementary schools had been almost ideal, free from drills and continued parade ground

<sup>99</sup>Bill, *Middleton VC*.

<sup>100</sup>Bill McRae. “Bed and Breakfast. A Canadian Airman Reflects on Food and Quarters During the Second World War”. In: *Canadian Military History* 9.1 (2000), pp. 60–70.



**Figure 20:** *Aerial View of Camp Borden, 1941 (AWM).*

discipline. . . The food was fine and there was always pleasant young female help in the mess hall. The service schools on the other hand were strictly air force and all business. They seemed to be alive with Flight Sergeants always on the look-out for a student pilot in need of a haircut, having his hands in his pockets or sneaking into the mess minus his hat or with his tunic undone.<sup>101</sup>

Dr Bill Adey (one of the RAAF members of Course 24) reflected on his time at Camp Borden:

Toronto was the nearest large town and the trainees would tend to take their leave there, staying at the Royal York Hotel. We used to get at least a day off each week and sometimes two days—we were treated very well in Canada really. We would take the bus down to Toronto and it would be dwarfed by the great mounds of snow heaped up on both sides of the road, often to a height of twenty feet. The huts were a great improvement on those at Narromine and in every hut there was a huge stove to keep the place warm. It was very cold outside of course but not nearly as cold in the huts. At the start of our training we were landing on snow but later on we landed on runways although snow was stacked along both sides to a height

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<sup>101</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.





**Figure 21:** A Harvard cockpit (Canadian Department of Notional Defence).

of ten or twelve feet. Because of the conditions many of the aircraft would spin sideways during landings.<sup>102</sup>

The 52 trainee pilots that made up Course 24 at No. 1 SFTS Camp Borden consisted of 40 Australians, all of whom had completed their elementary flying training at No. 2 EFTS Narromine, and 12 Canadians (see Appendix B for a list of the names of the Australian members and Appendix C for the Canadian members). Each course lasted for two months, and a new course started every three or four weeks. Hence there were always multiple courses in progress, each at different stages in the program. While Course 24 was beginning their training, Course 20 was about to graduate while Course 22 were well into the training program.

Course 24 began, as did all Courses, back in the classroom. For the first month, they received lectures every day covering navigation, meteorology and many of the other subjects studied at EFTS, but now at a more advanced level. Continued practice in Morse code was required to meet the mandatory standard of receiving 12 words per minute in code and 5 words per minute by Aldis signal lamp. There were also a range of new subjects, including the study of the layout of the *Harvard* cockpit.

To the uninitiated, a *Harvard* cockpit was “a hopeless collection of black faced dials and toggle switches”. Len Morgan, an American airman trained as part of the BCAPT in Canada recalled:

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<sup>102</sup>Bill, Middleton VC.



**Figure 22:** *Harvards and Yales on the Apron at Cape Borden: Course 26 Wings Presentation, 3 July 1941 (AWM).*

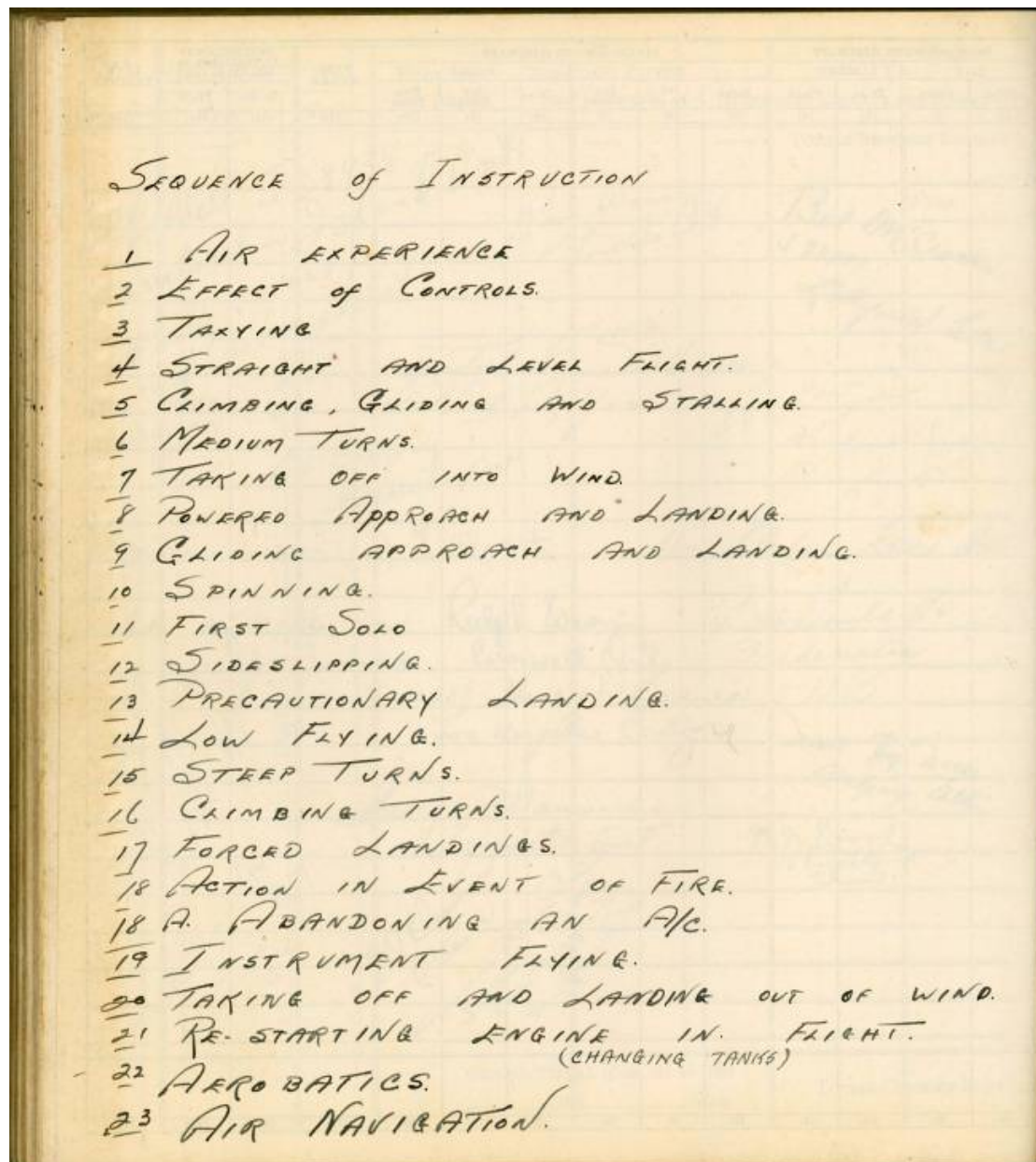
Climbing up on the left wing we peered into the open front cockpit and caught our breath. The wide spaces on each side of the aluminium seat were crammed with handles, wheels and levers of all shapes, sizes and mysterious uses. The broad instrument panel contained a hopeless confusion of black-faced dials and toggle switches. More handles protruded from beneath the instruments and between the big rudder pedals.<sup>103</sup>

But having mastered the *Harvard*, a pilot would feel at home in almost any other fighter aircraft; he would find pretty much the same instruments in much the same location.

From the training point of view the *Harvard* was considered to be an excellent investment. With a fairly high wing loading (21.5 pounds per square foot) and consequently a relatively high landing speed, the Harvard required from the pupil something of the same skill he would later require in handling operational aircraft. It was fully aerobatic, not too easily controlled and sufficiently

<sup>103</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.





**Figure 23:** The Sequence of Instructions Employed at Canadian SFTSs in 1941.

rugged to endure the heavy loadings and rough landings frequently imposed upon it by student pilots. The chief hazard in flying the *Harvard* was its tendency to ground-loop caused apparently by a combination of the particular design of the tail wheel and a high centre of gravity.<sup>104</sup> The *Yale* was a fixed undercarriage, lower powered, lighter weight version of the *Harvard*. Both the *Yale* (NA-64) and *Harvard* (NA-61) in service with the RCAF evolved from the North American Aviation NA-16, which was first flown in 1935.

Ground-based lectures were held every day of the week except Sundays and Easter Friday. After three weeks of lectures followed by two days of examinations, flying finally began. It followed the by now familiar routine in which a new skill or manoeuvre was first demonstrated by the instructor while flying dual. Having shown his proficiency, the trainee pilot was then sent off on his own to practice and perfect the new skill. The process began, of course, with the new pilots demonstrating to their instructors that they were competent to fly each new aircraft type solo. This usually took about four hours of dual instruction and covered the first ten items in the sequence of instruction list shown in Figure 23.

Most of Allan's course were flying solo by the last weeks of April. They then worked their way through the remaining items of the Sequence of Instruction, followed by cross-country and night flying exercises. While the individual steps were by now quite familiar, their application to the heavier, higher-powered *Harvard* with its increased complexity and capability was still quite challenging. Murray Peden of Winnipeg recalled:

At SFTS the emphasis . . . lay on cross-country navigational flights, instrument flying and reconnaissance missions on which we were expected to make sketch maps . . . outlining . . . road networks and the location of bridges, railway yards, refineries and water towers . . . Our course also prescribed formation flying . . . and simulated bombing runs over a camera obscura. Night flying . . . was to be given much more prominence than at EFTS . . . The whole flying curriculum had a markedly more advanced and professional stamp to it . . . and . . . a good deal more responsibility and maturity would be expected of us in the air.<sup>105</sup>

Time spent flying in real aircraft was supplemented by at least five hours in the Link Trainer.

As commanders of aircraft on operations, pilots would need to have some understanding of the duties of all the other members of their crew. This was relatively straight forward for navigators and wireless operators. These ar-

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<sup>104</sup>A ground loop is a rapid rotation of the aircraft in the horizontal plane while on the ground. In severe cases (particularly if the ground surface is soft), the inside wing can dig in, causing the aircraft to swing violently or even to cartwheel.

<sup>105</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.

eas could be covered in ground-based lectures and put into practice in cross-country exercises. But the training aircraft that they flew were completely unarmed, and so pilot instruction in bombing and gunnery was largely theoretical. To add a touch of realism, night cross-country flights, on which student pilots took their turn as navigator and air bomber, often ended with a simulated bombing run over a camera obscura, a small hut with a telescopic lens and reflecting mirrors mounted in the roof. A light flashed from the aircraft simulated the dropping of the bombs and projected a round image on a screen inside the darkened hut enabling an instructor to assess the accuracy of the bombing.

Although they were under strict orders as to what they could or could not do, and subject to discipline and perhaps dismissal for disregarding instructions, exuberant new pilots could not resist exploring the bounds of their freedom. Aerial dog fighting, for instance, was forbidden, but “there was no sport like it”. Low flying was also strictly controlled, but “more than one honeymooning couple standing on the International Bridge at Niagara Falls was unnerved by the sudden sight of a *Fleet* or *Harvard* or even a rattling old *Anson* roaring beneath their feet and disappearing into the dusk”.<sup>106</sup>

If Allan and his fellow trainees had not realized by this stage that flying could be a dangerous occupation, they were about to be enlightened. During 1941 in Canada, 170 training fatalities were reported: forty were the consequence of aerobatics and low flying; thirty-seven resulted from aircraft stalling; thirty-one occurred during night-flying exercises; twenty came about through mid-air collisions; fifteen were connected with faulty instruments and propellers; and twenty-seven were attributed to miscellaneous causes.<sup>107</sup> Within Allan’s Course 24, the trainees experienced numerous minor incidents such as ground looping or damaging a propeller or an oleo. By far the most serious accident occurred on 30 April when LAC Henry Douglas was killed when he failed to recover from a spin in a *Yale* and crashed near Cookstown, about 20 km south-east of Camp Borden. A few days later, all members of Course 24 attended his funeral at the cemetery in Barrie. On 19 May, LAC Kevin Gannon crashed while flying at night in a *Harvard*. He was seriously injured and spent some months convalescing at Camp Borden.

Course 26, suffered even worse. On 30 May, LAC David Robinson and his instructor, SGT C.E. Shannon were killed when practising formation take-offs in a *Harvard* at nearby Alliston field. Personnel from both Courses 24 and 26 attended Robinson’s funeral in Barrie on 2 June. The same day, LAC G.L. Gates and his instructor FLGOFF E. B. Gale crashed in a *Harvard* three miles east of Camp Borden. Both were seriously injured, Gale losing an eye.

The high rate of accidents, especially those resulting from low flying, resulted in the RCAF dispensing severe punishment to those who broke the rules

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<sup>106</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.

<sup>107</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.

governing low flying. On 19 June, an Australian, LAC V.J. Hibbens of Course 26, was court marshalled for “low flying over Berrie ” and sentenced to 56 days detention.

Despite these problems, 31 members (about 80%) of Allan’s Course 24 reached the required standards in flying and ground subjects. These new pilots, Allan included, were presented with their wings at an outdoor parade held in the late afternoon of 6 June 1941 at Camp Borden. Squadron Leader Hession addressed the graduates:

You are not only good pilots, but you are good Camp Borden pilots. I wish to remind you that pilots received their wings here twenty-five years ago for service in the first Great War. They were great pilots and left a wonderful tradition behind them. You are young pilots, ready to enter the second Great War. You are just as good and perhaps your task is more important than was theirs. There is no need to tell you what an important part the air force is playing in this war.<sup>108</sup>

At the conclusion of their course, Allan and his fellow pilots were posted to No. 1 ‘Y’ Embarkation Depot at Halifax, Nova Scotia. But they were given ten days leave before they had to report in Halifax. Many of the pilots spent their leave on a visit to New York.



### 7.5 Officer or NCO?

Commenting on one of the less pleasing aspects of the EATS agreement, Air Marshall Sir Richard Williams observed that:

It was agreed that on completion of their training 33 per cent of the pilots would be commissioned, the remainder to be sergeants, with similar but lower percentages in the case of observers, and so on, and that subsequent promotion be on the recommendation of commanding officer on a time scale.

During the 1914–18 war all air crew, pilots and observers were commissioned officers. They fought together, they lived together in the same mess and under the same conditions in all respects. . . All pilots and navigators in the RAAF today are commissioned.

<sup>108</sup>W. Peter Fydenchuk. *No. 1 Service Flying Training School Camp Borden*. 11 Feb. 2013. URL: <http://rcafcampborden.blogspot.com.au/> (visited on 23/06/2013).



**Figure 24:** ‘Y’ Depot, Halifax (AWM).

This proposal to commission a percentage of each course would clearly create serious anomalies and discontent—we did have trouble with it but it speaks wonderfully well for the morale of our young men that it did not produce more discord than it did. I can only believe it was designed to save expense, and many of our young men seemed not to be very concerned about the pay they received.<sup>109</sup>

While it may not have created much discontent (at least not enough to be visible from the lofty heights of an Air Marshall), it certainly produced anomalies. Canadian policy was that all pilots, observers, navigators, and air bombers “who are considered suitable according to the standards of the Government of Canada and who are recommended for commissioning will be commissioned”.<sup>110</sup> In practice, this meant that somewhat more than 50% of Canadian pilots were commissioned. For Allan’s course, the result therefore was that some Canadians who finished well down from the top of the class were commissioned, while many, more proficient, Australians were not.

There was also a well entrenched suspicion amongst the trainees that members were chosen to be commissioned on the basis of ‘class’. Whether this was

<sup>109</sup>Sir Richard Williams. *These Are Facts: The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, KBE, CB, DSO*. Canberra, Australia: The Australian War Memorial and the Australian Government Publishing Service, 1977. ISBN: 0642993998.

<sup>110</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.





**Figure 25:** *RMS Ausonia.*

true or not we will never know, but it certainly provoked a significant amount of angst amongst the new pilots.

For the 31 Australians who graduated from No. 1 SFTS in Course 24, about ten (the required 33%) were commissioned as Pilot Officers.<sup>111</sup> The remainder, including Allan and Ray Middleton, were promoted to Sergeant. Of the twelve Canadians, six were commissioned.

An examination of the personnel files of those who did receive commissions does not indicate any particular 'class'-based bias. The single most common attribute linking these men was that they had served previously in one or other branch of the Australian armed forces before enlisting in the RAAF. Whether this made them appear more suitable per se, or just provided them with a more 'military' demeanour, can only be guessed at.

## 7.6 To England

On 19 June 1941, Allan and most of his fellow graduates from No. 1 SFTS boarded the RMS (Royal Mail Ship) *Ausonia*. *Ausonia* was built in Newcastle by Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. She was 538 ft (164 m) long and displaced 13,912 tons. She was powered by geared turbines of 8,500 hp (6,338 kW) driving twin screws, giving her a top speed of 15 knots (28 km/h). As one of the Cunard Line's six 'A-Class' ocean liners on the Canadian service, she carried 510 cabin class and 1,178 third class passengers, served by a crew of

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<sup>111</sup>The exact number is not available as the personnel files of all the members of the course have not yet been digitised by the National Archives. However, the 24 personnel files that are available provide a fairly sound statistical basis for estimating the total number of commissions.

270. On 2 September 1939 she was requisitioned by the British Admiralty and converted into an armed merchant cruiser with the addition of two six-inch guns, one on the bow and one at the stern.

*Ausonia* departed Halifax on 20 June and steamed north-east to meet up with Convoy SC 35 that left Sydney, Nova Scotia, the following day. *Ausonia* was to provide escort to this convoy for the next two weeks. Convoy SC 35 was initially composed of 39 ships of varying nationalities and carrying a wide variety of cargoes.<sup>112</sup> On 24 June, orders were received from the Admiralty that SC 35 was to make one solid convoy with convoy HX 134 that had departed Halifax on 20 June.<sup>113</sup> With the 60 or so ships in HX 134,<sup>114</sup> the combined convoy now included over 100 ships.

Having been a passenger liner, the *Ausonia* provided the airmen with a fairly comfortable voyage. Initially, the weather was fine, if a little cool by Australian standards for mid-summer. Good enough, however, for some of Allan's group to sleep on the promenade deck. It was not to last!

In his diary, Gerald Jones, the Commodore of HX134 noted that by 11:00 a.m. on 26 June the weather had deteriorated, the wind blowing a fresh gale with very low visibility in driving rain.<sup>115</sup> By 4:00 p.m., a full gale had established with "terrific squalls", scattering the ships of the combined convoy over a wide area.

With the increased activity of German submarines in the approaches to Europe, convoys were now being routed far to the north, close to the southern tip of Iceland. By 30 June, they were far enough north (59° N) for Jones to observe that "it is never dark now, only a few hours of dusk".

By 4 July, when the combined convoy had reached a point 300 km directly south of Iceland, *Ausonia* departed and headed for Reykjavik to re-fuel. The convoy proceeded, now with reduced escort, to Greenock in Scotland. They arrived there on 9 July having completed the Atlantic crossing without the loss of a ship or even a confirmed sighting of a submarine.

Allan and his comrades were deposited at the RAF Transfer Camp in Reykjavik to wait for a ship to take them on to Scotland. After a dreary week in Reykjavik, they finally boarded the *Valendam*, a Dutch ship under the command of Captain Freyburg. One of the group, Len Reid, observed that this part of the trip was anything but enjoyable:

The *Valendam*, a dirty ship, was full of troops and we were squashed into a small area in the holds where we slept in hammocks. It was

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<sup>112</sup>Siri Lawson. *Convoy SC 35*. Warsailors.com. URL: <http://www.warsailors.com/convoys/SC35.html> (visited on 27/11/2013).

<sup>113</sup>G. N. Jones. *Commodore Gerald N. Jones' Report: Convoy HX 134*. Warsailors.com, 1941. URL: <http://www.warsailors.com/convoys/hx134report.html> (visited on 20/09/2014).

