

AWM 65

[4029]

O'NEIL, GEORGE CONNOR WATSON

403475

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

73.0TU
7E.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

The following biographical details are required for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London.

SURNAME O'NEIL NUMBER 403 475

CHRISTIAN NAMES .. GEORGE .. CONNOR .. WATSON ..

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING ... F/O Sgt/M. 450

DEGREES ETC.

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE

EDUCATED

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE

PLACES OF TRAINING

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES

.....

SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC.

.....

FATHER

WIFE

HOME ADDRESS

SIGNATURE

DATE

DATE OF EMBARKATION

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS... ~~403~~ M.M. 274

CATEGORY..... INTERVIEWS.....

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RADIO..... OTHER REFERENCES.....

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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

PRO. FORMA.
P/R. 5.

Overseas Headquarters,
Kodak House,
KINGSWAY, W.C. 2

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL

The following biographical details are required for R.A.A.F.

Historical Records, Overseas Headquarters. These forms are to be filled in and returned to the Officer Commanding Repatriation Disposal Section, No. 11 (R.A.A.F.) P.D.R.C.

NAME (in full) GEORGE CONNOR INGRAM O'NEIL NUMBER A.403471

RANK AND MUSTERING F/O PILOT DECORATIONS M.M.

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE 10 O.T.U. - A.F.U. etc.

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA 20 MAY 41
CANADA 16 SEPT 41 DATE OF ARRIVAL U.K. 14.8.44
Sth. AFRICA

SQUADRONS 450 & 451 Sqdns. M.E.

AIRCRAFT FLOWN KITTYHAWK & SPITFIRE

COMMAND & TYPED OF ACTIVITY MET FIGHTER - BOMBER AND FIGHTER

OPERATIONS OR TRAINING WITH AMERICAN PERSONNEL, SQUADRONS, OR AIRCRAFT NIL

DETAILS OF OPERATIONS - with dates: to be given as fully as possible under the following applicable headings:-

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (a) Number Operational Hours | (b) Number Operational Sorties, Day-night |
| (c) Targets attacked | (d) Attacks on enemy surface vessels - type, size, etc. |
| (e) Attacks on enemy submarines | (g) Outstanding sorties or incidents |
| (f) Combats with enemy aircraft | (i) Personnel in Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, Transport Command, etc., should give a brief report of their work. |
| (h) Other Australians in crews | |

A. 250 hrs

B. 160 DAY (NIL NIGHT)

F. 1 E/A DESTROYED

DATE 9.9.44 SIGNATURE George C.W. O'Neil

(Use other side, or attach extra sheets, if necessary)

FROM HINDLE EAST: 25/12/44

Six Australians who served with a R.A.F. Spitfire Wing based in Corsica for some months before the invasion of Southern France on August 15th have just been decorated. With one exception they subsequently operated with squadrons in France. They are - Aus.405158 S/L. R.C.O'Neill, D.F.C. of Grafton, N.S.W. who received a Bar to the D.F.C. Aus.402523 S/Ldr. D.H.E., H.C. Burnie, D.F.M. of Coctamire, N.S.W. who has been awarded the D.F.C. Aus.40637 P/Lt. E.C.House, D.F.M. of Gnowangerup, West Australia who has also been awarded the D.F.C. Aus.404324 P/Lt. H.J.Brey of Moonoolah, Queensland who has been awarded the D.F.C. ⁴⁵¹⁵ P/O G.C.W. O'Neil R.M. of Grenora, N.S.W. who has been awarded the D.F.C. Neill commanded the Australian Spitfire Squadron in Corsica and then took it to France. He has flown 400 hours on operations in 9 countries - England, Egypt, Libya, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Sicily, Italy, Corsica, and France. He won the D.F.C. as a member of the first Spitfire Squadron to operate in the Western Desert in the middle of 1942. He is now in the United Kingdom. H.C. Burnie, commanded a R.A.F. Spitfire Squadron in Corsica and took it to France. He was one of the original pilots of Australian Kittyhawk Squadron known as the Desert Harassers when it went into operations in the desert in February, 1942. He destroyed 5½ enemy fighters in nine months with that Squadron and won the D.F.C. He is now back in Australia. House won the D.F.M. in his first tour with the Desert Harassers. In March 1943 during the battle for El Hara in Tunisia his C.O. was shot down. House went low over the C.O.'s crashed aircraft and silenced several enemy guns which were firing at him. He destroyed a Pw.190 over Italy last May when with R.A.A.F. Spitfire Squadron. He was subsequently a Flight Commander in a R.A.F. Spitfire Squadron in Corsica and France. He is now in Australia. Brey flew 24 months with the all-Australian Kittyhawk Squadron joining it before Alessia and remaining till the end of the Tunisian campaign. He was twice shot down but had his revenge in his second tour of operations with the Australian Spitfire Squadron in Corsica and France when he got two enemy aircraft - Pw.190 and Me.109. He is now in the United Kingdom. O'Neil won the M.M. in January 1943 during his first tour with the Harassers. After crash landing behind the enemy lines he regained our lines with information of great use in the attack which we were then about to launch. He baled out twice in July 1942 and again in June 1944 both times over the sea. O'Neil did a second tour with the Australian

Spitfires in Corsica. He is now in Australia. Hannan served with the R.A.F. Spitfires in Corsica and France. Last June his aircraft was hit over Italy and he baled out into the Mediterranean only 10 miles from the enemy held coast. He was rescued after an hour and three quarters in his dinghy.

Personal file - T.P. S. O'Neill

FROM MIDDLE EAST 15/5/44

Up before dawn and out at first light, pilots of an Australian fighter Squadron operating from their forward Mediterranean base made a fighter sweep over Italy less than 25 miles from Rome, searching for German motor transport or anything else to be found. ⁴⁵⁷⁵ 403475 E/O.
Sergeant
George O'Neill, M.M. of Milson Road, Cremorne, N.S.W. found a target on an enemy aerodrome containing two German fighters. They were either Me.109s or Fw.190s. Sweeping down three times he definitely destroyed one, which burst into flames, and probably destroyed the other from which smoke poured. By this time, as his companions on the 'gaggle' explained on their return home, there was intense ack ack so O'Neil lingered no longer. The others returned to base with a couple of enemy trucks to their credit and their object achieved - to interfere with German movement of supplies towards Rome.

O'Neil won his Military Medal during his first tour of operations on Kittyhawks with the Desert Harassers in the Western Desert when he was shot down and walked back, bring with him valuable information about enemy dispositions.

Personal File
1 (100) 170 G.C.W. O'Neill

DEPARTMENT OF AIR

MORNING PRESS RELEASE.

12-1-42

Directorate of
Public Relations,
Bulletin No. 4636.

SEVREY PILOT'S MANY ADVENTURES.

403475
457 Mdn
Adventure lurks at the heels of some men. One such is
Flying Officer G. C. W. O'Neill, D.F.C., R.M., of Cresmo (R.S.W.),
now home in Australia after two eventful operational tours overseas -
the first in the Western Desert on Kittyhawks, the second in Corsica
on Spitfires. O'Neill twice baled out over the sea, so qualifying for
the Order of the Caterpillar -- and Bar. He was awarded the D.M.
in January 1943 and the D.F.C. in November 1944.

Here are some of O'Neill's adventures -

JULY 1942:

While flying a Kittyhawk from a base in the Western Desert he
baled out over the Mediterranean following a fight with ME 309's. He had
no Mae West or dingy and swam two miles to the shore, arriving clad
only in a wristwatch.

JULY 1942:

Crash landed behind our lines in the Western Desert.

JANUARY 1943:

Crash landed behind enemy lines after a strafing "cc" in
Tripolitania. Dressed as an Arab, he walked through a break in the
wire guarded by a sentry armed with a machine gun. After O'Neill had
gone 500 yards the sentry opened fire and he dropped flat on his face.
Bullets struck the ground about him but he was not injured. When dusk
fell shortly afterwards he crossed into our lines bringing information
concerning enemy dispositions which was invaluable in an attack which
had been planned for that morning. Then a Sergeant Pilot, O'Neill
breakfasted with the Brigadier.