<sup>114</sup>Siri Lawson. *Convoy HX 134*. Warsailors.com. URL: <http://www.warsailors.com/convoys/hx134.html> (visited on 27/11/2013).

<sup>115</sup>Jones, *Commodore Gerald N. Jones' Report: Convoy HX 134*.



**Figure 26:** *The River Clyde off Greenock in WWII (Remembering Scotland at War).*

like the black hole of Calcutta—we couldn't see a thing.<sup>116</sup>

The *Valendam* reached Greenock on 16 July and Allan and his colleagues disembarked in preparation for a train journey to Bournemouth on the south coast of England. On 17 July they reported as ordered to No. 3 PRC (Personnel Reception Centre) in Bournemouth and were allocated to their accommodation while they waited to be posted to the various training units.

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<sup>116</sup>Bill, *Middleton VC*.



## 8 Attached to the RAF

While the Australian airmen had been officially attached to the RAF from the time they boarded the *Ausonia* in Halifax, for all intents and purposes their attachment really began when they reached No. 3 PRC in Bournemouth. No. 3 PRC had been formed on 1 March 1941 at Uxbridge "...to deal with all incoming Dominion airmen, and a week later, an Australian officer arrived to command 'A' Flight in which were congregated all Australians and New Zealanders".<sup>117</sup>

The number of men arriving from Canada and Australia increased dramatically in the following months, forcing No. 3 PRC to relocate to Bournemouth, a south-coast resort. As civilians were banned from travelling to Bournemouth (it being on a defended coast), many large hotels were available to be requisitioned to accommodate the new aircrew. While every effort was made to promptly transfer them to an Operational Training Unit (OTU), in many cases men stayed at Bournemouth for three months or more.

The RAAF aircrew posted to the RAF under the terms of the EATS were literally surrendered to the control of the Air Ministry. No rights were retained over aircrew postings, Australia having no say in what theatre or in what capacity its aircrew operated or in what type of aircraft. *Article XV* of the EATS agreement guaranteed the formation of eighteen 'Australian' Squadrons. However, their formation lagged seriously behind the official timetable, and even though some squadrons had commenced their official existence by June 1941 (No. 455 SQN for example), their existence was largely illusory. Australian aircrew were scattered throughout the RAF, serving in all types of squadrons and in virtually every theatre in which the RAF operated. McCarthy adds that:

Moreover there was never any question that there should be Australian representation on the higher decision making bodies of the Air Ministry. Australia endorsed not a single operational sortie involving its nationals.<sup>118</sup> Wing Commander remains still very much an air force operational rank. It may be just a coincidence that this was the highest rank obtained by an EATS graduate.<sup>119</sup>

Air Marshall Sir Richard Williams wrote that, in the early months of WWII:

<sup>117</sup>John Herrington. *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 3 – Air. Volume III – Air War Against Germany and Italy, 1939 – 1943*. Canberra, Australia: Australian War Memorial, 1954. URL: [http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/second%5C\\_world%5C\\_war/AWMOHWW2/Air/Vol3/](http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/second%5C_world%5C_war/AWMOHWW2/Air/Vol3/) (visited on 22/02/2014), page 111.

<sup>118</sup>A sortie is the deployment or dispatch of one military unit, in this case, a single aircraft.

<sup>119</sup>J. McCarthy. "Two Faces of the Empire Air Training Scheme The European Experience". In: 1994 RAAF History Conference - The RAAF in Europe and North Africa 1939-45. (Canberra, 20 Oct. 1994). Canberra, Australia: RAAF Air Power Development Centre. ISBN: 0 642 22475 7. URL: <http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/Publications/Details/201/RAAF-History-Conference-1994-The-RAAF-in-Europe-and-North-Africa-19391945.aspx#.U85BpPmSyrq> (visited on 29/09/2010).

...there were strenuous objections to our Army being scattered—why the same principles were not applied to the Air Force I cannot understand.<sup>120</sup>

While at Bournemouth, airmen were asked to choose whether to continue their operational training as a fighter pilot or as a member of a crew in either Bomber Command or Coastal Command. We have no record of Allan's choice, but it would have probably made little difference. There was an increasing shortage of bomber crews, and this together with the preference for placing younger pilots in fighters (it was said that no one over the age of 24 had any chance of becoming a fighter pilot) almost guaranteed that Allan would find himself heading for Bomber Command. And this is how it turned out.

After just eight days at Bournemouth during which he completing documents for record purposes and receiving his kit to full scale (including such necessary evils of war-time Britain as a steel helmet, a respirator and an identity card) Allan was sent on three days leave prior to being posted to No. 23 OTU at Pershore on 25 July 1941.

### 8.1 Operational Training at Pershore

RAF Pershore is located in Worcestershire, about 13 km east of Worcester. Originally known as Throkmorton Airfield, it was taken over by the Ministry of Defence in 1940 and developed as a training airfield. The base was opened in February 1941 and its first occupants were No. 23 OTU who began operations at Pershore in April 1941.

The purpose of the OTU was to allow pilots to make the transition to the much heavier and more powerful twin-engined *Wellington* bomber. In Allan's case, this transition was more difficult than usual. He had never flown a twin-engined aircraft, so his learning curve was particularly steep.



**Figure 28:** J. Wellington Wimpy

The *Wellington* was a twin-engined, long-range medium bomber designed at Brooklands in Weybridge, Surrey, by Vickers-Armstrongs' Chief Designer, Rex Pierson. The fuselage was built from 1650 elements forming a *geodesic* structure that was strong and light for its size, which gave the *Wellington* a load- and range-to-power-ratio advantage over similar aircraft, without sacrificing robustness. This structure was covered with Irish linen, which, treated with many layers of dope, formed the outer skin of the aircraft. However, the aircraft lacked the protection of extensive armour plate. The *Wellington* was popularly known as the Wimpy by service personnel, after the portly J. Wellington Wimpy character from the Popeye cartoons. It remained in production from 1938 until 1945. The first RAF bombing attack of the war was

<sup>120</sup>Williams, *These Are Facts: The Autobiography of Air Marshal Sir Richard Williams, KBE, CB, DSO*.

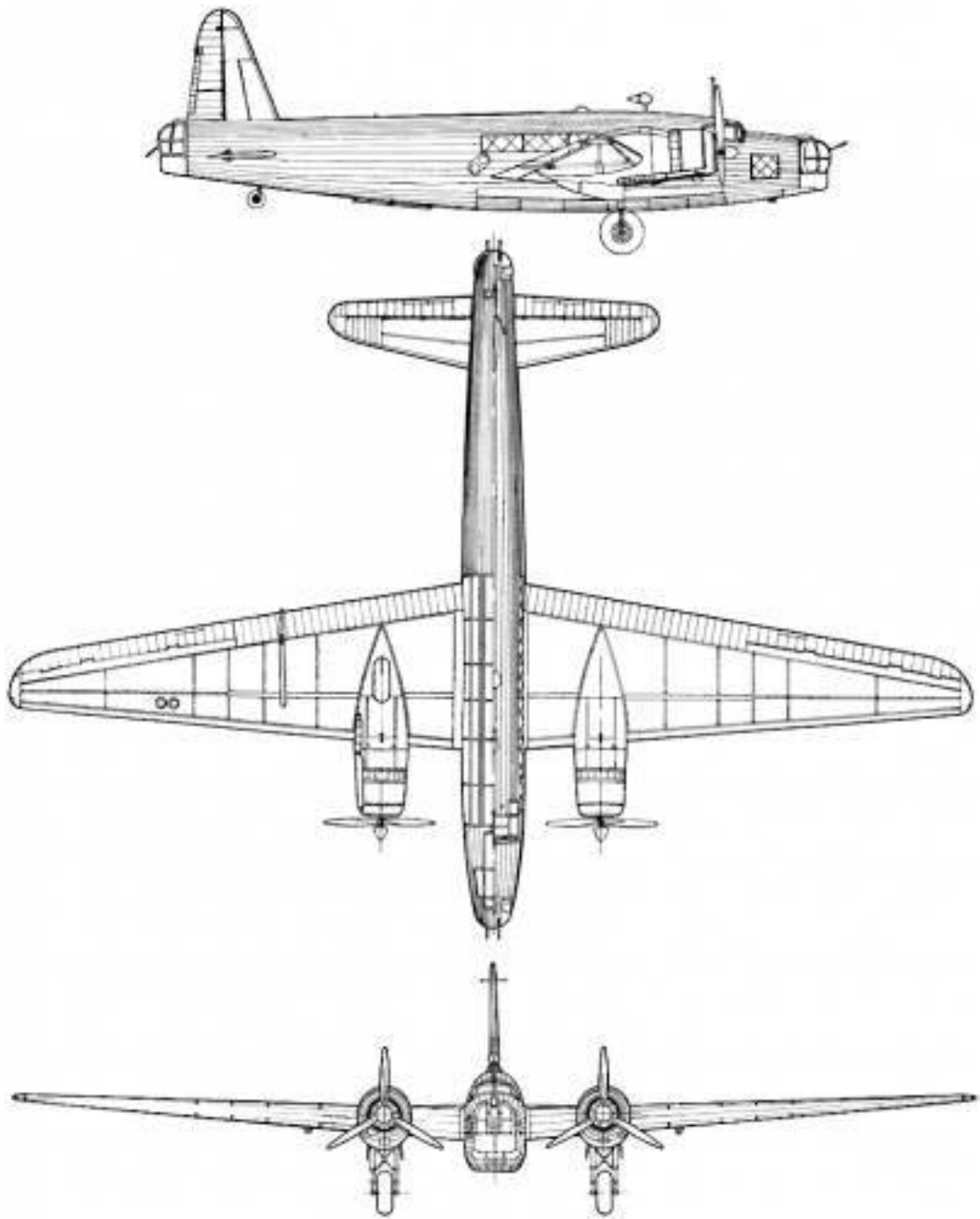


**Figure 27:** Aerial View of RAF Pershore, 1941 (IWM).

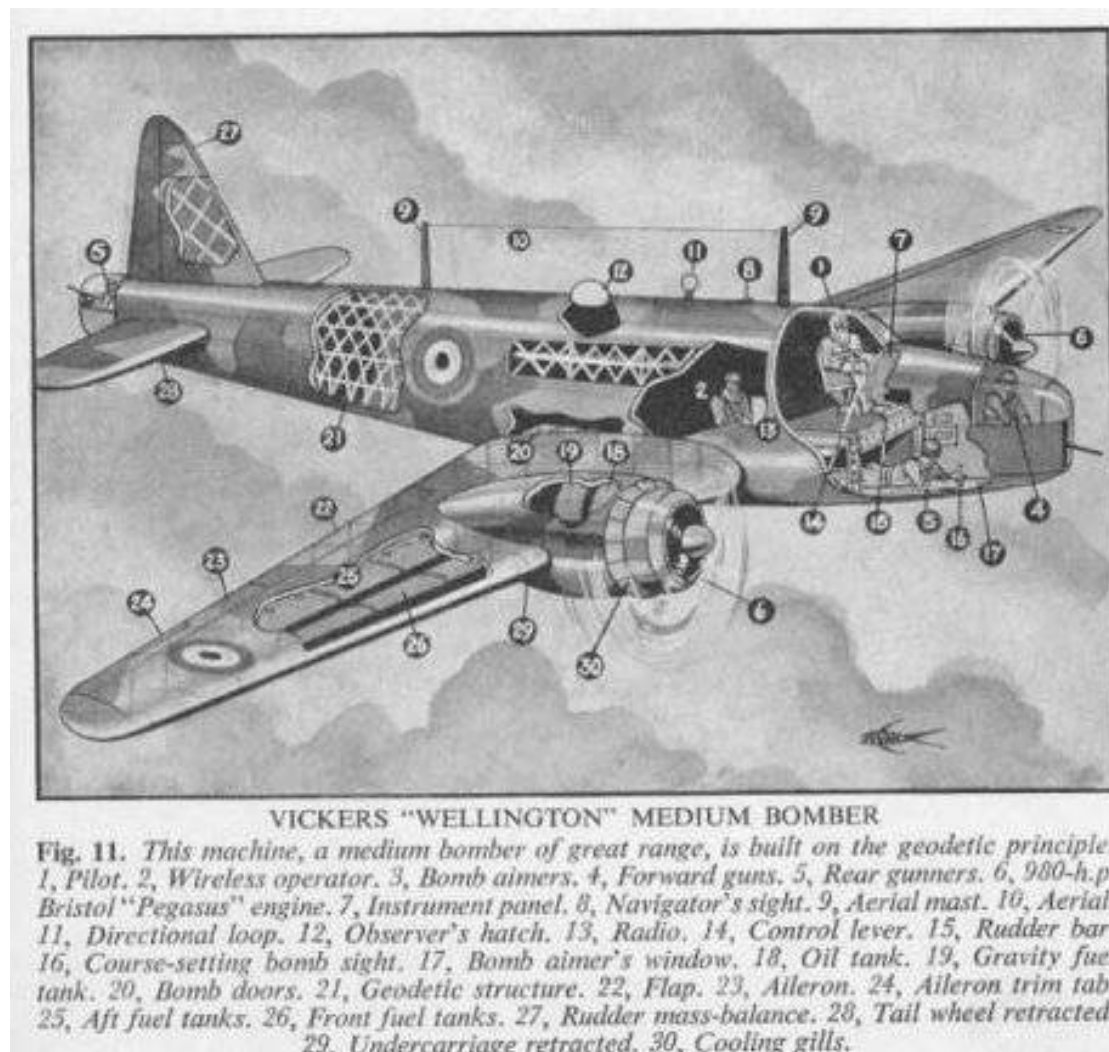
made by *Wellington* MkI aircraft on 4 September 1939. The first main production variant was the MkIc of which a total of 2,685 were produced. The MkIc had a crew of six: pilot, second pilot, wireless operator, navigator/bomb aimer, observer/nose gunner and tail gunner.

Howard Hewer, a Canadian wireless operator, described his first impressions of the *Wellington*:

Climbing up into this aircraft through the front hatch, using the wooden ladder always carried aboard, I was struck immediately by the unique geodetic or basket-work airframe of a duralumin alloy, combining lightness, rigidity, and great strength. There was no other aircraft like it. There was also a constant aroma of petrol fumes and oil. The nose was totally occupied with a Frazer-Nash hydraulic gun turret fitted with two Browning .303 machine guns. The tail housed the second gun turret, also with two Brownings—the ‘office’ of the lonely rear gunner. The pilot’s seat was on the port side. On the starboard side there was a swing-down seat (for the second pilot) or



**Figure 29:** *Vickers Wellington Mk I.*



**Figure 30:** Cutaway View of a Wellington (Britain's Fighting Forces, 1940).



**Figure 31:** *Wellington Rear Fuselage. Note the Elsan Toilet on the Right (IWM).*

an instructor. Immediately behind the pilot's armoured bulkhead was the wireless operator's position, and behind him, in the aisle, was the table and bench for the navigator. Climbing over the main spar, behind which were the valves for switching petrol tanks, a person could walk towards the rear on a 'catwalk', passing on the way the *Elsan* toilet, and the flare chute, on the starboard side. Amidships, there were triangular windows on either side. Brownings could be fitted on a swivel mount to fire through these windows, the gunner sitting on a seat in the aisle so that he could switch from one gun to the other.<sup>121</sup>

When Allan arrived at RAF Pershore, accommodation was still rather primitive. NCOs were housed in tents with duck boards and the food, by all reports, was quite appalling. Instruction followed the now familiar routine, beginning with two weeks of lectures and ground work, including time in the Link Trainer, aimed at familiarising the new pilots with the workings of the *Wellington*. Then

<sup>121</sup>Howard Hewer. *In for a Penny, in for a Pound. The Adventures of a Wireless Operator in Bomber Command*. Canada: Anchor Canada, a division of Random House of Canada Limitd, 2004. ISBN: 9780385672597.

began learning to handle the real aircraft doing circuits and landings.

After about a month at the OTU, the all important process of 'crewing-up' took place. This was left up to the airmen themselves to sort out. Appropriate numbers of pilots and each of the other trades had been assigned to the same course. They were gathered in a hanger or lecture room and told to form themselves into crews. This importance of this critical process was recognised by Hank Nelson:

The crew was mutually dependent. Given the confined space, the intensity of the experience, and the length of the long flights, personal compatibility was almost as important as skill. At any given time in a flight, any one of the crew could be responsible for the success of the operation and the lives of the others. For most of an operation the crew was alone: they took all decisions, and they alone knew just how each other performed under stress. It is difficult to think of any other small group of servicemen so frequently asked to operate alone and with such power to kill and so liable to be killed.<sup>122</sup>

It might appear strange that this process was usually left entirely up to the crews themselves. Dan Conway sums it up nicely:

That this casual, seemingly haphazard method of 'crewing-up' was a success is a tribute to the RAF leadership. It was like a marriage without the courtship, as once crewed up, we were stuck with one another and had to make our relationships work. Our priority was to get to know one another.<sup>123</sup>

While we have no direct evidence, it appears that his course at No. 23 OTU consisted of mostly RAF personnel with very few other Australians. On the evidence of its make-up at No. 218 Squadron, his crew probably consisted entirely of RAF Sergeants.

As well as the now familiar sequence of general flying instruction, the conversion to *Wellingtons* introduced Allan to a range of new areas that needed to be mastered. These included formation flying, blind take-offs and handling the aircraft following the loss of one engine, in particular landing on one engine. It was said that the *Wellington* Mk Ic did not perform well on one engine, it could "at best maintain 4,000 feet (1,200 m), at worst not stay airborne at all".<sup>124</sup>

At this time, the whole crew lived and trained together as a unit. By the end of their time at the OTU, each crew had to develop into a well oiled machine,

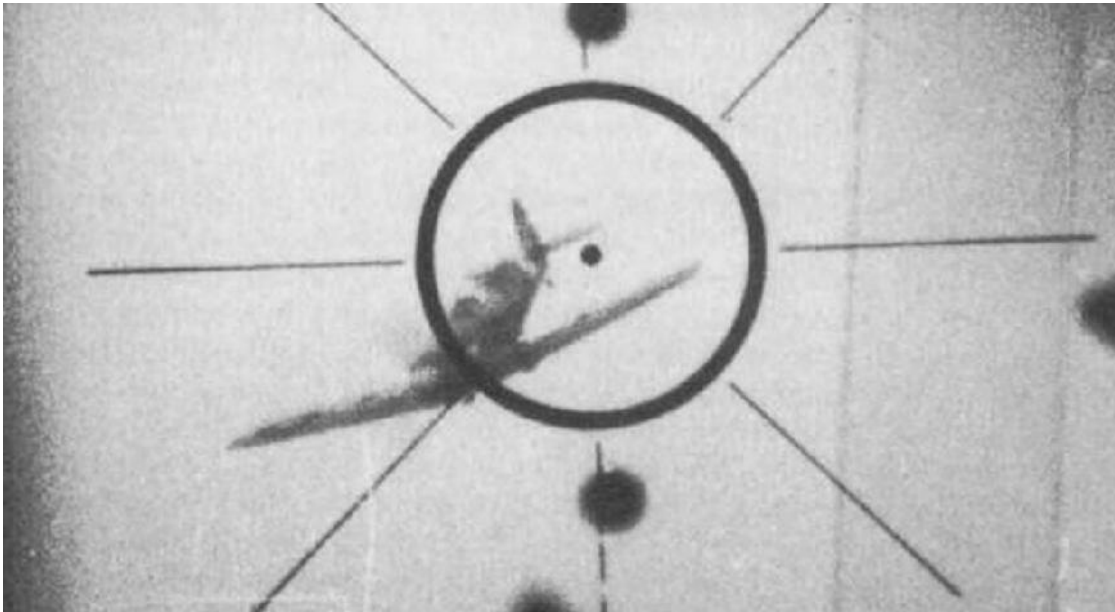
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<sup>122</sup>Nelson, "A different war: Australians in Bomber Command".

<sup>123</sup>Daniel Thomas Conway. *The Trenches in the Sky. What it was like flying in RAF Bomber and Transport Commands in World War II*. Victoria Park, WA: Hesperian Press, 1995. ISBN: 0859052052.

<sup>124</sup>Eric Mattingley. *Australian War Memorial, Canberra Manuscript MSS0656: Mattingley, Eric DFC (Flying Officer b:1916)*. 1988.





**Figure 32:** *Photograph of a Spitfire in a Bomber's Gun Sight During Fighter Affiliation.*

ready to react as one to any emergency. They needed, for example, to master the procedures for the evacuation of the aircraft, and the employment of the dinghy. Most bomber missions involved a return to the UK across either the English Channel or the North Sea, often in an aircraft that was either damaged by enemy action or short on fuel, or both. Given the low sea temperature, particularly in winter, the crew of a ditched aircraft could not expect to survive for long in the water. Every bomber was therefore equipped with an inflatable dinghy arranged such that it would deploy and inflate on impact with the water. The crews trained for transfer to the dinghy via a 'dry' program of lectures and films, and 'wet' drills held at the local (unheated) municipal swimming pool. They found that getting into the dinghy from the water was difficult in the pool. What would it be like in a howling gale in pitch darkness? And many of the aircrew could not swim!

They also trained for their major operational task; long-range bombing. Cross-country flights of seven or eight hours were flown in all weather, during the day and at night, with bombing simulated with cameras or on infra-red beacons. These flights also included 'fighter affiliation' which was designed to familiarize the bomber crew with fighter attack tactics and provided them with opportunities to practise air-to-air gunnery using towed targets or gun cameras. It was also an opportunity to develop the coordination between the rear gunner and the pilot required to execute successful defensive manoeuvres. The difficulties associated with such manoeuvres were described by Hank Nelson:



The standard evasive techniques of aircraft caught in searchlights or under attack from night fighters demanded flying to the limits of the aircraft and the skill of the crew, and sustaining that effort through several minutes.<sup>125</sup>

It would be surprising if the operational training units in the United Kingdom had been completely satisfied with the Canadian-trained pilots. On the whole they found little fault with their general flying ability, but from time to time observed weaknesses in areas such as formation flying, aircraft recognition, radio procedures and instrument flying. Pilots trained on the Canadian prairie would have had very little experience flying completely enveloped in cloud or fog, a common occurrence in the UK.<sup>126</sup>

Don Charlwood remembers his time at an operational training unit:

When we started operational training we were instructed by ex-RAF aircrew, men already experienced in operations over Germany. They possessed qualities we had thought of as being Australian. They were easy-going, jocular, and, in their battered caps and sagging battle dress, rather scruffy. They were an extraordinary cross-section of British life. On squadrons, they told us, no one bothered much about spit and polish. Provided crews were ready to fly, they were pretty much left alone. What mattered most was to have self-discipline and crew discipline in the air. They were ready to pass us hints as to how best we might survive.<sup>127</sup>

Huia Russell, an RAF observer who was to fly on a number of operations with Ray Middleton, recalled his time training at No. 23 OCU:

The *Wellingtons* used in training were usually rather worn out ex-operational aircraft. In fact one aircraft tended to have an up-and-down movement at the wing tip of twelve inches and when it was written off in a taxiing accident there was relief all round. An operational training unit was supposed to be a rest for the instructors but many were killed while on these units—the *Wellington* tended to catch fire in a crash.<sup>128</sup>

Many never made it to an operational squadron. John Herington gives an official figure of 724 Australian deaths in air accidents at OTUs,<sup>129</sup> the great

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<sup>125</sup>Nelson, "A different war: Australians in Bomber Command".

<sup>126</sup>Hatch, *Aerodrome of Democracy*.

<sup>127</sup>Donald Charlwood. "The Men of Bomber Command". In: 2003 History Conference - Air War Europe. (Telstra Theatre, Australian War Memorial, 15 Nov. 2003). Canberra, Australia: Australian War Memorial. URL: <http://www.awm.gov.au/events/conference/2003/charlwood/> (visited on 03/04/2014).

<sup>128</sup>Bill, *Middleton VC*.

<sup>129</sup>Herrington, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945. Series 3 – Air*.

majority of which would have been from among those training for Bomber Command. At an OTU men were tested, for the first time, in bombers, not smaller lighter training aircraft.

The deaths that occurred were the result of a deadly combination of the pressure to train men quickly; the inexperience of the trainees; the less than perfect machines they flew; the need to push the limits of weather, technical, and human capacities; and youthful bravado.

Norman Magnussun, an air observer who graduated from the BCATP in 1941, recalls that the time spent at an Operational Training Unit in Britain:

...was a maturing period for most of the aircrew and pilots who began to realize that war was a pretty serious business. Prior to that time it was a great deal of fun. Learning how to fly, being involved in flying activities was great fun. We lost a number of crews ... it seems to me that the memories I have of the operational training unit were the difficult flights that we had, the other was carrying coffins to the cemetery. We spent a great deal of time burying our friends.<sup>130</sup>

By 18 September 1941, Allan had completed all the requirements of the course at No. 23 OTU. After a week's leave Allan, together with his crew, was posted to No. 218 Squadron at RAF Marham.

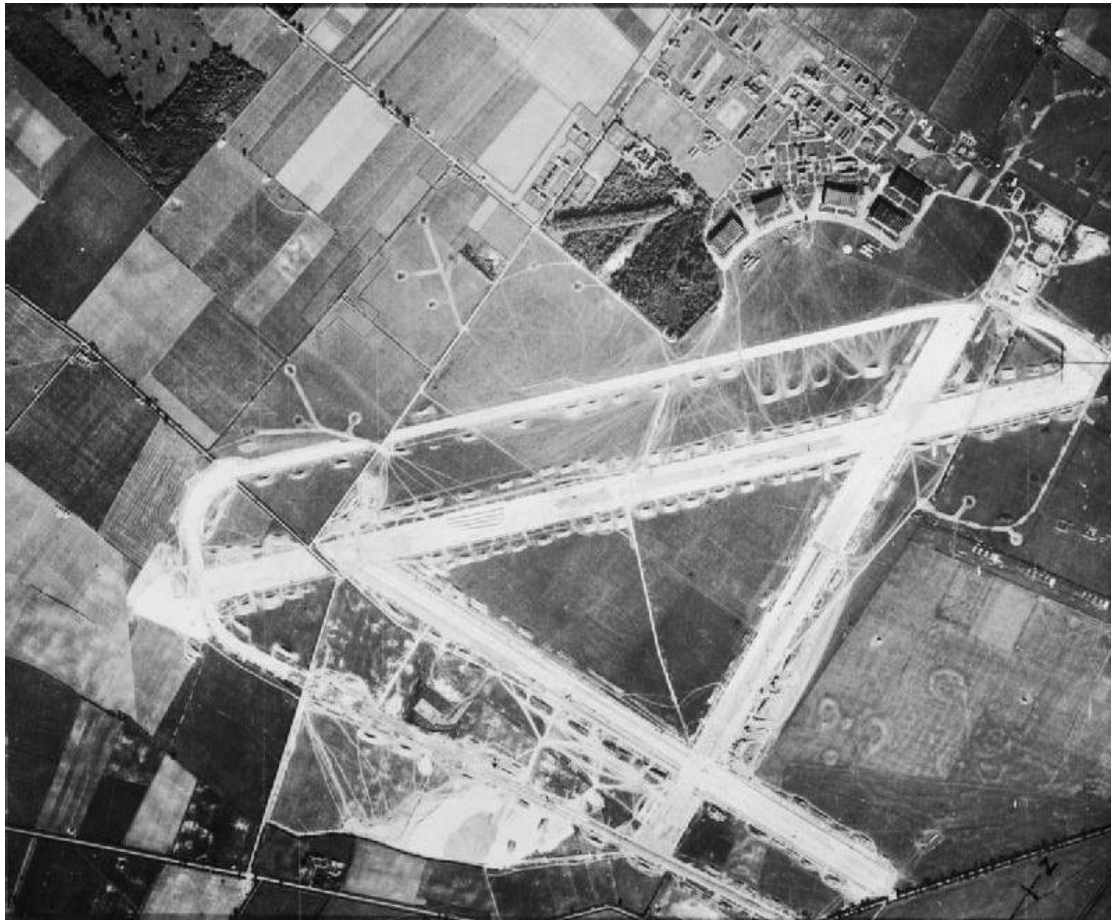
## 8.2 No. 218 Squadron, Marham

Construction started on the present-day Marham aerodrome in the first half of 1935 as part of the RAF's pre-war expansion program. When completed the aerodrome was a completely self-contained township, with 15 acres of playing fields, a combined church and cinema, fire station, sick quarters, shops, stores, even prison cells and exercise yard. The aerodrome opened on 1 April 1937 as a heavy bomber station.

No. 218 Squadron was formed at Dover on 24th April 1918 as a light bomber unit. In November 1940, No. 218 Squadron was transferred to No. 3 Group Bomber Command and converted to *Wellingtons* for night bombing. The squadron's first night raid was on 22 December 1940, and *Wellingtons* continued to operate until February 1942 when *Stirlings* replaced them. The squadron was located at several bases in mid-1940 but on 25 November 1940 they moved to RAF Marham, where they stayed until the middle of 1942.

Howard Hewer, a Canadian wireless operator who served with No. 218 Squadron at Marham from August until the end of November 1941, remembers his first day at Marham:

<sup>130</sup>Mathew Chapman. "The Evolution of Professional Aviation Culture in Canada, 1939-1945. A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of History". University of Victoria, 18 June 2010. URL: [https://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8443/bitstream/handle/1828/3023/Chapman\\_Thesis\\_Final\\_1%20Sept%202010.pdf?sequence=1](https://dspace.library.uvic.ca:8443/bitstream/handle/1828/3023/Chapman_Thesis_Final_1%20Sept%202010.pdf?sequence=1) (visited on 31/11/2013).



**Figure 33:** Aerial View of RAF Marham, 1944 (IWM).

... we got back to the sergeants' mess in time for high tea, which consisted of buns, toast, assorted jams, and lots of strong, acidic tea. Dinner, we discovered, was at the fashionable 2000 hours.

This was the standard, peacetime meal-hour routine Marham had always followed, and it remained in effect for the length of our stay. No little war was going to upset this long-established British routine. The main disadvantage was that if we waited to have a proper dinner it was then too late to catch the bus into King's Lynn to go to the 'flicks' (movies), or to a dance. On most free nights, therefore, we headed for town after high tea, in time for fish and chips before the show, and often more of them afterwards. Because of rationing and shortages of almost everything, the fish and chips were deep fried in the same fat over and over again—but we were young.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>131</sup>Hewer, *In for a Penny, in for a Pound*.



**Figure 34:** Wing Commander Herbert Kirkpatrick (No. 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron Association).

In September 1941, the Commanding Officer of No. 218 Squadron was WGCDR Herbert James ('Jimmy') Kirkpatrick. He was a well-liked commanding officer and took an active role in the squadron, flying at least two operations each month. He was mentioned in dispatches and was awarded a DFC for his part in rescuing members of the squadron following a bomb explosion. After the war, Kirkpatrick continued in the RAF, rising to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal in 1957 before retiring in 1963.

Allan and his crew reported to RAF Marham on 25 September 1941. They would have continued to gain experience in *Wellingtons*, flying nearly every day. The range and extent of the training undertaken may be gauged from the entries under "Training" in No. 218 Squadron's Operations Record Book (RAF Form 540) for October 1941.<sup>132</sup> These are tabulated in Appendix F.

Crews arriving at their first operating squadron were confronted by the spectre of the 'tour'. How a tour was measured varied from time to time, but generally it meant completing thirty operations. The mortality rates for bomber crews were not readily available and were not published, but it was generally accepted that the chances of dying on any single raid was about 3%. Many aircrew simply didn't worry about it—what would be would be. However, for those men who did think about the odds they faced, a 3% chance of dying on

<sup>132</sup>AIR 27/1349/20 *Squadron Number 218, Summary of Events*. The National Archives, Kew, UK. 1–31 Oct. 1941. URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=D8394322> (visited on 07/12/2013).

any one raid might seem reasonable. But they had to do this 30 times, and any airman could do the simple-minded calculation that 30 times 3% was 90%. A 90% chance of being among the missing was near enough to a certainty. In fact, that simple multiplication does not give the odds of survival. A 3% chance repeated 30 times gives a 40% chance of completing a tour, still less than half but a lot better than 90%. If the average loss rate rose to 5%, then only 21.5% would complete a tour.

Statistics compiled at the end of the war bear this out.<sup>133</sup> Out of every one hundred aircrew in Bomber Command, an average of 38 would be killed on operations, seven would be killed in non-operational flying (training etc.), seven would be seriously injured in crashes, eight would become POWs and 40 would survive unharmed. No other branch of the fighting services faced odds such as these. Don Charlwood noted that:

Like all squadrons, ours was constantly haemorrhaging, but the transfusions from Training Command were equally steady, so that numbers of men never diminished, only faces changed. They arrived shining with an air of invincibility, like today's P-plate car drivers. They who lasted awhile matured rapidly. As for the rest, we were never witness to their death on operations, just as we were never witness to the victims of our bombing.<sup>134</sup>

Ken Gray, an RAAF pilot who flew with No. 101 Squadron RAF, was interviewed by the Australian War Memorial in 1989.<sup>135</sup> He recalled the practical aspects of dealing with the high attrition rate amongst aircrew:

Outside one's own crew you didn't have too many friends. You deliberately did not because you quickly learned that if you became personal friends with that crew you get back tonight and you find he didn't come back and so you'd have that sort of loss of a strong friend. So they were acquaintances rather than friends and you see your whole being of social activity—social intercourse, everything else was with your crew and only to a small extent you'd say sometimes to a fellow crew "How about coming out", and they would come out and – but seldom did you act as buddy to buddy from pilot to pilot or whatever. . .

Our attitude tended to be...don't get too close to another one because he may not be there in the morning and you don't want

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<sup>133</sup>D. B. Howard. *The Operational Life of Bomber Command 1939-1945*. 2008. (Visited on 22/06/2014).

<sup>134</sup>Charlwood, "The Men of Bomber Command".

<sup>135</sup>Kenneth Gray. S00539: *Transcript of Oral History Recording: Gray, Kenneth Douglas (401943)*. Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939-45. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, Feb. 1989. URL: [http://static.awm.gov.au/images/Transcripts/S00539\\_TRAN.pdf](http://static.awm.gov.au/images/Transcripts/S00539_TRAN.pdf) (visited on 08/10/2014).

to—you deliberately sort of distanced yourself to a degree from those other fellows.

### 8.3 On Operations

In the early days of the bomber offensive, British aircraft like the *Wellington* flew with a 'second pilot' in a support role to operate flaps and throttles or to take over for a while in the cruise. The second pilot was a fully-trained and qualified pilot who was usually less experienced than the 'first pilot' who commanded the aeroplane. The position of second pilot was also used to introduce new pilots to operations.

It was in this role that Allan found himself on his first operation on the night of 10 October 1941. The first pilot was SGT Webber who was making his first flight as pilot in charge. While Webber had experienced a number of operations as second pilot, he was still relatively inexperienced. They joined a raid by eleven aircraft from No. 218 Squadron on Bordeaux, but never reached the target. Their rear gunner experienced two runaway guns, and as there were "at least six enemy aircraft in the vicinity", they bombed a nearby target of opportunity (some 250 mile (400 km) north of Bordeaux) and returned. They said that the target:

...looked like (a) newly constructed aerodrome. No runways seen, but apparent aerodrome buildings. Bombs fell along the edge of the wood. Results not seen.<sup>136</sup>

Two aircraft failed to return to base: one crashed into the sea about 10 miles (16 km) off St. Albans Head, with three of the crew being drowned; the other was lost without trace after sending a signal that they were bailing out in a position estimated to be close to the target.

Allan had to wait just two days before he was once more on an operation, again with the same crew. Eleven No. 218 Squadron aircraft were again involved, but this time the target was Nuremberg. Most aircraft successfully bombed the target but SGT Webber and his crew failed to reach Nuremberg due to "compass trouble". They dropped their bombs on St. Ingleburt instead.<sup>137</sup> All aircraft returned to base.

On 14 October, Allan again joined SGT Webber and his crew for a further raid on Nuremberg. They were accompanied by nine No. 218 Squadron aircraft. SGT Webber's crew were unable to locate the target and, due to icing,

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<sup>136</sup>AIR 27/1349/21 *Squadron Number 218, Summary of Events*. The National Archives, Kew, UK. 1–31 Oct. 1941. URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=D8394323> (visited on 07/12/2013).

<sup>137</sup>It is unclear what or where this was.

jettisoned their bombs over Waldurn (about 150 km west of Nuremberg).<sup>138</sup> Nine aircraft returned safely to base, one crashing into a tree having undershot on landing. Three of the crew were slightly injured. Another aircraft suffered a failure of its port engine shortly after take-off and did not leave the vicinity of the base. It crashed on landing but no-one was injured. The only aircraft not to return was forced to land at Welmington (?) due to fuel problems. Of those aircraft that reached the target, most dropped their bombs based on their dead reckoning position due to 10/10 cloud over the target.<sup>139</sup>



**Figure 35:** Loading a 4,000 lb HC bomb (IWM).

Ten aircraft were briefed and detailed for operations on 16 October 1941. Of these, two were to target Dunkirk while the remainder were bound for Duisburg. Allan again joined SGT Webber and they were scheduled to attack Duisburg. The crew of one aircraft had to bale out east of Norwich due to engine trouble. They all landed safely and were uninjured. This sortie was of particular note as it was the first time that a *Wellington* MkIc had carried a 4,000 lb High Capacity (HC) bomb, known as a 'cookie'. It was scheduled to be used in an attack on the main power station at Darberg. One aircraft returned to base early with intercom failure. All aircraft bombed Duisburg based on their dead reckoning position as 10/10 cloud at the target made identification impossible.

Neither Allan nor SGT Webber took part in a ten-aircraft raid on Bremen on 21 October 1941. All aircraft returned safely to base.

A further attack on Bremen was scheduled for the night of 31 October 1941. SGT Webber's crew, with Allan again as second pilot, took part but could not locate Bremen as it was totally obscured by cloud. Like several other aircraft, they bombed an alternate target, in their case Emden, where they saw the bombs burst and "all lights disappeared". All aircraft returned safely to base, but one aircraft was badly shot up and the rear gunner was killed by fire from

<sup>138</sup>Aircraft flying through cloud in sub-freezing temperatures are likely to experience some degree of *icing*. Ice is deposited on the leading edges of wings and fuselage when they are struck by super-cooled water droplets. The resulting layer of ice leads to a significant degradation in aircraft performance and, in severe case, can lead to a complete loss of control.

<sup>139</sup>A dead reckoning position is based on the compass courses steered and an estimate of the distances flown, with an allowance for the forecast wind, on each heading.

an enemy aircraft.

Allan took part of his sixth operation and his last as second pilot with SGT Webber on a raid to Brest. Just two aircraft were detailed for the operation. Both aircraft returned safely to base. In their de-briefing, SGT Webber's crew described the sortie as:

Saw docks through break in cloud from about 2 miles [on a bearing of] 50° and bombed docks as estimated from there. Much evasive action necessary during run up. Burst seen through cloud.<sup>140</sup>

After six operations as second pilot, Allan would have gained valuable experience. However, only in the final operation was his crew able to confirm that they had successfully bombed the primary target. Even then, overcast prevented any real assessment of the damage done. Three operations had been compromised by equipment failure, while icing and the ever present cloud had reduced the effectiveness of all the others.