MAY 1944:

A Spitfire he was flying over Italy was hit in the main petrol
tank. Petrol flooded the cockpit, splashing in his face when he
endeavoured to open his hood and nearly asphyxiating him when he closed
it. He managed to cross the sea and landed at his Aerodrome in Corsica
with only a few pints of petrol in his tanks.

JUNE 1944

Sailed out for the second time over the Mediterranean when returning from a strafing "do" in Italy. Practice makes perfect, and when his Spitfire caught fire -- it had been hit by fire from the ground -- O'Neill left it coolly at 4,000 feet. After half an hour in his rubber dinghy, he was picked up by an aircraft of the air-sea rescue service and deposited on his home airbase.

Authorized by _____

D.P.S.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE NEWSLETTER

(R.A.A.F. No. 928)

London, January 8, 1945

News Editors are invited to make use as desired of the items in this weekly review, without acknowledgment. If follow-up information, photographs, feature articles or facilities for feature writers or photographers are desired, please telephone the R.A.A.F. News Room at Holborn 1513 (direct line : attended up to 10 p.m.) or Holborn 9211 (extension 33 : attended to 6 p.m.). Please note that some items herein have already been issued through the Ministry of Information.

ORDER OF CATERPILLAR -- AND BAR

(First release in U.K.)

Adventure dogs the heels of some men. One such is Flying Officer G.C.W. O'Neil, D.F.C, M.M, of Cremorne, New South Wales, now home in Australia after two eventful operational tours overseas, the first in the Western Desert in Kittyhawks, the second in Corsica in Spitfires.

O'Neil twice baled out over the sea, so qualifying for the "Order of the Caterpillar" -- and Bar. He was awarded the M.M. in January, 1943 and the D.F.C. in November, 1944. Here are some of O'Neil's adventures -

July, 1942: Baled out from his Kittyhawk over the Mediterranean after a fight with Me.109s. Without Mae West or dinghy, swam two miles naked to the shore. Later in July, crash-landed behind our lines in the Western Desert.

January, 1943: Crash landed behind enemy lines after strafing attack in Tripolitania. Dressed as an Arab, walked through a break in the wire which was guarded by a sentry with a machine-gun. After O'Neil had gone 500 yards, sentry opened fire and O'Neil dropped flat, unhurt. At dusk, he crossed into our lines, bringing information about enemy dispositions which was invaluable in an attack planned for that morning.

May, 1944: Hit in the main petrol tank while flying a Spitfire over Italy. Petrol flooded the cockpit, splashing in his face when he tried to open his hood and nearly asphyxiating him when he closed it. Managed to cross the sea and landed at his airfield in Corsica with only a few pints of petrol in his tanks.

June, 1944: Baled out for second time over the Mediterranean when returning from a strafing attack in Italy. Spitfire caught fire -- it had been hit by fire from the ground -- and O'Neil left it at 4,000 feet. After half an hour in his rubber dinghy, he was picked up by an aircraft of the Air-Sea Rescue service and flown to his home airfield.

Footnote: The "Order of the Caterpillar" is a reference to the Caterpillar Club, an official organisation to which an operational parachute descent gives entry.

DAILY SKETCH

29 JUN 1943

He Landed Twice Among Foes

An R.A.A.F. pilot who twice avoided capture when having made forced landings has been awarded the Military Medal.

He is Pilot Officer George C. W. O'Neill, of No. 450 Squadron.

In July last year he came down near Hamman in the Western Desert and last January he had to land many miles behind the enemy lines after making a low-level attack on the Tripolitanian border. He brought back useful information.

MOB

29 JUN 1943

**EVADED CAPTURE
TWICE—WINS M.M.**

An RAAF pilot, who twice avoided capture, has been awarded the Military Medal.

Sergeant (now Pilot-Officer) George Connor Watson O'Neil, RAAF, of No. 450 Squadron, had to make a forced landing near Namman, in the Western Desert, in July last year because of engine failure, but succeeded in making his way back to the British lines.