On 4 November 1941, Allan joined his crew, augmented by the addition of an experienced Observer (SGT Rogers) and Rear Gunner (SGT England), as first pilot and captain of *Wellington* R1601 on an operation to the Ostende docks. His aircraft was one of ten No. 218 Squadron aircraft briefed for operations that night, seven detailed to attack Essen and three Ostende. Allan was able to report that he had successfully bombed Ostende Docks and "eight small fires were left burning". Thick cloud at Essen precluded identification and bombs were dropped on dead reckoning positions. All aircraft returned safely to base.

Allan's crew was not required for a raid by thirteen aircraft on the Ruhr and the Berlin area which took place on the night of 7 November 1941. None of these aircraft attacked their primary target due to 10/10 cloud that persisted throughout the operation. One aircraft failed to return to base, nothing further being heard after it reached the target area.

At this stage Allan, if not his full crew, had gained enough experience to take a full part in the day-to-day operations of the squadron.

#### 8.4 What was an Operation Like?

Flying an operation was a terrifying ordeal for all the crew. For hours at a time they were confined to what amounted to a flying bomb that afforded little protection against anti-aircraft fire, enemy fighters or the weather. What was it like? We can reconstruct an operation using first-hand accounts given in a

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<sup>140</sup>AIR 27/1349/23 Squadron Number 218, *Record of Events*. The National Archives, Kew, UK. 1–30 Nov. 1941. URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=D8394325> (visited on 07/12/2013).



number of sources.<sup>141</sup>

The first indication that there was to be an operation that night would be the announcement of a time for an operational briefing. All crews would attend the main briefing that was held in a large, claustrophobic room with no windows. Some crews might find that they were not required for the operation and would leave. The remainder would wait for the senior officers to arrive. The Wing Commander would call each aircraft captain by name and ask if all members of his crew were present. He would then reveal a large map on which the target for the night and the routes to be flown were displayed. The Intelligence Officer would brief the crews on the importance of the target and details of rendezvous points and bombing levels. He would also outline the anticipated areas in which the crews would encounter defences—usually searchlights and anti-aircraft guns. The meteorologists would provide a synopsis of conditions



**Figure 36:** Crews being briefed at RAF Lakenheath, Suffolk (IWM).

<sup>141</sup>See for example: Gray, *S00539: Transcript of Oral History Recording: Gray, Kenneth Douglas (401943)*; Edwin Wheeler. "Just to Get a Bed". In: Martin Bowman. *Flying into The Flames of Hell*. 2006. Chap. 1, pp. 1–22; Harry Barker. "Memories of a 218 Squadron Bomb Aimer". In: Martin Bowman. *Flying into The Flames of Hell*. 2006. Chap. 10, pp. 109–122; Donald Charlwood. *S00568: Transcript of Oral History Recording: Charlwood, Donald Ernest Cameron (408794)*. Keith Murdoch Sound Archive of Australia in the War of 1939–45. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, Apr. 1989. URL: [http://static.awm.gov.au/images/Transcripts/S00568\\_TRAN.pdf](http://static.awm.gov.au/images/Transcripts/S00568_TRAN.pdf) (visited on 18/10/2014); *Target for Tonight*. Crown Film Unit, UK. 1941. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PDTLeFl8cXU> (visited on 01/12/2014).



**Figure 37:** A Wellington being refuelled and 'bombed up' (AWM).

he expected *en route*, over the target and on the return to base. The more experienced crews might at this stage interject that of course the weather reports were generated mostly by gazing into a crystal ball. Details of the bomb load, fuel load and armament were outlined and, after a few encouraging words from the Wing Commander, the briefing broke up.

The main briefing was followed by separate briefings for navigators, wireless operators and gunners. The navigators were able to study the relevant charts and record the details of tracks and way-points. Each aircraft would be assigned a take-off time and given details of their schedules height and time at the target. The Wireless Leader would issue the 'colours of the day'—the colours contained in the cartridge to be fired from the Very pistol in the event of being fired at by friendly anti-aircraft gunners, Navy ships or fighters. They were reminded the half-hourly broadcast by Group headquarters were to be logged and acted upon, and that radio silence was to be maintained except in the case of dire emergencies. Pick-up times for transport to take crews to their aircraft (usually arranged so that they arrived about 40 minutes before take-off) were organised, and the briefing was complete.

The crews would then have an hour and a half or two hours before it was time to begin preparing for the operation. The time was spent writing letters, reading, playing cards or snooker, watching a movie, trying to sleep or whatever each airman desired. They might also eat a pre-operations meal. Don Bruce, an Observer with No. 115 Squadron based at RAF Marham remembers this as

a very special time:

On every wartime bomber station there is an intermission prior to the commencement of operations. A period of time after the bustle of preparation has died. The air testing, the refuelling, the bombing up, the briefing are all behind. Now the waiting. It is a time of calm, of anticipation, of apprehension, even of foreboding. It is difficult to describe. Almost indefinable. Yet anyone who has served on a wartime bomber squadron will be aware of it. It affects everyone from the Station Commander down to the humblest aircraftman second class. It is a feeling which having been experienced will never be forgotten.<sup>142</sup>

Eventually it was time to go to the crew room to get kitted up. First though, they needed to empty their pockets of anything that could be helpful to the enemy in the event of their being shot down and captured. They then got into their flying clothing. Each crew member wore a standard flying suit—a kapok lined overall—as well as a polo-necked sweater, multiple layers of gloves and loose-fitting Morlands sheep-skin boots. This was all topped off by a leather flying helmet that included the crew intercom. Rations, parachutes, signal codes and Very pistol cartridges of the correct colours of the day were collected and it was time for a last ‘nervous’ pee before moving out to the bus or truck waiting to transport them to their aircraft. Many have likened the nervous banter on the trip to the aircraft to the banter one would hear on the way to a party. But in this case, it was a party from which some were destined not to return.

At the aircraft, after a final smoke and, for the superstitious, a pee on the tail wheel, it was time to climb aboard. Each crew member took up their positions and carried out their pre-flight checks. At the proper time, engines were started and run up to check for magneto drops.<sup>143</sup> Chocks were waved away and the aircraft taxied out onto the perimeter track, and in its turn, onto the runway.

At the end of the runway, each aircraft waited for a green light from the Flying Control caravan. Then it was engines to full power, release the brakes and trundle off down the runway. With a full bomb load, acceleration was not brisk, but eventually take-off speed of 125 miles/h (201 km/h) was reached. The pilot eased back on the control column and the aircraft slowly lifted off

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<sup>142</sup>Don Bruce. *Memory 7 - Don Bruce -115 Squadron - 1942*. RAF. 1942. URL: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/rafmarham/aboutus/memory7.cfm> (visited on 07/10/2014).

<sup>143</sup>For safety, all internal combustion aero engines, even today, power their ignition systems by two independent magnetos, each firing separate spark plugs. A magneto check ensures that each system is capable of operating the engine on its own. Each magneto system is turned off in turn, and making sure that the speed (revolutions per minute) of the engine does not drop by more than a nominated amount (50 rpm for the *Hercules*).

and climbed into the blackness. At 2,000 ft (610 m), the pilot reduced power and changed course towards the first rendezvous point.



**Figure 38:** *A Navigator Taking a Sight (IWM).*

The navigator was now faced with the problem of finding out what wind was actually blowing and how it compared to the forecast wind. When flying above a cloud base or over the sea, there were no landmarks to check your actual position. In 1941, before the introduction of electronic aids such as Gee and H2S, the only alternative was to use astro navigation. This involved standing under the astrodome and using a sextant to measure the elevation above the horizon of known stars or the moon. This data was then fed into a set of quite complex calculations which finally yielded a position line. Two or more position lines produced a 'fix'. The difficulty lay in obtaining accurate elevations while using the sextant in an unsteady, vibrating aircraft. Other than that, the only option was to use dead reckoning, allowing for the effects of the wind as if it was exactly as the Met. Officer had forecast, a risky business!

Recalling the many dangers that he and fellow aircrew faced when tasked with bombing missions to continental Europe, Canadian pilot Norman Magnusson recalled:

Half the time you wondered whether you would ever make it back, not only through enemy action, but because of weather and inadequacies of navigation equipment. Most often in Europe at that time of the year [winter] it is pretty cloudy, and the altitudes were such that you couldn't see the ground. You could not pinpoint where you were. So essentially you are relying on your astro navigation.

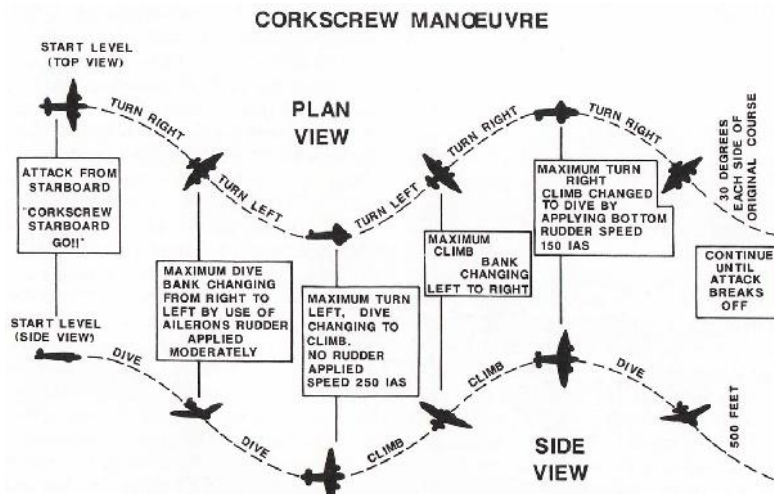
If your calculations were accurate, you managed to get back home. I guess that's why I say I wonder often whether some of the crews that went missing weren't missing because they simply weren't able to find their way home. They just ran out of fuel somewhere over the North Sea or over clag and that was just it. We had some interesting experiences that way.<sup>144</sup>

The pilot would continue to climb until he reached the *Wellington's* cruising altitude of 10,000 ft (3,050 m) and set the best cruise speed (about 165 mile/h (265 km/h) for a fully loaded *Wellington* MkIc). As the aircraft flew without any navigation lights to avoid detection, it was rare to see another aircraft. They might be felt when flying through the turbulence of their wake, or inferred from a fleeting glimpse of a dark shape passing by.

Depending on the location of the target, there may be one or more turning points to be passed, before reaching the vicinity of the target. As the target was approached, or even sooner if the target was well inland, the aircraft would

<sup>144</sup>Chapman, "The Evolution of Professional Aviation Culture in Canada, 1939-1945".

enter belts of searchlights. These were of blinding intensity and many crews got the feeling that the searchlights were looking only for them and felt extremely exposed. The defender's anti-aircraft guns would begin their barrage, the sky filling with the black puffs of smoke from the exploding flak.<sup>145</sup> It seemed to the crews that all hell had broken loose, and was particularly bad if 'coned' by several searchlights. When this happened, all of the anti-aircraft gunners in the area would concentrate their fire on the unfortunate aircraft.



**Figure 39:** *The Corkscrew Manoeuvre (Lancaster Archive).*

The standard defence was the corkscrew manoeuvre; a series of sharp dives, rolls and climbs designed to shake off the pursuer. This often worked, at least until the enemy could reacquire his prey and start over again.

The observer, in his duty as bomb aimer, would then take up his position in the bomb well and proceed to guide the pilot to the target with instructions such as 'Left, left, steady, right, steady'. As the aircraft could not conduct evasive manoeuvres during this period, it always seemed an eternity to the crew before they heard the magic words 'bombs gone' and the pilot could once more throw the aircraft about the sky in an attempt to avoid both flak and searchlights.

If they were lucky, they would escape from the maelstrom unscathed. Those less lucky might experience a degree of damage, some great enough to necessitate abandoning their aircraft and taking their chances on the ground. If they could, they would set a course for home. The rest was easy. All they had to do was hope that any damage to the aircraft was not enough to be terminal; that the engines would continue to run; that they had enough fuel; that they could navigate their way back to base; and once there, that the weather would be clear enough to allow a safe landing.

<sup>145</sup>The word flak is commonly used to describe anti-aircraft fire; it derives from the German Flugzeugabwehrkanone, aircraft defence cannon.

Once safely landed, the crews would attend a debriefing session with the Intelligence Section, followed by the traditional breakfast of bacon and eggs. If there were gaps around the mess table, nobody mentioned them.



**Figure 40:** *Lancaster crew being de-briefed (AWM).*

## 9 Operations to Kiel and Emden

Other than for training purposes, the entire Bomber Command remained on the ground from 10 to 15 November.

### 9.1 Operational Details

On 15 November, orders were issued by Headquarters No. 3 Group (Form B.661) in Exning, Suffolk,<sup>146</sup> detailing an attack on Kiel and Emden. A total of 71 No. 3 Group aircraft were to take part, with 49 targeting Kiel and 22 Emden. No. 218 Squadron was to provide 13 aircraft, 11 bound for Kiel and 2 for Emden. In the event, only 12 of the requested 13 aircraft took part. The Squadron's Operations Record Book (Form 541) for 15 November 1941 records them as:

**Operations.** There were twelve crews detailed and briefed for operations tonight, they are:-

A Z1103	Sgt.	Tompkins	F Z.1101	Sgt.	McGregor	
B R1346	"	Vezina	H Z.8853	"	Forsyth	
V W5727	"	McKay	L Z.8965	"	Webber	
N R1135	"	Cook	J Z.8431	P/O	Livingston	
O X9785	"	McPhail	X Z.8437	Sgt.	Brewerton	
E Z8982	"	Hinwood	Z Z.8375	W/Cr.	Kirkpatrick	147

The two aircraft bound for Emden (SGT Webber and SGT Hinwood) took off at 17:15 and 17:20 respectively. The remaining 10 aircraft took off in two waves, the first between 21:20 and 21:50 and the second between 22:05 and 22:43. Allan's aircraft, as was common for the most inexperienced crew, was the last to take off at 22:43.

Each aircraft from No. 218 Squadron carried a bomb load to Kiel consisting of one 1000 lb bomb with the remainder of the load made up of 500 lb General Purpose bombs, all fitted with tail fuses set to a delay of 0.025 seconds.

Their objective was Kiel harbour, a strategically important target. At that time, Kiel remained one of the major naval bases and shipbuilding centres of the German Reich. As a naval port and as a production site for submarines, Kiel was heavily bombed on a number of occasions. Kiel was second only to Hamburg in importance as a U-boat construction location in Germany, with over 230 U-boats launched throughout the war.

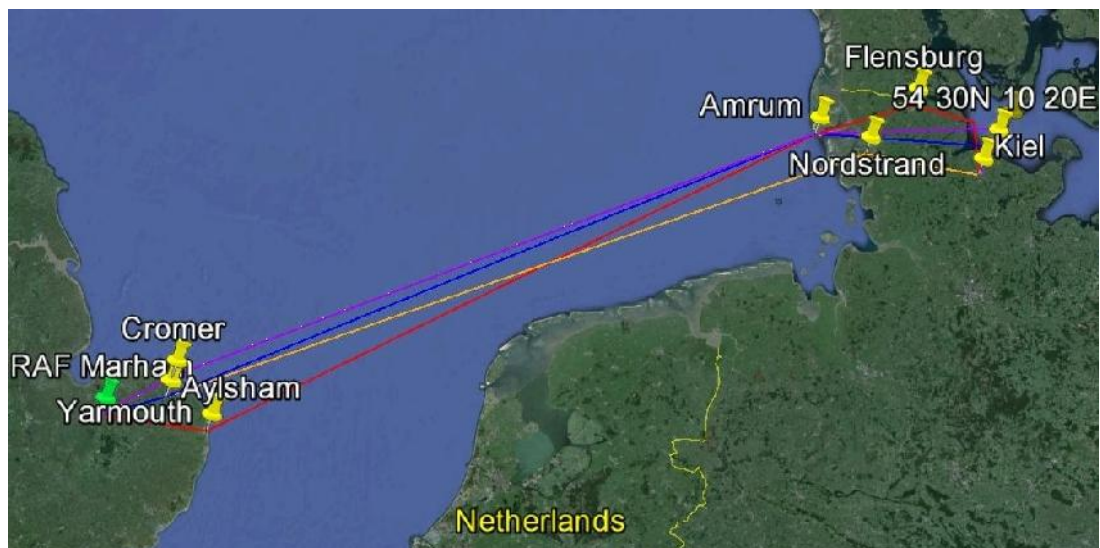
<sup>146</sup>No. 3 Group Senior Air Staff Officer. *Orders from Headquarters No. 3 Group to No. 3 Group Bases. (Included in an E-mail from Mr. Steve Smith, 3 February 2014).* 15 Nov. 1941.

<sup>147</sup>AIR 27/1349/23 Squadron Number 218, *Record of Events*.





**Figure 41:** Aerial View of Kiel Harbour (No. 218 Squadron Association).



**Figure 42:** Routes to Kiel.





**Figure 43:** Approaches to Kiel.

According to the Bomber Command File AIR 14-3371 *Interception and Tactics: night reports*,<sup>148</sup> five different routes were to be taken to the target (see Figure 42):

- Route 1: Yarmouth—Amrum—Flensburg—Baltic—Kiel and return
- Route 2: NW Aylsham—Amrum—54 30N 10 20E—Kiel and return
- Route 3: NW Aylsham—Nordstrand—Kiel—Yarmouth
- Route 4: Cromer—Amrum—54 37N 10 30E—Kiel and return
- Route 5: Cromer—Amrum—54 30N 10 20E—Kiel—Burnham Market

Using these routes had the effect of separating the aircraft in time and space, but more importantly of varying the approach angles that groups aircraft took on their final runs toward the target. As shown in Figure 43, aircraft would be approaching the target from directions ranging from the west, through north to the north-east. Hopefully, this would generate enough confusion among the defenders to minimise aircraft losses.

## 9.2 The Aircraft

On the raid to Kiel, Allan flew *Wellington* Mk1c R1135 which had the call sign HA-N.<sup>149</sup> This aircraft was delivered by Vickers Armstrong into storage at No. 51 Maintenance Unit (MU) on 18 September 1940. It was transferred to No. 9 MU for initial testing on 2 November 1940 and delivered to No. 218 Squadron on 28 December 1940. By the time of the Keil raid, R1135 had completed 126.5 flying hours. It was one of the older aircraft in the squadron,

<sup>148</sup>AIR 14/3371: *Interception and tactics: night reports*. The National Archives, Kew, UK. Aug.–Dec. 1941.

<sup>149</sup>RAF aircraft were marked with an identification code consisting of a squadron code (HA for No. 218) followed by a letter that uniquely identifies a particular aircraft. When an aircraft is lost or withdrawn from use, its call sign has been applied to its replacement or another aircraft.



**Figure 44:** No. 218 Squadron Wellington R1448 (This aircraft was one of a batch of 30 Wellington MkIcs delivered to No. 218 Squadron from late 1940 until early 1941. Allan's aircraft, R1135, was from the same batch.) (IWM).

### 9.3 The Crew

In addition to Allan as pilot and captain of the aircraft, the crew of R1135 for the operation to Kiel consisted of:

**Second Pilot:** Deadman, SGT Kenneth David. Service Number: 101410, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Born: November 1916 in Darlington, Durham, England. Parents: William Henry Deadman and Edith Prosser.

**Observer:** Drury, SGT Jack Burton. Service Number: 968019, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Born: 2 March 1918 in Leeds, Yorkshire, England. Parents: \_\_\_\_\_ Drury and M. Edith Wood. He was educated at Preston Grammar School from 1929 to 1934. He joined the RAF in 1939 completing his training as an observer under the BCATP in Canada.

**Wireless Operator:** Reeve, SGT Fred Charles. Service Number: 1168648, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Born: October 1916 in Brentford,

Greater London, England. Parents: \_\_\_\_\_ Reeve and \_\_\_\_\_ Richards.

**Front Gunner:** Hannam, SGT Robert Neville. Service Number: 1006118, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Born: May 1920 in Bradford, Yorkshire, England. Parents: Victor Hannam and Eva Richardson.

**Rear Gunner:** Glenny, SGT Robert Edmund. Service Number: 1021175, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. Born: 1922 in County Down, Northern Ireland. Parents: Sydney Glenny and Betty \_\_\_\_\_.

## 9.4 Results

By the middle of 1941, there was increasing concern about the accuracy of bombing. The cumulative effect of inadequate training and the inaccuracy of meteorological forecasts together with poor technology to assist with navigation and target recognition, meant that in spite of the courage and resolve shown by crews, very few of the bombs they dropped fell within the vicinity of the target. In August 1941, at the instigation of Lord Cherwell (science and technology advisor to and close friend of Prime Minister Churchill), Mr David Butt (a civil servant member of the War Cabinet Secretariat)<sup>150</sup> made an examination of 4000 target photographs taken by Bomber Command aircraft in night raids during June and July 1941. His conclusions were that:<sup>151</sup>

- (a) Of those aircraft recorded as attacking the target, only one in three got within 5 miles (8 km).
- (b) Over Germany as a whole, this ratio was one in four, while over the Ruhr, it was only one in ten.
- (c) With a full moon, the ratio was two in five while for a new moon, one in fifteen.
- (d) With no haze, the ratio was one in two while thick haze reduced this to one in 15.
- (e) These data only relate to those aircraft recorded as attacking the target. The proportion of total sorties that did so was less than one third.
- (f) Overall, only about 5% of of bombers setting out managed to drop their bombs within 5 miles (8 km) of the target.

The results of the operations to Kiel and Emden were, unfortunately, all too typical of the inefficiencies uncovered by Butt.

Of the 71 No. 3 Group aircraft (all *Wellingtons*) that attacked Emden and Kiel on the night of 15/16 November, eleven aircraft failed to take off and seven

<sup>150</sup>In the 1960s Butt took up an appointment as professorial fellow in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University. As a member of the Asprey Committee on tax reform (1975-1976) he became the first person to propose a Goods and Services Tax for Australia.

<sup>151</sup>Robert Jackson. *Before the Storm. The Story of Royal Air Force Bomber Command, 1939-42*. London, UK: Barker, 1972.

aircraft returned early due to icing.<sup>152</sup> Only eight aircraft reported completing attacks against Kiel and only one or two against Emden. Of the ten No. 218 Squadron aircraft targeting Kiel: three reached the vicinity of the target but could only report sighting flashes due to 10/10 cloud; three returned to base after encountering severe icing; one jettisoned their bombs having been unable to find the target; and one turned back because of low oil pressure in the port engine. The remaining two aircraft did not return to base. However, No. 3 Group reported that all aircraft that did not return early confirmed by wireless that they had attacked the primary target, including those that did not return to base.<sup>153</sup>

According to the Bomber Command War Diaries, "Kiel reported a cloudy night and no bombs".<sup>154</sup> Of those who claimed to have reached Kiel, the best they could report was sighting bursts through the 10/10 cloud.<sup>155</sup> As the No. 3 Group ORB notes: "Altogether a very unsuccessful night, five aircraft are missing and several crashed".<sup>156</sup>

The No. 3 Group aircraft that either crashed or ditched were:

- |         |       |        |   |
|---------|-------|--------|---|
| 99 SQN  | Z9740 | (Kiel) | Turned back due to severe icing and crash landed at Wilburton, Cambridgeshire. All of the crew suffered non-fatal injuries.                             |
| 115 SQN | Z8848 | (Kiel) | Ditched 10 Miles NE of Whitby, Yorkshire. Crew rescued by a destroyer manned by Norwegian sailors.  |
| 218 SQN | Z8853 | (Keil) | Encountered very severe weather conditions and crashed near Marske, Yorkshire, killing the front gunner and injuring two of the crew.                   |
| 311 SQN | Z8966 | (Kiel) | Passed over the north of England on return and crashed in the Irish Sea 20 miles SW of St. Bees Head, Cumberland. Two members of the crew were rescued. |

<sup>152</sup>AIR 25/52 Headquarters No. 3 (Bomber) Group: Operation Record Books. The National Archives, Kew, UK. Jan. 1941–Dec. 1943.

<sup>153</sup>AIR 14/3371: Interception and tactics: night reports.

<sup>154</sup>Chris Everitt Martin Middlebrook. *The Bomber Command War Diaries. An Operational Reference Book, 1939-1945*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Viking, 1972. ISBN: 0670801372.

<sup>155</sup>AIR 27/1349/23 Squadron Number 218, Record of Events.

<sup>156</sup>AIR 25/52 Headquarters No. 3 (Bomber) Group: Operation Record Books; W R Chorley. *Royal Air Force Bomber Command Losses of the Second World War*. Vol. 2: 1941. Hinkley, England: Midland Publishing, 2006. ISBN: 9780904597875.

The missing aircraft were:

99 SQN	Z8975	(Emden)	Last heard of on a first class bearing from Waterbeach.
99 SQN	L7873	(Emden)	Signalled target attacked. Last heard of at a fixed position 40 miles NE of Terschelling (in the North Sea off the Netherlands.)
115 SQN	X9888	(Emden)	Last heard of 50 miles NW of Terschelling.
149 SQN	R1627	(Emden)	Sent an SOS at 2007 and got a bearing 075° from Pulham (?) at 2050. Nothing more heard.
218 SQN	R1135	(Keil)	Sent an SOS and received a position very far north of his track at 0204. Nothing more was heard.

All of these aircraft failed to return to base and their crews were declared missing, presumed dead, shortly thereafter. Unfortunately, Allan's aircraft (R1135) was one of these.

## 9.5 What Happened?

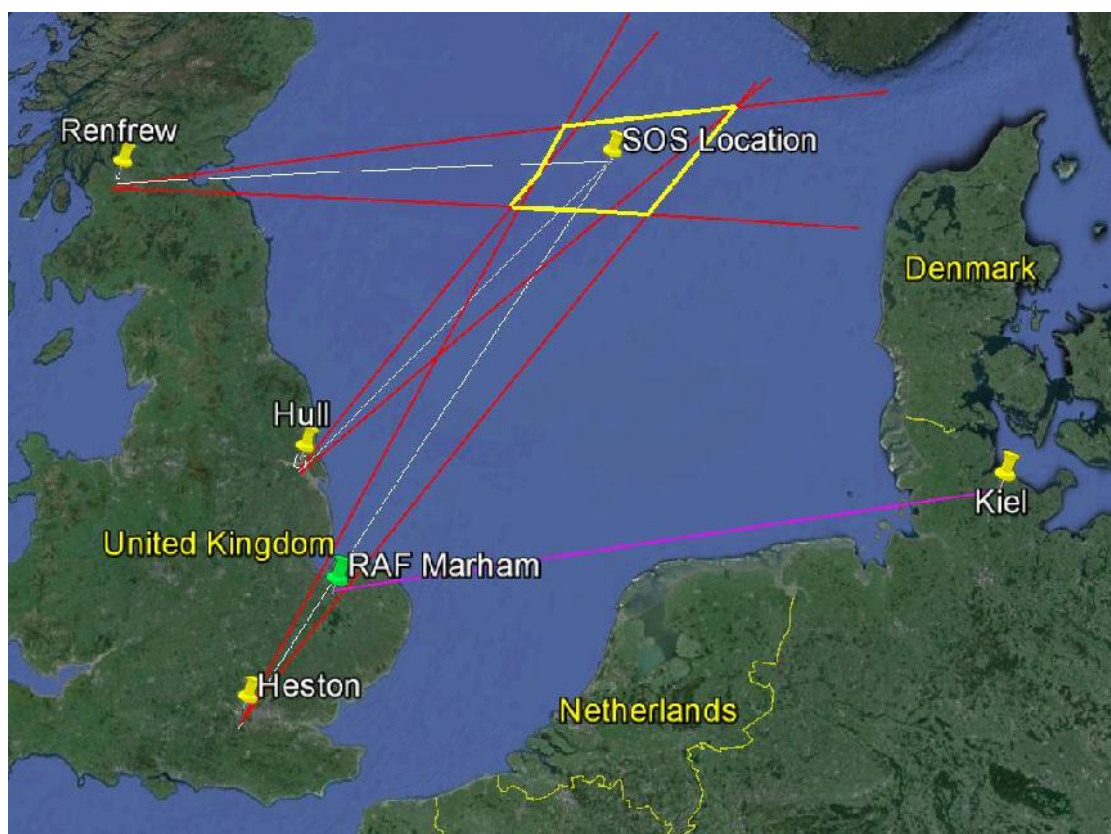
What went wrong? Given the minimal contact between Allan's aircraft and shore stations, we will never know the exact circumstances that led to the loss of the aircraft and its six aircrew. We can however make some suggestions based on the evidence that we do have.

### The fix

The aircraft was given a 'second class fix' in response to an SOS sent at 02:02 on 16 November 1941.<sup>157</sup> The fix was provided by the Medium Frequency Direction Finding (MF D/F) Station at Hull. The fix was generated by detecting the direction from which the SOS signal was coming at three geographically dispersed stations, all working on the same radio frequency, that together made up a section of the MF D/F organisation. The station at Hull, 'Hull No. 2', was the control station for Section 'K' which provided security duties for No. 3 Bomber Group aircraft. The other stations in Section 'K' were 'Heston No. 2' (located near London, Heathrow) and 'Renfrew No. 2' (8 km east of Glasgow).<sup>158</sup> These stations would have passed their measurements of the bearing of the signal to Hull No. 2 who would have plotted them, their point of intersection giving the position of the aircraft. They would then have passed the resulting fix back to Allan's aircraft by coded radio message. While this sounds rather cumbersome, in practice, an aircraft could receive its fix within a minute of asking. In this case, the requested fix was sent at 02:04. No response was received from Allan's aircraft.

<sup>157</sup>AIR 25/52 Headquarters No. 3 (Bomber) Group: Operation Record Books.

<sup>158</sup>Signals Volume III.. Aircraft Radio. Buxton, UK: MLRS Books.



**Figure 45:** MF D/F Bearings with Error Limits.

The accuracy of the fix provided to the aircraft varied depending on, amongst other things, the distance of the aircraft from the D/F station, the height of the aircraft, the strength of the transmitted signal and atmospheric conditions. The accuracy of a fix was classified according to the class of bearings composing it (1st class bearing: error between  $0^\circ$  and  $2^\circ$ ; 2nd class: error between  $2^\circ$  and  $5^\circ$ ; and 3rd class: error greater than  $5^\circ$ ):<sup>159</sup>

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| First Class  | Two or more 1st class bearings making a good cut.                           |
| Second Class | One 1st class bearing and one or more 2nd class bearings making a good cut. |
| Third Class  | Bearings all other than 1st class making a good cut.                        |

The fix provided to Allan's aircraft placed it at a latitude of  $56^\circ 53'$  North and a longitude of  $03^\circ 30'$  East.<sup>160</sup> Bearings from the three Section 'K' MF D/F stations to this point are shown in Figure 45. The fix was described as a

<sup>159</sup> *Air Publication 3024: Flying Control in the Royal Air Force. Promulgated for the Information, Guidance and Compliance of all Concerned.* Air Council. UK: Air Ministry, 1944.

<sup>160</sup> A705, RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series.

Second Class fix, meaning that only one of the three bearings had an error between  $0^\circ$  and  $2^\circ$  while the other two had an error between  $2^\circ$  and  $5^\circ$ . As we cannot know which bearing was the more accurate one, the conservative approach is to assign the same, larger, error to all three bearings. These error bounds are also included in Figure 45. They form a polygon (outlined in yellow) around the nominal SOS location which defines the possible location of the SOS signal when the errors in the individual bearings are taken into account. This polygon covers about 130 miles (210 km) from north to south and about 87 miles (140 km) from east to west.

It is surprising that the fix was rated as Second Class. The maximum range for accurate fixing was stated to be 300 miles (480 km) “in good conditions”.<sup>161</sup> Only one of the D/F stations (Hull No. 2) was within this range, while Renfrew No. 2 was 310 miles (425 km) away and Heston No. 22 was 410 miles (660 km) away, well outside the range for good accuracy. Both of these latter stations must have somehow provided, at worst, a 2nd class bearing to allow the fix to be rated as Second Class.

The fix places the aircraft a very long way (250 miles (395 km)) north of its expected return route, and far enough (350 miles (560 km)) off the coast of the UK that “the air-sea rescue service could not compete”.<sup>162</sup>

### How did the aircraft get so far off course?

Since they confirmed by wireless that they had attacked the primary target, the crew obviously believed that they had been in the vicinity of Kiel. The fix on the SOS places the aircraft between 270 miles (435 km) and 350 miles (565 km) from Kiel (depending on their actual position within the possible location polygon) shortly after 2:00 a.m. The distance flown from Marham to Kiel varies depending on which route they were assigned, but the average is about 450 miles (725 km). Assuming an average speed of 165 miles/h (265 km/h), the outward journey would have taken Allan about 2 hours and 45 minutes. Given that they took off from Marham at 22:43 on 15 November,<sup>163</sup> they would have reached Kiel at about 01:28 on the morning of 16 November. To have reached even the closest point in the possible location polygon by 02:04 is not possible, as to do so they would have had to average close to 370 miles/h (595 km/h), well above the maximum speed of the *Wellington* (235 miles/h (380 km/h)).

For the aircraft to have reached the centre of the possible location polygon by 02:04, they must never have been in the vicinity of Kiel. They must instead have reached the coast of Denmark well north of Kiel. Trial and error suggests that reaching the coast about 150 miles (240 km) north of Kiel and then turn-

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<sup>161</sup> *Signals Volume III.*

<sup>162</sup> A705, RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series.

<sup>163</sup> AIR 27/1349/23 Squadron Number 218, Record of Events.





**Figure 46:** *Possible Course Flown by R1135*

ing for home would put them in the vicinity of the SOS position at the correct time. A plot of one possible course taken by Allan's aircraft is shown in Figure 46.

This amounts to a quite serious error in navigation. What might have been the cause? The weather conditions over the North Sea on that night were such that there was thick cloud all the way from Marham to Kiel, with the cloud tops initially at 8,000 ft, increasing towards the east to above 14,000 ft. The cloud would almost certainly have been thick enough to prevent the identification of any ground features. It would also probably have made astro-navigational sights difficult if not impossible. Hence it is very probable that Allan's aircraft flew the complete operation on the basis of dead reckoning positions.

A number of No. 218 Squadron aircraft reported that the winds encountered were not as forecast. From an analysis of German upper air meteorological charts for 15 and 16 November, Brian Lyffe has estimated that the weather forecast was indeed significantly in error, with strong south to south-westerly winds at the altitudes flown.<sup>164</sup> In the absence of any sort of visual or astro fix,

<sup>164</sup>Brian Lyffe. *E-mail re: Weather Pattern in the North Sea, 15-16 November 1941*. 20 Aug. 2014.



Allan's navigator would have not have been able to account for these, leading to the aircraft being blown a significant distance to the north of its intended course. Why didn't all the aircraft on the raid suffer a similar fate? In fact they probably did. Only three of the ten aircraft that targeted Kiel dropped their bombs in what they claimed was the vicinity of Kiel. But none were able to confirm their position due to 10/10 cloud. Some of these may have been lucky enough to get a glimpse of the ground sufficient for an experienced navigator to get a fix. Others were not so lucky. One crew, in *Wellington* Z8853, also found themselves well north of the return course and were forced, by engine failure and severe icing, to land in a field near New Marske, Yorkshire. This is about 140 miles (225 km) north of Marham. A crew from No. 311 Squadron, flying *Wellington* Z8966, passed completely over the north of England on their return and crashed into the Irish Sea near St. Bees Head. They would have passed about 155 miles (250 km) north of their base at RAF East Wretham.

### What prompted the SOS?

An SOS is only transmitted in situations of extreme distress, where lives are in immediate danger. What could have been the trigger for the SOS sent by Allan's aircraft? There was a set of self-evident codes (e.g. ICE = Icing) that could be added to the SOS signal to indicate the cause of the problem. However, signals procedure insisted that "It must be clearly understood that the use of this code must not jeopardise the passing of the S.O.S. calls, either from the aircraft concerned or other aircraft using the same frequency."<sup>165</sup> As far as we know, no such code was appended to the SOS sent by Allan's aircraft. Nevertheless, the codes provide a convenient framework for analysing the possible problem(s) they encountered. The codes were:

FTR	—	Damaged by enemy fighter.
FLK	—	Damaged by enemy flak.
BAL	—	Damaged by enemy balloons.
ICE	—	Icing.
ENG	—	Engine failure.
PET	—	Fuel shortage.
LLL	—	Lost.

As we will see in the next section, the body of one of Allan's crew (SGT Drury, the Observer) was recovered from the sea in northern Norway. When recovered, the body was clothed with little damage beyond that caused by two or three months in the sea and with an inflated Mae West life preserver, suggesting that either the aircraft made a fairly well controlled landing in the sea (ditching) or that at least some of the crew were able to abandon the aircraft and parachute into the sea.

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<sup>165</sup>*Signals Volume III.*

To parachute into the North Sea was to invite almost certain death from exposure and hypothermia. The sea surface temperature in the North Sea around the SOS location in November is between 8°C and 9°C. For water temperatures below 10°C, hypothermia results in death in less than an hour. Ditching was often seen to be a more desirable alternative. However, ditching also had its dangers. Standard advice to pilots was to land into the wind, and to attempt to land between the wave crests. Even with flaps fully extended, the minimum landing speed for the Wellington MkIc was about 90 miles/h (145 km/h). Hitting the water at that speed, particularly if there were significant wind generated waves or swell present, would result in severe decelerations and in many cases, breaking the back of the aircraft. The crew could sustain severe injuries, despite taking up their correct ditching positions.

If the aircraft had ditched, the crew's problems were only just beginning. The *Wellington* was notorious for sinking quickly despite having flotation bags mounted in the bomb bay. These were inflated from carbon dioxide cylinders and would, ideally, be inflated by the crew at least five minutes before ditching, but would in any case inflate automatically on immersion of the front turret.<sup>166</sup> An immersion switch in the starboard engine nacelle released and inflated the inflatable dinghy stored in the nacelle. This could also be initiated by pulling a handle inside the fuselage.

With these considerations in mind, let us consider the possible reason for sending the SOS:

**FTR, FLK, BAL** While it is possible that Allan's aircraft had suffered damage inflicted by enemy units, this seems unlikely. If they were as far north of their intended track as their final position infers, the chances of encountering either ground- or air-based defensive units would have been small. The dense cloud cover, and the likelihood that they dropped their bombs over sparsely populated countryside, would have made their detection unlikely, even if there had been enemy units in the area.

**ICE** Conditions conducive to icing were certainly present for both the outward and return journeys to Kiel. Of the ten No. 218 Squadron aircraft detailed for Kiel, four reported that they had encountered severe icing conditions; of these three returned to base at an early stage in the outward leg. Hence it is possible, even probable, that Allan would have encountered icing conditions during the flight. With the height of the cloud tops (14,000 ft (4,250 m)) close to the service ceiling of the *Wellington* MkIc (16,000 ft (4875 m)) it would have been difficult to avoid flying in cloud. If icing had resulted in the aircraft becoming hard to control, or even unstable, the only recourse available was to move to an area of higher air temperature so the ice would melt. This usually meant descending to a lower altitude.