After making a low-level attack on the enemy near Churgia, 60 miles from Mesurata, Tripoli, last January, he was compelled to land many miles behind the enemy's lines.

Despite machine-gun fire he penetrated those lines and reached our forces four days later.

Copy of Citation of Award of D.F.C.

14-11-44 Spare

Flying Officer George Connor Watson O'NEIL, N.M. (403475) No.451 Squadron.
This officer joined his present squadron in November, 1943, for his second tour of operational flying. On at least 3 occasions, since then his aircraft has been extensively damaged by enemy action, but by his outstanding skill and tenacity, Flying Officer O'Neil has always succeeded in returning safely to base. In June, 1944, he took part in an attack on ground targets in Central Italy. Although his aircraft had been badly hit by ground fire, he continued with his mission, leaving one truck in flames and four others badly damaged. His skill alone enabled him to cross 400 miles of sea, before his engine caught fire, forcing him to abandon the aircraft. This officer has always shown outstanding coolness and courage.

Flying Officer Carl Anthony FALKLAND (400172) No.272 Squadron.

Copy of Citation of Award of D.F.C.

Low Immediate 14-11-44.

Flying Officer George Connor Watson O'NEIL, M.M. (403475) No.451 Squadron.

This officer joined his present squadron in November, 1943, for his second tour of operational flying. On at least 3 occasions, since then his aircraft has been extensively damaged by enemy action, but by his outstanding skill and tenacity, Flying Officer O'Neil has always succeeded in returning safely to base. In June, 1944, he took part in an attack on ground targets in Central Italy. Although his aircraft had been badly hit by ground fire, he continued with his mission, leaving one truck in flames and four others badly damaged. His skill alone enabled him to cross 400 miles of sea, before his engine caught fire, forcing him to abandon the aircraft. This officer has always shown outstanding coolness and courage.

Flying Officer Carl Anthony FALKLAND (400172) No.272 Squadron.

AMB No. 10723.

Not for publication, broadcast or use on club tapes before 0030 hours 29th June, 1943. This "mbargo should be respected overseas by prefacing any message with this Embargo.

ROYAL AIR FORCE AWARDS No. 595.

The King has been graciously pleased to approve the following award in recognition of gallant conduct:-

Military Medal.

437A.

Aus. 403475 Sergeant (now Pilot Officer) George Connor Watson O'NEIL,
R.A.A.F., No. 450 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron. This airman effected a forced landing near Namman on 25th July, 1942, owing to engine failure, but succeeded in making his way back to the British lines. After making a low level attack on the enemy near Churgia on 13th January, 1943, he was compelled to land many miles behind the enemy's lines. Despite machine gun fire, he penetrated those lines and reached our forces four days later. Sergeant O'Neil displayed great courage and resource in evading capture and his report was useful to the military authorities.

R.A.A.F. Release No. 582

June 14, 1944.

AUSTRALIAN FIGHTERS SPEED RETREAT FROM ROME

In the great German retreat from Rome, enemy motor transport has provided excellent early-morning targets, and an Australian Kittyhawk fighter squadron operating from a forward Mediterranean base has been quick to take advantage.

Fighters found their objectives carefully camouflaged among the trees, or moving along roads north of the Italian capital, and returned to base with their best score so far --- 14 vehicles destroyed (nine "flamers" and five "smokers") and a further 21 damaged. Some were towing trailers. Lack of ammunition prevented a larger tally.

Pilots with the best day's score were:-

Squadron Leader E.E. Kirkham, of Concord, New South Wales
one flamer, one other destroyed, two damaged.

Flying Officer R.T. Milner, of Sutherland, New South Wales ---
three flamers, two damaged.

Flying Officer G.C. O'Neill, of Cramorne, New South Wales ---
one flamer, four damaged.

Flying Officer J.T. Minchan, of Waverley, New South Wales --- one
flamer, one smoker, four damaged.

Flying Officer T.H. S. James, of Woody Point, Queensland ---
one flamer.

Flight Sergeant J.P. Vinter, of Applethorpe, Queensland --- one
flamer, one damaged.

.....OOO.....