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<sup>166</sup>*Air Publication 1578C: Wellington Pilot's Notes*. Aviation of World War 2. URL: [http://www.airpages.ru/eng/uk/wel\\_01.shtml](http://www.airpages.ru/eng/uk/wel_01.shtml) (visited on 08/12/2014).

**ENG** Engine failure was an ever present risk with the *Wellington* MkIc aircraft. Once one engine failed, the aircraft was supposedly capable of holding an altitude of 2000 ft (619 m), but many aircraft, particularly the older ones, could not maintain height at all. This was exacerbated by the *Wellington* MkIc not being equipped with feathering propellers.<sup>167</sup> Hence, the failure of one engine could lead to a continuing descent to sea level. Once there, ditching was inevitable, a difficult manoeuvre at the best of times, but much more so with only one engine.

**PET** Allan's aircraft took off with a full fuel load of 750 gallons. In normal operations, a *Wellington* MkIc consumed between 80 and 100 gallons of fuel per hour, giving it an endurance of between seven and nine hours. Allan had been flying for a little short of three and a half hours when he sent the SOS. In the absence of battle damage, it is therefore highly unlikely that he ran out of fuel.

**LLL** There is very little doubt that Allan's aircraft was lost when it sent the SOS. However, despite the unsettling effect (bordering on panic?) that this would have had on the crew, being lost would not have been the direct cause of their problems.

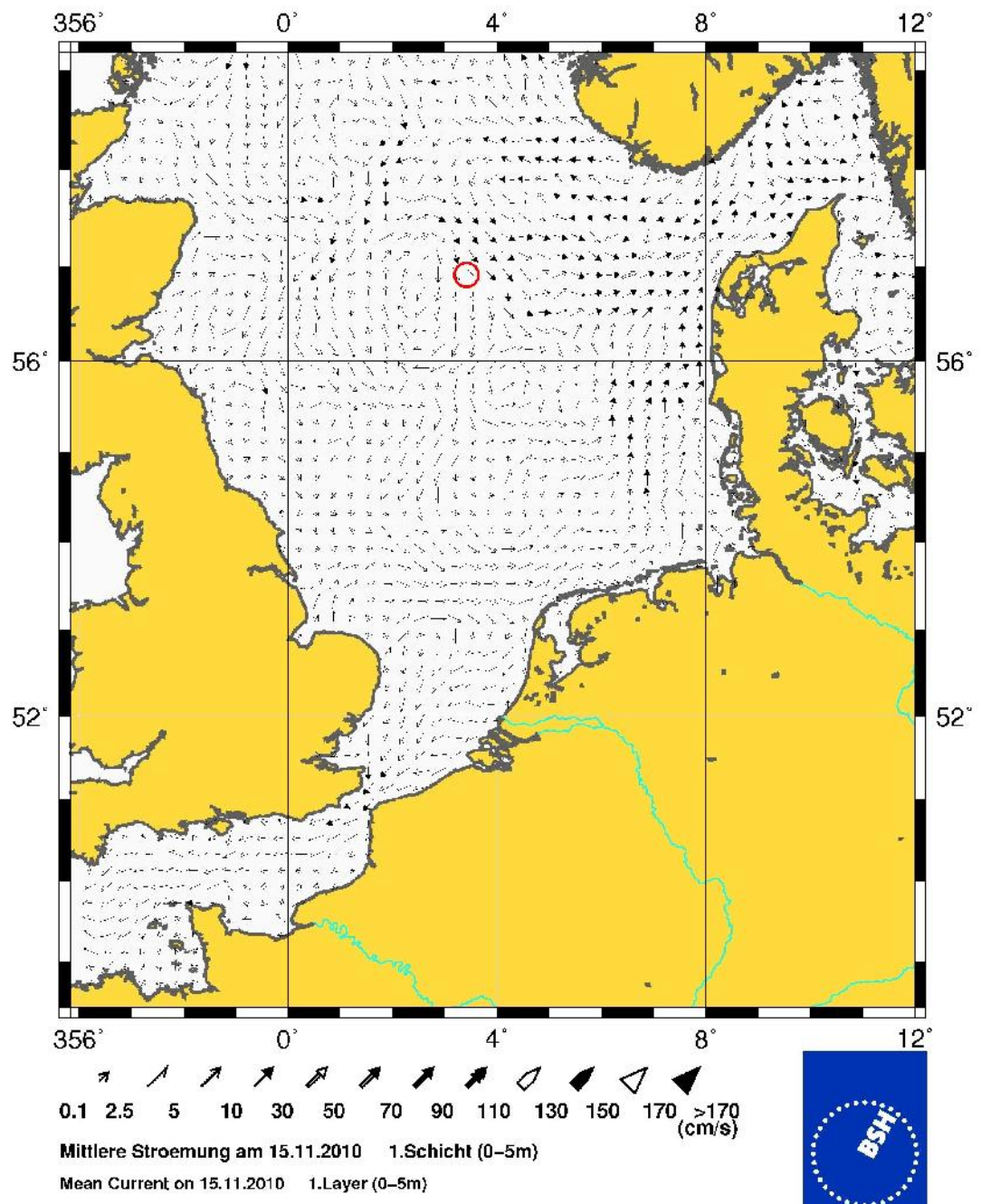
## 9.6 SGT Drury

The body of Allan's observer, Jack Drury, was discovered in late January 1942 in the water near the Sklinna island group in Norway. Sklinna is located about 30 kilometres north-west of the island of Leka, and some 650 miles (1050 km) (by the shortest sea path) from the SOS location. Could the body have travelled that distance in the time available? If it took the shortest route, it would have had an average speed of 0.36 Miles/h (0.58 km/h) for the 75 days between 16 November 1941 and the end of January 1942. In all likelihood, it would have followed a considerably longer path, requiring a correspondingly higher average speed. Figure 47 shows that the sea surface currents in the area have maximum magnitudes of the order of 10 cm/s or 0.22 miles/h, not sufficient to carry the body to where it was found.

However, allowances must also be made for the effects of the wind. There are two possible effects: leeway, which is the movement of an object caused by it being pushed through the water by local winds blowing against its exposed surfaces; and local wind current which is the current generated by wind acting on the surface of the water. We do not have sufficient information to calculate these effects in detail, but we can use Internationally accepted models to ob-

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<sup>167</sup>Like many aircraft, the *Wellington* MkIc was fitted with variable-pitch propellers and a system to maintain the optimal angle of attack (maximum lift to drag ratio) on the propeller blades as aircraft speed varied. On some variable-pitch propellers, the blades can be rotated parallel to the airflow to reduce drag in case of an engine failure. This is known as propeller feathering.



**Figure 47:** Surface Currents in the North Sea for 15 November 2010 (BSH).

tain an estimate of their magnitude:<sup>168</sup>

Wind Speed (knot)	Wind Current (knot)	Leeway (knot)	Total (knot)	Total (miles/h)
10	0.36	0.12	0.48	0.55
20	0.72	0.24	0.96	1.10

Thus, it is quite possible that, with favourable wind direction, the effects of wind could have been two or three times those of sea surface currents. While it is unlikely that the wind would have been favourable throughout, it is clearly feasible for the body to have reached Sklinna in the time available.

It should also be noted that the the recovery of the body in Sklinna adds confidence in the location of the SOS location. If the crash site had been much further south or west, it seems unlikely that it would have been caught by the eddy that eventually took it north to the coast of Norway and then further up the coast to Sklinna.

SGT Drury's body was taken to Brønnøysund, the local administrative centre aboard the *Skarv*, a pre-First World War torpedo boat built for the Royal Norwegian Navy but at that time under the command of the occupying German forces. He was buried there as 'unknown'. In October 1944 FLTLT Hubert Brooks, a Canadian working with the RAF/Commonwealth Forces Missing Research & Enquiry Service, went to Brønnøysund with authority to open the grave. Brooks recalls that:

The airman was so to say 'vacuum-wrapped' in a tarpaulin, the Germans who brought him from Sklinna obviously hadn't opened the 'package'. The body had his airman's jacket with observers watch on his wrist, and the ID-tags around his neck were still in place.

Thanks to the ID-tags, his identity could be established.<sup>169</sup>

The body was moved to a new grave and re-buried with great respect from the local dignitaries. The coffin was later moved by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to the Stavne Cemetery in Trondheim, Norway.

<sup>168</sup>*National Search and Rescue Manuals*. Australian Maritime Safety Authority. June 2014. URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?Uri=D8394323> (visited on 02/01/2015).

<sup>169</sup>*The Life and Times of Hubert Brooks M.C. C.D.. Chapter 6: Missing Research & Enquiry Service – M.R.E.S.* 2011. URL: [http://www.hubertbrooks.com/6\\_6HubertBrooks\\_EngPilot.html](http://www.hubertbrooks.com/6_6HubertBrooks_EngPilot.html) (visited on 27/10/2013).



**Figure 48:** Grave at Stavne Cemetery in Trondheim, Norway (L. Druce).

## 10 Your Son is Missing

### 10.1 Sad News

News that Allan's aircraft was missing (due to "presumed enemy action") was passed to the Air Board in Melbourne by the Air Ministry in London on 17 November 1941. A telegram was then sent by the Air Board to his next of kin, his mother Ellen, on 18 November 1941. It read:

Regret to inform you that your son Sergeant Alan Cook is reported missing as the result of air operations on 6 Nov 1941. Any further information received will be immediately conveyed to you.<sup>170</sup>

A very similar telegram was sent to George Latimer, who Allan had named as a "Person to be informed of Casualties" on his Airman's Record Sheet (Active Service—Overseas).<sup>171,172</sup>

### 10.2 Confusion

The receipt of the telegram from the Air Board by his family was greeted with concern, but also with a growing conviction that a mistake must have been made. Allan's sister, Jean, had received a cablegram from Allan dated 11 November which read:

Parcel received  
Many thanks  
Love  
Allan Cook.

The family wondered, very reasonably, how Allan could have gone missing on 6 November (as reported in the telegram sent to his mother) and then send a cablegram to Jean on 11 November? They were quickly in touch with the Air Board who sent a request to the Air Liaison Office, London for clarification. It read:

Reference AUS.400696 Sgt Alan COOK reported missing 6 Nov. Next of kin received cablegram from this airman apparently dated 11 Nov. Request you investigate whether this airman now safe and signal advice. Air Ministry's X6170 17 Nov refers.

It took just one day for London to respond, the Air Board receiving a message on 9 November that read:

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<sup>170</sup>A705, RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series.

<sup>171</sup>A9300, RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48.

<sup>172</sup>It is unclear why Allan had nominated George Latimer rather than one of his siblings for this rôle. On Allan's Record Sheet—Officers and Airman Pilots (A9300, RAAF Officers Personnel Files, 1921-48) it is stated that George should be notified "Instead of the next of kin".



Casualty. AUS 400696 Sergeant COOK A  
Your J575 19/11 and AIR MIN X6170 17/11. Airman reported missing 16/11 not 6/11. No further news to date.

This information was forwarded on 21 November to Ellen Cook and George Latimer in almost identical telegrams:

Latest information received from Air Liaison Office London states that your son Sergeant Alan Cook was reported missing on 16 Nov 1941 not 6 Nov 1941 as previously advised. No further news is yet available. Any further reports received will be immediately conveyed to you.

The situation was summarised in a letter (see Figure 49) sent by the Air Board to both Ellen Cook and George Latimer on 27 November. This letter is a standard form letter sent in such circumstances, but with two important differences. There is an added paragraph explaining that the mistaken date of Allan going missing was due to “an error having occurred in the transmission of the cablegram”, and some additional information, that “An S.O.S. message was picked up from your son’s aircraft at 2:12 a.m. but after that time nothing more was heard of the aircraft or any members of the crew.” is included.

If the RAAF had expected that this would produce some sort of closure, they were to be disappointed. Once sown, that seed of doubt created by the confusion over the date that Allan was reported missing continued to grow. On 6 January 1941, Jean Cook sent a letter to the Air Board that read:

Dear Sir,

Following our telephone conversation, we enclose herewith a page from the Sun, 12th December showing the picture of airmen picked up, somewhere in the Atlantic. We feel sure that the first airman in the picture is our brother, Sgt. Allan Cook, No. 400696, and would like you to do all you possibly can to check up on this photo for us.

Thanking you, and looking forward to hearing from you.

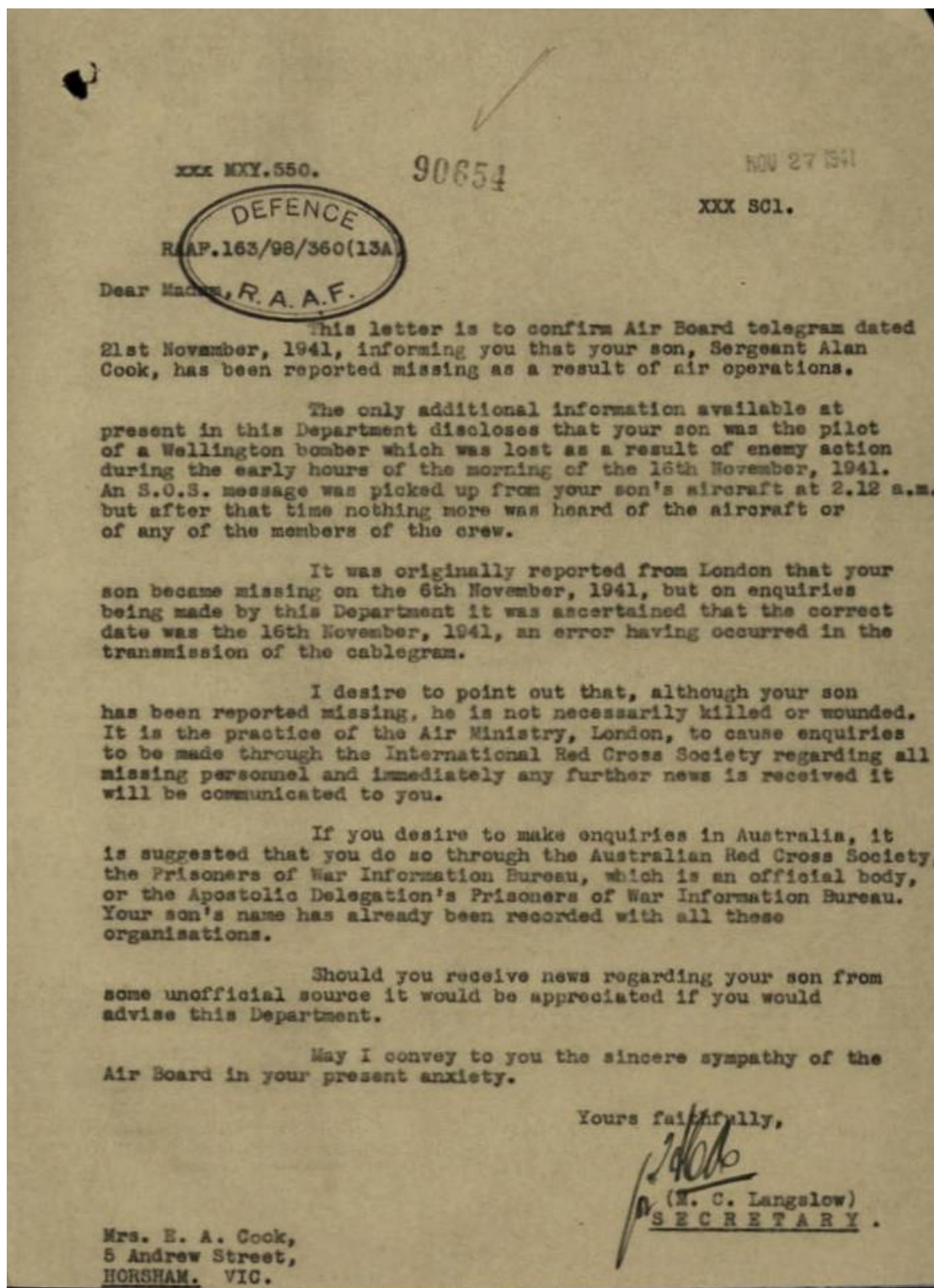
Yours faithfully

(signed) (Miss) Jean Cook



**Figure 50:** Photograph in the Sun (NAA).





**Figure 49:** Letter from the Air Board to Mrs. Ellen Cook (NAA).

Even though the Air Force knew that Allan's aircraft had been lost in the middle of the North Sea, far from the Atlantic, they nevertheless proceeded to send several messages to London requesting that they seek further information through the International Red Cross of the possibility that Allan had become a prisoner of war. It took until 21 May for London to advise that the International Red Cross had no record of Allan having become a prisoner of war.

This information was included in a letter from the Air Board to Ellen Cook dated 19 June 1942. This letter also included the dreaded paragraphs:

All efforts to trace him have proved unavailing and it is feared that all hope of finding him alive must be abandoned.

In order to complete your son's Service affairs, it has now become necessary, for official purposes, to presume his death.

One of the necessary formalities in such cases as this, is that the next of kin is required to write a letter to this Department stating that no further news has been received from the missing member. Accordingly it is requested that you write in these terms to this Department at your earliest possible convenience.

followed by the standard paragraph expressing sympathy for her loss.

The requested letter was sent by Jean Cook on 22 June, confirming that nothing further had been heard from Allan. She also stated that "I was appointed by my brother as Agent for him whilst he was away, and will act for any 'next of kin' duties".

Allan was duly presumed dead for official purposes "on lapse of time" on 13 July 1942. A telegram to that effect was sent to Ellen on 16 July and was confirmed by letter on 8 August.

While Allan might have been "presumed dead for official purposes", so far as the family, and in particular his two older sisters Jean and Nancy were concerned, his death was far from confirmed, and certainly not accepted. Both Jean and Nancy remained unconvinced that Allan might not one day just appear, and they were not to obtain the closure they had so desperately sought until they became aware in 2003 of the burial of SGT Drury in Norway.<sup>173</sup> The confirmed death of one member of the crew finally gave strong support for the presumed deaths of all of them.

Allan had made a will when stationed at No. 5 EFTS at Narromine. In that will he appointed his sister Jean as executrix, and specified that:

I give devise and bequeath the sum of £1000 to Merri Iredale of 211 Lower Plenty Road, Heidelberg, Victoria and the remainder of my

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<sup>173</sup>While the RAF (and most probably also the RAAF) had been aware of the discovery of SGT Drury's body from late 1944 or early 1945, this information was apparently never shared with Allan's family.

estate both Real and Personal of whatsoever nature and wheresoever situate to be divided equally between my Brothers and Sisters, absolutely.

The will was dated 21 January 1941. Presumably a copy was forwarded to Allan's solicitors, Stuart F. Brown in Horsham. An application for Probate to be granted to Jean Cook was made to the Supreme Court of Victoria on 16 October 1942. Allan's estate consisted of:

Real Estate	Nil
One sixth share or interest in the Estate of Walter Cook (valued at £2499-16)	£287-10-4
Bank of New South Wales, Horsham Branch (cash)	£8-7-5
State Savings Bank of Victoria, Horsham Branch (cash)	£23-8-1
Bank of New South Wales, Horsham Branch (fixed deposit, due 29/10/42)	£250-0-0
Bank of New South Wales, Horsham Branch (Interest on fixed deposit)	£6-11-1
Life policy: Temperance and General Life Assurance Co. Limited - Amount of Policy No. 170772 on life of deceased, including bonuses.	£90-11-5
One sixth share of W. Cook & Son, Merchants, Horsham— value of testator's interest	£1833-6-8
Total	£2499-16-0 <sup>174</sup>

It is notable that, while the value of Allan's Estate was more than sufficient to cover the bequest of £1000 to Merri Iredale, there was insufficient cash funds to do so. The family would have had to find more than £600, presumably by realizing some assets, to cover the bequest.

### 10.3 Other Messages

In addition to the correspondence between the Air Board and Allan's family, letters were sent to both Ellen Cook and George Latimer by the Air Officer in Charge of Records, RAF (in London) on 17 November 1941. These contained much the same information as had already been communicated by the Air Board, and were sent by ordinary mail. They were not delivered until the beginning of March 1942! These were followed on 10 February 1942 by letters stating that nothing further had been heard. These arrived towards the end of April.

In April 1942 RAF Base Marham provided, at the request of the Director of Personal Services, RAF, some further details of the operation:

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<sup>174</sup>"Alan Cook: Probate".

With reference to your letter P.363815/41/P.4. Cas dated 7th April, this aircraft took off at 22.17 hours on the 15th November with an ETA base of 0441. The petrol load was 750 gallons. Nothing was heard of this aircraft until 0202 hours on 16th November when an S.O.S. was picked up by Hul. MF frequency who gave the aircraft a second class fix of 5653 in N. 0330E at 0204 hours, this fix was not acknowledged by the aircraft.

Every effort was made to establish communications without delay. Assurances can be given that everything possible was done to locate this aircraft, but as the last position known of the aircraft was so far out to sea, air-sea rescue services could not compete. No indication of the cause of the trouble was received.

Following receipt of further information from London on 28 November 1948 stating that the target for Allan's aircraft was either Kiel or Emden a précis of all available information was included in a letter forwarded to his family on 7 December 1948. This letter also informed them that, as no bodies of any member of the crew had been recovered, it was intended to commemorate them in a memorial to be erected to the memory of those deceased airmen who have no known grave.

It is also worth noting that, despite not being listed as someone to be contacted in case of casualty, the RAAF saw fit to contact Merri Iredale by telephone on 21 November 1941 to inform her of the change in the date that Allan went missing. The inference from the note on Allan's Casualty File is that they had been in touch with her earlier with information about Allan going missing.<sup>175</sup>

The *Horsham Times* reported on 13 March 1942:

### **HORSHAM AIRMAN MISSING**

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#### **Tribute from Wing Commander**

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The following air mail letter has been received by Mrs. E. A. Cook, of Andrew street, Horsham, mother of Pilot Officer (sic) Allan Cook, from Wing-Commander H. G. Kirkpatrick overseas:-

May I offer the most sincere sympathy both of myself and of the whole squadron with you in the sad news you have heard about your son, who went missing on operations on the night of November 15. Your son, who was captain of his crew, was returning from attacking an important target in \_\_\_\_\_ when a call came through saying that they were in trouble and asking for their position. This position was well out at sea. We had no indication of the nature of their trouble or whether they could continue their flight, and, therefore, it was

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<sup>175</sup> A705, RAAF Correspondence files, multiple number (Melbourne) series.

impossible the following morning, when they did not return to base, to institute a search in any particular area. The weather on this night was particularly bad, and I rather fear that this may have had something to do with the mishap. I regret to say nothing further has been heard of them. In the circumstances I am afraid I cannot hold out much hope that the crew had been save, but it must remain a possibility until more time has elapsed. Your son will be missed by his many friends here. He and his crew were keen and promised to be one of our best. He came a long way to offer his services in the war effort, and we are proud to fight beside such men from the Dominions.

In another letter from England this week, Mrs. Cook was advised that Allan's commission to an officer came through the week after he was reported missing.<sup>176</sup>

Unfortunately this letter has not survived, and the official files in the Australian Archives do not include a copy. Nor is there any suggestion of Allan being granted a commission, although he was recommended, on a number of occasions, for promotion.

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<sup>176</sup>"Horsham Airman Missing." In: *The Horsham Times* (13 Mar. 1942), p. 1. URL: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/72700562> (visited on 12/11/2013).

## 11 In Memoriam

### 11.1 Medals



**Figure 51:** Allan's Medals (A. Lenton).

Allan was entitled to receive the standard set of World War II Campaign medals. These were (left to right in Figure 51):<sup>177</sup>

**1939–1945 Star:** Awarded for service between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945 for a period of two months operational service for air crew personnel.

**Air Crew Europe Star:** Awarded for operational flying from United Kingdom bases over Europe between 3 September 1939 and 5 June 1944.

**War Medal 1939–1945:** Awarded for 28 days full-time service in the Armed Forces between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.

**Australia Service Medal 1939–1945:** Instituted in 1949 to recognise the service of members of the Australian Armed Forces and the Australian Mercantile Marine during World War II. The medal was awarded to those who served at home or overseas for at least 18 months full-time.

Ellen would have received a Mothers' and Widows' Badge.<sup>178</sup> This badge was issued to the mothers of members of the Australian Forces who were "killed in action, or died of wounds or from other causes whilst on service or as a result of such service".

The badge is round and silver-coloured. The obverse shows a raised image of a grieving woman and part of a laurel wreath with the words 'FOR AUSTRALIA' in raised letters. The reverse has a hinged securing pin and raised lettering which reads 'Issued by the Commonwealth Government'. Suspended by two securing



**Figure 52:** Mothers' and Widows' Badge.

<sup>177</sup>*Imperial Awards: World War Two 1939–1945.* Department of Defence. URL: <http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Content/Imperial/WWII/Default.asp> (visited on 14/12/2014).

<sup>178</sup>*Mothers' and Widows' Badge.* Department of Defence. URL: <http://www.defence.gov.au/Medals/Content/Australian/Badges/Mothers-Widows-Badge.asp> (visited on 14/12/2014).

rings from the bottom of the badge is a flat rectangular bar where stars were added to represent children killed.

## 11.2 Rememberance

News of Allan's disappearance was reported in several newspapers. Among the first to appear was a report in the Horsham Times on 21 November 1941 under the heading "Reported Missing":

Another of Horsham's well known young residents who is serving in the forces overseas has been reported missing. He is Sergeant Pilot Alan Cook, partner in the firm Messrs W. Cook & Son, general merchants, of Firebrace street Horsham. Aged 27 years, he is the younger son of Mrs. E. A. Cook, of Andrew street, and the late Mr. W. Cook, and is well known throughout the town and district and received his education in Ballarat and later at the Horsham High School. In public life he was associated with many activities as he was a member of the Church of England Men's Society, and other bodies connected with the church, secretary of the Horsham Tennis Club and a member of the Apex Club. He enlisted in the R.A.A.F. in October, 1940, and completed his training in Canada before going to England about three months ago. News that he was missing was received by his mother from the Air Board, which stated that "Sergeant-Pilot Cook, who was the first pilot of a Wellington bomber, did not return from air operations on November 6." Prior to sailing, the young airman announced his engagement to Miss Meredith Iredale, of Melbourne, and who is well known in Horsham, where she conducted a cosmetic salon for some months.<sup>179</sup>

When Allan's death had been presumed, the Horsham Times duly reported on 7 August 1942, under the headline "DIED IN DEFENCE OF THE EMPIRE":

In November, 1941, Mrs. E A. Cook of Andrew street, Horsham received advice from the Air Board that her younger son (Alan) was reported missing in air operations. Official information has now been supplied that the young airman is presumed to have lost his life in defence of the cause for which he volunteered. He was 27.<sup>180</sup>

The item then repeats almost verbatim, the text of the previous article.

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<sup>179</sup>"Reported Missing."

<sup>180</sup>"Died in Defence of the Empire". In: *The Horsham Times* (7 Aug. 1942), p. 2. URL: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article72704342> (visited on 18/11/2013).



### 11.3 Memorials

For as long as Australians have gone to war, we have built war memorials to recognise their service, and remember those who did not come home. From the 1850s to today, we have commemorated those who served, and we have been particularly generous in the erection of memorials to those who died in the two World Wars.



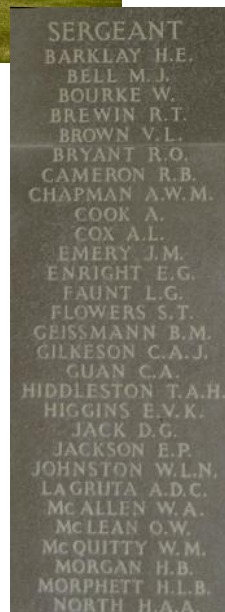
**Figure 53:** *The Runnymede Memorial (Author).*

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for the Air Forces Memorial at Runnymede. This memorial commemorates by name over 20,000 airmen who were lost in the Second World War during operations from bases in the United Kingdom and North and Western Europe, and who have no known graves. They served in Bomber, Fighter, Coastal, Transport, Flying Training and Maintenance Commands, and came from all parts of the Commonwealth. Some were from countries in continental Europe which had been overrun but whose airmen continued to fight in the ranks of the Royal Air Force.

The memorial was designed by Sir Edward Maufe with sculpture by Vernon Hill. It overlooks the River Thames on Cooper's Hill at Englefield Green between Windsor and Egham, 4 miles from Windsor.

Allan's name, together with 1,396 others who served with the RAAF is carved into the stone of the memorial.

Allan's name is recorded on the Second World War Panel of the Horsham and District Cenotaph and War Memorial. Located in



**Figure 54:** *RAAF Sergeants with No Known Grave (Author).*



Sawyers Park on the banks of the Wimmera River, the memorial was unveiled on 18th April 2004. It incorporates panels listing the names of those who served in all conflicts since the Boer War. The inscription reads:

This memorial is dedicated by the Horsham and District community to honour and remember our men and women who served in the Australian Defence Forces to defend justice and peace in conflicts in which our nation has been involved.

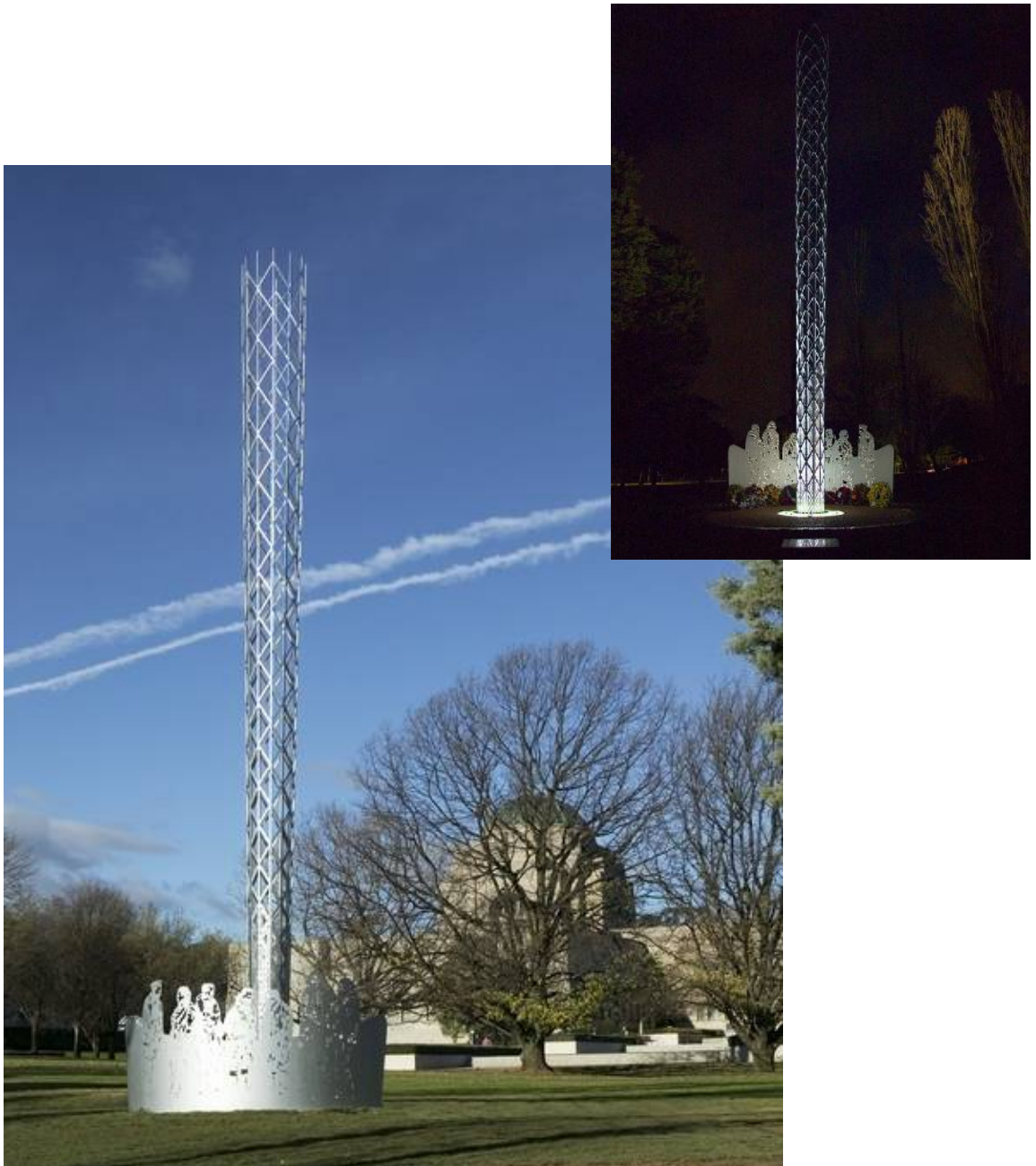


**Figure 55:** *Horsham and District Cenotaph and War Memorial (Author).*



Allan's name is also recorded on an honour roll held at the Horsham RSL, and on a honour board that hangs in the Ian Maroske Hall at Horsham College (previously the Horsham High School). Interestingly, his name is not included on the Honour Board in Ballarat High School, although this is probably not surprising given that he attended the school for only three months.

For many years there had been no memorial in either the UK or in Australia that was specific to those who died whilst serving in Bomber Command. This lack of recognition, as well as the absence of a campaign medal for Bomber Command, probably stemmed from the tactics used under the Command of Arthur 'Bomber' Harris—the large-scale area bombing of cities with the inevitable destruction of civilian infrastructure and cost in civilian lives. In 1940, Winston Churchill said: "The fighters are our salvation but the bombers alone provide the means of victory". With time, the area bombing tactics become more and more controversial and Churchill, the consummate



**Figure 56:** *Bomber Command Memorial, Canberra (AWM).*

politician, barely made reference to Bomber Command in his VE Day address. For similar reasons, 'Bomber' Harris was the only commander-in-chief not to receive a peerage immediately following WW2.

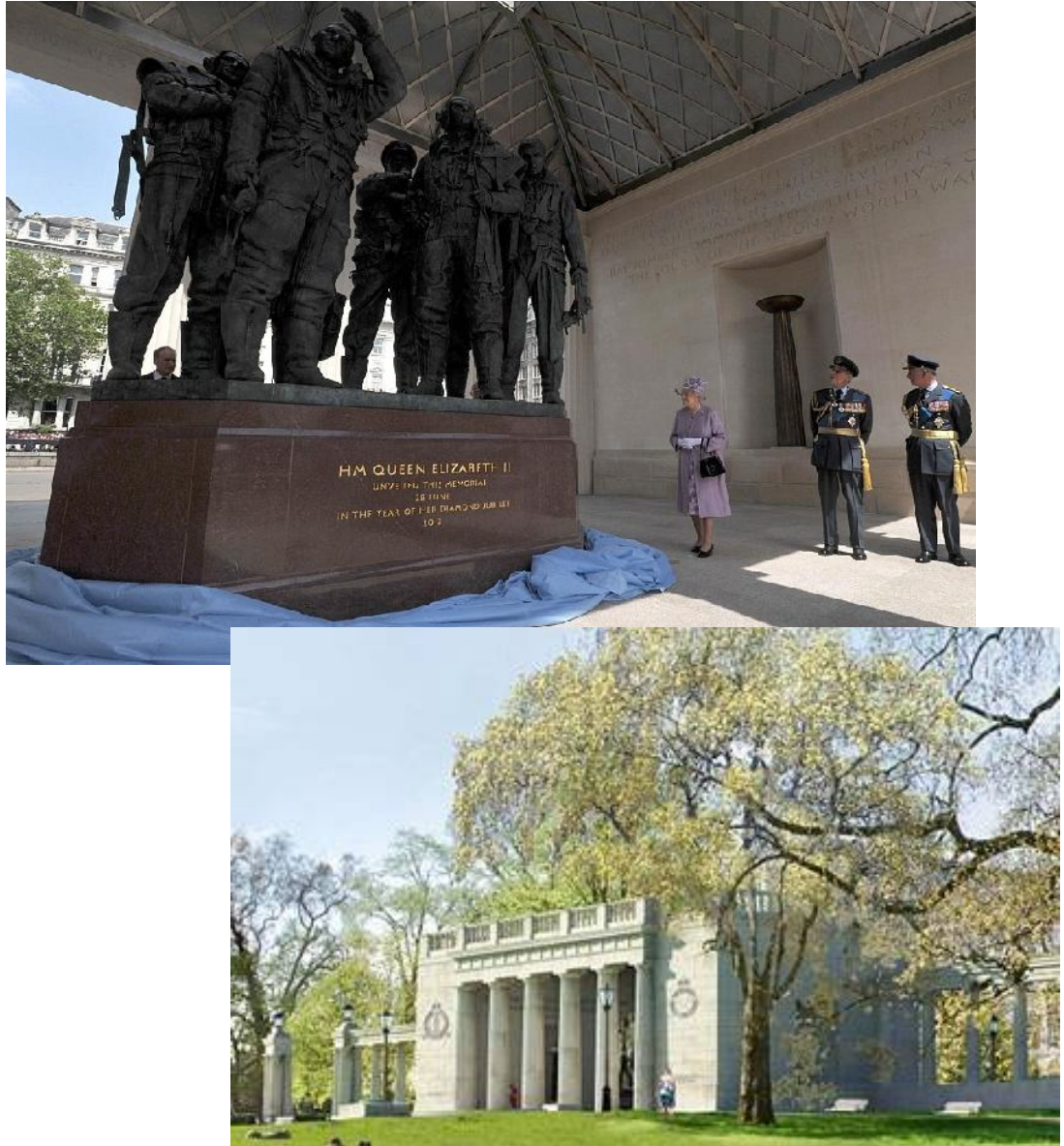
It took until 2005 for a memorial commemorating the service and sacrifice of the RAAF air and ground crew who served and died with Bomber Command during the Second World War to be constructed in Australia. It is located in the gardens surrounding the Australian War Memorial. The memorial consist of a symbolized searchlight beam, images of air and ground crew as silhouetted figures in the form of a curved stainless steel wall, a glass plate at the base of the searchlight beam with stencils of the eight plane types flown and a ring of granite surrounding the base of the sculpture engraved with text and insignia commemorating the Bomber Command crews.

The long-overdue London memorial to the 55,573 who died while serving in Bomber Command 1939-45 was unveiled by Queen Elizabeth II on 28 June 2012. Located in Green Park, near Hyde Park Corner, the memorial was designed by architect Liam O'Connor. It consists of a white Portland Stone building of neoclassical design. The design of the ceiling of the 8.5 metre tall pavilion at the focal point of the Memorial was inspired by the geodetic construction used in the Vickers *Wellington* bomber. The aluminium panels that make up the roof supports were formed from aluminium reclaimed from a RCAF *Halifax* bomber, provided by the Bomber Command Museum of Canada.

The centrepiece of the memorial is a three metre high bronze sculpture by Philip Jackson depicting the aircrew of a Bomber Command heavy bomber. Jackson described the sculpture as capturing "the moment when they get off the aircraft and they've dumped all their heavy kit onto the ground". The crew looks up into the sky, waiting to see how many of their comrades were returning home.

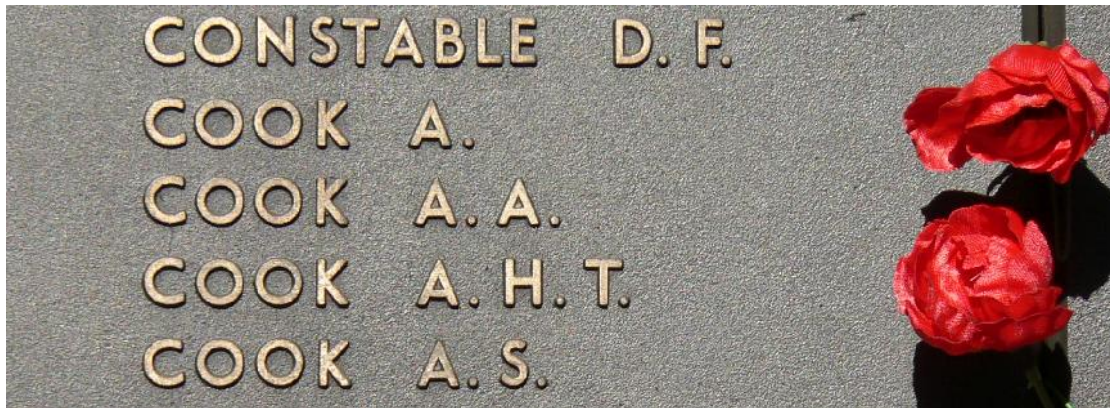
In 2013, Her Majesty The Queen approved the design for the new award of a Bomber Command Clasp. It is to be worn on the ribbon of the 1939 to 1945 Star and follows the design of the Battle of Britain Clasp which had been awarded to members of Fighter Command since 1945. While this was not the 'Bomber Command Medal' sought by many veterans, it at least gave the same recognition to those who served in Bomber Command as their Fighter Command colleagues had enjoyed for many years.





**Figure 57:** *The Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park, London (Guardian, BBC).*

Finally, Allan's name is recorded in the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial. The Roll of Honour records and commemorates the names of all of Australia's war dead. It takes the form of a long series of bronze panels in the Memorial's Commemorative Area and the Roll of Honour database, which is accessible via the War Memorial's website. Records in the Roll of Honour database contain the personal particulars, unit and the date of death of each person. Allan's name is recorded on Panel 120 in the Commemorative Area.



**Figure 58:** *Australian War Memorial, Commemorative Area, Panel 120 (Author).*

## 12 Conclusion

Between 26,000 and 27,000 members of the RAAF served in the RAF during the war, the majority serving in the dangerous and demanding strategic air war against Germany. Overall, these men sustained the highest casualty rates by far of any Australian service. Yet, their contribution appears to be little known to Australians today. It is certainly not nearly as widely known as those who served in the Gallipoli campaign or endured the siege of Tobruk. The reasons for this are complex. Mordike attributes the national amnesia to a number of causes, chief among them being the essentially Imperial structure of the EATS and the lack of will by Australia's political and RAAF leadership to protect national interests.<sup>181</sup> This led to an inevitable loss of national identity and, therefore, a loss of recognition of RAAF efforts in WW2. In addition, the ANZAC legend and its promotion within the community at large has predisposed Australian public perceptions, until very recently, towards the war contribution of soldiers at the expense of airmen and sailors.

Finally, lack of recognition for the contribution of Bomber Command has a lot to do with how the action was reported in Australia, both at the time and in subsequent years. While the press could remain quite close to soldiers fighting on the ground, Bomber Command operations were, by their very nature, solitary. Very rarely did any member of the press fly on operations. The only time that operations were widely reported was when great acts of heroism, such as Middleton's, were recorded. Many such actions have surely remained unreported simply because of the lack of surviving witnesses. Allan's fatal last flight is a case in point. With no survivors to tell the story, is it not possible that he performed acts of bravery as deserving of a VC as those of Middleton? Only one thing is for sure: We will never know.

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<sup>181</sup> J.L. Mordike. "RAAF Participation in the War in Europe and North America: Some Reflections". In: 1994 RAAF History Conference - The RAAF in Europe and North Africa 1939-45. (Canberra, 20 Oct. 1994). Canberra, Australia: RAAF Air Power Development Centre. ISBN: 0 642 22475 7. URL: <http://airpower.airforce.gov.au/Publications/Details/201/RAAF-History-Conference-1994-The-RAAF-in-Europe-and-North-Africa-1939-1945.aspx#.U85BpPmSyrq> (visited on 29/09/2010).

## Appendix A Timeline

Date	Event
21-Apr-1912	Birth in Ballarat
5-Jun-1928	Moved to Horsham
1-Dec-1930	Passed nine subjects at Intermediate Certificate examinations
3-Jun-1931	Death of father Walter
1-May-1940	Applied to join the RAAF as aircrew
29-May-1940	Enrolled in RAAF Reserve at Ballarat
13-Oct-1940	Enlisted at No. 1 Recruiting Centre in Melbourne
14-Oct-1940	Posted to No. 2 Initial Training School, Linfield, NSW
7-Dec-1940	Promoted to LAC
12-Dec-1940	Posted to No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School, Narromine, NSW
4-Feb-1941	Engagement to Meredith Iredale announced
6-Feb-1941	Posted to No. 2 Embarkation Depot, Bradfield Park, NSW
22-Feb-1941	Embarked on SS <i>Awatea</i> bound for Canada
16-Mar-1941	Disembarked Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
16-Mar-1941	Posted to No. 1 Service Flying Training School, Camp Borden, Ontario, Canada
19-Mar-1941	Commenced flying training course at No. 1 SFTS
6-Jun-1941	Graduated from flying training course at No. 1 SFTS
6-Jun-1941	Promoted to Sergeant Pilot
9-Jun-1941	Posted to No. 1 'Y' Embarkation Depot, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
19-Jun-1941	Embarked on RMS <i>Ausonia</i> bound for the UK
5-Jul-1941	Arrived RAF Transfer Camp in Reykjavik, Iceland
12-Jul-1941	Departed Reykjavik on SS <i>Valendam</i>
16-Jul-1941	Arrived Greenock, Scotland and proceeded by train to No. 3 Personnel Reception Centre, Bournemouth, Dorset, UK
23-Jul-1941	On three days leave (until 25 Jul 1941)
26-Jul-1941	Posted to No. 23 Operational Training Unit, Pershore, Worcestershire, UK
18-Sep-1941	On seven days leave (until 24 Sep 1941)
25-Sep-1941	Posted to No. 218 Squadron, Marham, King's Lynn, Norfolk, UK
16-Nov-1941	Missing in action
17-Nov-1941	Date on letter from RAF to next of kin confirming telegram sent by Air Board Melbourne
18-Nov-1941	Missing in action message received by Air Board Melbourne from Air Ministry UK. Last heard of 0212 6 Nov 1941
19-Nov-1941	Reported missing telegram sent to next of kin
19-Nov-1941	Family reported receiving telegram from Allan dated 11 Nov

Date	Event
19-Nov-1941	Request for clarification sent from Air Board to Air Ministry
21-Nov-1941	Clarification received by Air Board from Air Ministry—date reported missing was 16 Nov not 6 Nov
21-Nov-1941	Change of reported missing date sent to next of kin
27-Nov-1941	Official letter to next of kin confirming telegram of 21 Nov
23-Dec-1941	Jean Cook telephoned Air Board to state that a photograph of a POW published in the Sun looks like Allan
6-Jan-1942	Letter from Jean Cook to Air Board including photograph of a POW in the Sun that looks like Allan
16-Jan-1942	Message from Air Board to Air Ministry requesting investigation of this claim
10-Feb-1942	Date of letter to next of kin from RAF stating that nothing more had been heard of Allan
21-May-1942	Message from Air Ministry to Air Board stating that Red Cross had no record of Allan as a POW
19-Jun-1942	Letter from Air Board to next of kin stating that Allan was not held as POW and as nothing more had been heard of him he was now presumed dead
22-Jun-1942	Letter from Jean Cook to Air Board confirming that they had heard nothing more of Allan
13-Jul-1942	Message from Air Ministry to Air Board confirming presumption of death
15-Jul-1942	Telegram to next of kin confirming presumption of death on 16 Nov 1941
8-Aug-1942	Letter to next of kin confirming above telegram
23-Sep-1942	Death certificate issued to H. Balfour Cathcart & Co, Solicitors, Horsham
8-Sep-1948	Confirmation to Air Board that case has been closed—Allan and his crew assumed to have lost their lives at sea
18-Nov-1949	Air Board receives letter covering details of Allan's last flight
7-Dec-1949	Letter to next of kin confirming details of last flight and that a memorial to Allan would be erected by Imperial War Graves Commission



## Appendix B Australian Members of Course 24, No. 1 SFTS.

	Number	Name	SQN	Awards	Notes
*	404491	John Philip <b>Adam</b>	452 SQN RAAF		Killed in flying accident, Darwin
	400686	William John <b>Adey</b>			
*	402632	Edwin Lawrence <b>Anderson</b>	104 SQN RAF		Killed in flying battle, Egypt
*	404614	Lloyd Wilson <b>Bailey</b>	149 SQN RAF		Killed in flying battle, Germany
*	400690	Jack Gordon <b>Bond</b>	22 SQN RAF		Killed in flying accident
*	404548	John Livingstone <b>Boyd</b>	135 SQN RAF	DFM	Killed in flying battle, Malta
*	400696	Allan <b>Cook</b>	218 SQN RAF		Killed in flying battle, North Sea
*	402731	Colin Albert <b>Cornwell</b>	158 SQN RAF		Killed in flying battle, UK
	402644	Francis Norman <b>Crouch</b>	97 SQN RAF	DFM	
	402734	Stephen Penn <b>Dennis</b>	1 SQN RAF		Missing air ops UK. POW camp Stalag IXC
*	404562	Henry Beirne <b>Douglas</b>	-		Killed in flying accident No. 1 SFTS, 30 April 1941
	404605	Douglas Ralph <b>Edwards</b>			
	404563	Robert James <b>Gannon</b>	615 SQN		Seriously injured in flying accident, 19 May 1941. Graduated 5 December 1941, No. 16 SFTS
*	402740	Gordon Lindsay Charles <b>Gifford</b>	457 SQN RAAF		Killed in flying battle, Darwin
	400412	Donald Murdock <b>Hannah</b>	502 SQN RAF	DFC MID	
*	400708	Geoffrey Thomas <b>Heard</b>	7 SQN RAF		
*	404549	Archibald Cowen <b>Honeyman</b>	215 SQN RAF		Graduated on 3 July 1941 with Course 26. Killed in flying battle, India
*	400414	Geoffrey Francis <b>Jackson</b>	221 SQN RAF		Graduated on 3 July 1941 with Course 26. Killed in flying battle, Italy
*	404658	Charles Dermot <b>Kelly</b>	105 SQN RAF		Killed in flying battle, Germany
*	400719	Anthony Dominica Cyril <b>La Gruta</b>	60 OTU RAF		Killed in flying accident
*	404655	Kenneth George Campbell <b>McCallum</b>	205 SQN RAF		Killed in flying accident
	402748	Donald Kewin <b>McDonald</b>	261 SQN RAF	DSO, DFC	Graduated with Course 28, 30 July 1941
*	405005	Ian Cumming <b>MacKenzie</b>	408 SQN RCAF		Killed in flying battle, France
	404567	Frederick Warren <b>Madsen</b>	459 SQN RAAF	DFC	
*	402745	Rawdon Hume <b>Middleton</b>	214 SQN RAF	VC	Killed in flying battle, UK

A "\*" at the beginning of a line indicates that this member was killed during air operations

Number	Name	SQN	Awards	Notes
* 400728	Herbert Charles <b>Nette</b>	24 SQN RAAF		Killed in flying accident, Bankstown, NSW
* 404543	John William <b>Newell</b>	5 OTU RAAF		Killed in flying accident, Williamtown, QLD
400730	John Sefton <b>Newton</b>	457 SQN RAAF		
* 402749	Edward Murray <b>Oldham</b>	131 SQN RAF		Graduated with Course 30, 20 August 1941. Killed in flying battle, UK
400732	Gordon Stanley <b>Orchard</b>	458 SQN RAAF		Graduated on 3 July 1941 with Course 26.
* 402750	Marshall Edmund <b>Parbery</b>	457 SQN RAAF		Killed in flying battle, UK
* 400734	Archibald McMeekin <b>Paton</b>	151 SQN RAF		Killed in flying accident, England
400735	Leonard Stanley <b>Reid</b>	185 SQN RAF	DFC	
* 400488	Richard Harry <b>Roe</b>	RAAF	DFC	Killed in flying accident, Macauley, Vic.
* 400737	Ronald Norman Milton <b>Scott</b>	54 SQN RAF		Killed in flying accident, Wales
* 400638	William George <b>Sharpe</b>	148 SQN RAF		Graduated on 3 July 1941 with Course 26. Killed in flying battle, Egypt
* 404553	Douglas Wilberforce <b>Spooner</b>	103 SQN RAF	DFM	Killed in flying battle, Germany
262747	Michael Shelley <b>Stuart</b>	264/32 SQN RAF		
404609	Herbert Thomas <b>Thompson</b>	410 SQN RAF		
404556	Alan <b>Wharton</b>	148/466 SQN RAF/RAAF	DSO, DFC & Bar	

A "\*" at the beginning of a line indicates that this member was killed during air operations

## Appendix C Canadian Members of Course 24, No. 1 SFTS.

Number	Name	SQN	Awards	Notes
R/66041	William Bilton <b>Begy</b>	86 SQN	DFC, MID	
* R/165968	William John <b>Blakely</b>	405 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 3 Jan 1944, Germany
* J/5663	Harold Fraser <b>English</b>	400 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 13 Dec 1941, English Channel
* R/59718	William Ralph <b>Gates</b>	76 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 30 Dec 1941, UK
J/5662	Edmund Irvine <b>Hall</b>			
* J/15389	Carter Woodruff <b>Harp</b>	133 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 31 July 1942, France
J/15733	William Murdock <b>Jackson</b>			Killed in flying accident, 15 Sep 1946 in Canada
J/15583	Arthur James <b>Johnston</b>	405 SQN	DFC	
J/5661	Stanley Melvin <b>Knight</b>	417 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 8 June 1948
* R/71746	William Everett <b>Lunan</b>	78 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 12 August 1942, Belgium
* R/66181	Harvey William <b>Lundy</b>	57 SQN		Killed in flying battle, 2 April 1942, Germany
J/36495	Kenneth Skog <b>McAndrews</b>			

A '\*' at the beginning of a line indicates that this member was killed during air operations  
Service numbers starting with J were commissioned as officers; those starting with R became NCOs.

## Appendix D Abbreviations

AWM	Australian War Memorial
BCATP	British Commonwealth Air Training Plan
BSH	Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie (Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany)
CAF	Chief of the Air Force
CAS	Chief of the Air Staff
CEMS	Church of England Men's Society
DFC	Distinguished Flying Cross
DFM	Distinguished Flying Medal
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
E	East
EATS	Empire Air Training Scheme
ED	Embarkation Depot
EFTS	Elementary Flying Training School
FTR	Failed to Return
H2S	Airborne radar aid to navigation and target identification
HC	High Capacity (bomb)
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
HMCS	Her Majesty's Canadian Ship
HQ	Headquarters
ITS	Initial Training School
IWM	Imperial War Museum
km	Kilometres
m	Metres
MID	Mentioned in Dispatches
MU	Maintenance Unit
N	North
NAA	National Archives of Australia
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
ORB	Operations Record Book
Ops	Operations
OCU	Operational Conversion Unit
OTU	Operational Training Unit
POW	Prisoner of War
PNBW	Pilot, Navigator, Bomb aimer, Wireless operator
PRC	Personnel Reception Centre
PROV	Public Records Office, Victoria
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RCAF	Royal Canadian Air Force
RMS	Royal Mail Ship

RNAS	Royal Naval Air Service
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RNZS	Royal New Zealand Ship
rpm	Revolutions per minute
RSL	Returned and Services League, Australia
S	South
SFTS	Service Flying Training School
SLV	State Library of Victoria
SQN	Squadron
TSS	Turbine Steam Ship (or Twin Screw Ship)
VC	Victoria Cross
W	West
WAG	Wireless Air Gunner
W/Op	Wireless Operator
WOp/AG	Wireless Operator/Air Gunner
WW1	World War One
WW2	World War Two

## Appendix E Air Force Ranks

Aircraftman, 2nd Class	AC2
Aircraftman, 1st Class	AC1
Leading Aircraftman	LAC
Corporal	CPL
Sergeant	SGT
Flight Sergeant	FSGT
Warrant Officer, Class II	WO II
Warrant Officer, Class I	WO I
Pilot Officer	PLTOFF
Flying Officer	FLGOFF
Flight Lieutenant	FLTLT
Squadron Leader	SQLDR
Wing Commander	WGCDR
Group Captain	GPCAPT
Air Commodore	AIRCDRE
Air Vice-Marshal	AVM
Air Marshal	AIRMSHL
Air Chief Marshal	ACM

## Appendix F No. 218 Squadron Flying Activity for October 1941

Date	Activity
1	Fourteen sorties were 8 hours in the air today.
2	Two cross-country runs were carried out today totalling six hours between them.
3	18 sorties were in the air for 12 hours including the usual pre-operational air tests [14 crews were detailed for operations].
4	4 sorties took place today covering 5 hours.
5	1 a/c completed one hours flying.
6	17 sorties took part, (ten cross-country flights were also completed) the total hours covered were 18.
7	2 crews completed 1 hours flying each.
8	13 sorties completed 13 hours cross-country today.
9	3 sorties completed 3 hours flying.
10	2 sorties completed 4 hours flying.
11	6 crews went on a short cross-country covering 4 hours flying.
12	Pre-operational air tests were made today lasting five hours.
13	There was a general stand down for air crews today.
14	The usual pre-operational air tests took pace today.
15	7 sorties completed 7 hours formation flying today.
16	11 sorties made air tests for tonight's operations totalling 10 hours flying.
17	3 sorties completed 4 hours flying.
18	7 sorties complete 5 hours flying.
19	There was a general stand down for air crews today.
20	4 sorties including one pre-operational air test covered 3 hours flying.
21	10 sorties completed some cross-country flying totalling 6 hours.
22	No training took place today [weather related].
23	Ten sorties took place in the usual pre-operational air tests, totalling 13 hours.
24	Ten sorties took place today totalling 13 hours in the air.
25	Three sorties took part in 4 hours formation flying.
26	Four sorties completed 8 hours in cross-country flying.
27	There was a general stand down today.
28	6 sorties completed 6 ours formation flying today.
29	Eight sorties completed ten hours flying.
30	No flying took place today [Weather related].

Data extracted from No. 218 Squadron Operational Record Book (RAF Form 540) for the month of October 1941 [AIR27/1384/20 Squadron Number 218. Summary of Events, The National Archive, Kew]



120APPENDIX F NO. 218 SQUADRON FLYING ACTIVITY FOR OCTOBER 1941

Date	Activity
31	The usual pre-operational air tests took place today comprising 12 sorties totalling 8 hours flying.

Data extracted from No. 218 Squadron Operational Record Book (RAF Form 540) for the month of October 1941 [AIR27/1384/20 Squadron Number 218. Summary of Events, The National Archive, Kew]

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