

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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

PRO. FORMA,
F/R. 5.

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL

The following biographical details are required for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters. These forms are to be filled in and handed to the Adjutant of your unit immediately.

NAME... KENNETH, George MCKENZIE NUMBER... 402101
(In full)

RANK AND MUSTERING... F/O (Air Observer) DECORATIONS.....

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE... No. 1 Broadfield

X DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA
CANADA 9th April 1941
8th AFRICA

DATE OF ARRIVAL UNITED KINGDOM... 30th April 1943

O.T.U. - A.F.U. etc. Proceeded direct to squadron after arrival in M.E.

PRESENT UNIT... No. 4 (O) A.F.U. as Navigation AIRCRAFT FLOWN... Anson

PREVIOUS UNITS (with dates) AND AIRCRAFT FLOWN.....

- 1) 39 Squadron, Western Desert. Maryland a/c
- 2) 69 Squadron, Malta. Maryland & Baltimore
- 3) 41 Air School, East London, South Africa Anson
- 4) Central Navigation School, Cranage Anson

DETAILS OF OPERATIONS (details of operations with dates to be given as fully as possible under the appropriate headings as shown)

- (a) Number Operational Hours (b) Number Operational Sorties, day-night
(c) Target bombed
(d) Attacks on enemy surface vessels - type size etc.
(e) Attacks on enemy submarines (f) Combats with enemy aircraft
(g) Other attacks and incidents. (h) Other Australians in crew.

(a) 300 (b) 70 operational sorties (day)

(c) Benghazi (3), Cambrat Sollum (2), Derna, Mechili (2), Bomba, Gazala, Tobruk, Marsaba, Bardia, Crete, Barce, Capuzzo, El Adem, Si Aziz ----- all carried out with 39 Squadron between June & September 1941 - all normally routine patrols without anything untoward (except usual flak etc.) happening. Bardia trip resulted in a descent forced landing without any mishap.

In September 1941 I led a formation of Maryland a/c from WADI NATRUN (Egypt) to DUBAI (Malta) via C. Miltos (Crete). Except for a lone enemy a/c who sheered off at our approach in the Central Med. the trip was fairly uneventful. On joining 69 Squadron we carried out a variety of tasks, ranging from sea searches extending from the Adriatic to Benghazi from Sardinia to Crete; Tunis to Taranto - P.R.U. flights visiting every aerodrome in Sicily; Tunisian & Tripolitanian ports & airfields - combined with bombing & leaflet dropping the work had the quality of variety. Encounters with enemy a/c (especially when the Malta "blitz" commenced) became commonplace, whilst life on the island it all was different to anything hitherto experienced.

The targets visited are listed overleaf. Attached is a short account of the more interesting incidents which it was my fortune (or otherwise) to share whilst flying with 69 Squadron.

use other side if necessary.

TARGETS:

● PALERMO (3) BORIZZIO TARANTO PANTELLERIA SARDINIA NAPLES TRIPOLI (3)
CASTEL BENITO MESSINA TRAPANI (4) TUNIS CORFU ZANTE ONTRANO
MISURATA TAUGORGO BIRDUFAN BENI ULID KERKEGNA LAMPEDUSA LINGSA
MARITIMO SOUSSE ARGOSTOLI PATRAS NAVARINO STROVATHI

- (f) Encounters : enemy a/c 1) Chased 25 mins by 2 ME 109 2 ME 110
ii) Encountered 11 different a/c on one sortie.
SM79 damaged in head on attack.
iii) Interception patrols over Paterno - chased by
109's for 20 minutes.
iv) Many others sighted but never bad enough to do
us any damage.
- (g) As attached. Also made initial sighting off Tripoli which resulted in
rescue of almost complete complement of H.M.S. "Kandahar".

Dear Squadron Leader Tart,

I am enclosing the data asked for on the attached form. I regret that I was unable to keep the appointment made some weeks ago but a recall intervened. I would appreciate your acknowledgment of the enclosed.

I have endeavoured to make the story as complete as possible and not indulge in excessive line shooting. However, the following are a few further points which may be of interest.

Prior to joining the R.A.A.F. I was on the reserve for the Citizen Air Force but on the outbreak of hostilities I joined in a clerical capacity in October 1939, hoping to go overseas with the then projected Sunderland Wing. Its cancellation and the introduction of the Empire Air Training Scheme prevented this and I found myself on the staff of the Recruiting Centre in Sydney.

When air crew enlistment commenced towards the end of 1939 I was given the job of "initial interviewer" and the work from then on was full of interest. Graham Pockley was one of the first to visit Erskine House ... Chad Martin ,,, Clive Caldwell ... Ray Thorold Smith ... Chisolm ... Lister Ifould ... Digges ... Frank Arthur ... Mick Grace ... Doug Vanderfield ... these, and many others, I came to know very well during their many visits to "join" and many others who lie forever on the plains of Syria, in the fields of Europe, in jungle and desert, or in the deep of mighty oceans. All of them, at one time or another, took their place in what was probably Sydney's first wartime queue.

Interesting as the job was it lacked the action of aircrew; so after repeated applications permission was finally given for me to be remustered. On departure from the centre some of the less conservative dailies carried a short review of my activities whilst on the job, one showing a photo with the captain "From office".... (then the photo) ... and beneath "to cockpit". I recount that merely to point out that it was not the pilot's cockpit aimed at that I finally attained. Three months later I was a "scrubbed" pilot. Back to Bradfield ... thence Coota, Evans Head, Parkes and overseas, as an observer.

I've met many of the early applicants in odd corners of the world and it has become very interesting to study them from the "then" and "now" angle.

That's about all. I hope to be in London in 3-4 weeks' time. If you require any further gen I could give it to you then.

Sincerely,

(Sgd.) K. G. McKenzie

AUS/402101 F/O K. G. McKenzie,
R.A.F. Station,
West Freugh,
nr. Stranraer. Scotland.

We took off at dawn from Ta Kali aerodrome; circled the island and set course for the target. A pleasant, uneventful trip half way to Cephalonia with 10/10ths cloud forced us down to 1,000 feet. Flying beneath this canopy the sunlight ahead appeared as a thin red line on the horizon. Red for danger? Ironically and factually correct!

The "red line" faded and in its place came the enemy coastline - great green hills behind brown cliffs rising out of the blue of the Mediterranean. Against this background and across the line of vision came an unannounced aircraft. Our powers of recognition were tested for a moment but as we drew nearer it became apparent that it was a Cant seaplane.

We turned in to attack - at the critical moment the intercom. system went u.s. The skipper commented laconically "they (the gunners) will know what's happening when they see the bullets flying". They did! As a precautionary measure I moved my from behind my back and placed it in front of me for use as a shield against unfriendly bullets. The observer's glasshouse of a Maryland was not the healthiest of spots in episodes such as this!

No. 1 attack carried out - successfully, I imagine, as we had no return fire from the rear cockpit of the enemy kits. The duel continued, the great, grey aircraft endeavouring to manoeuvre from our grasp - a smoke float thrown out on the sea was evidently an appeal for assistance to those on shore. We came in again, smoke from one engine, again, and then, near disaster!

As the final attack commenced our guns jammed, we turned away too suddenly and presented an ideal target to the rear gunner, who had either been cowering in the rear turret or whose place had been taken by another crew member. He made the most of his opportunity - our kite was raked from end to end. I was aware of vivid red tracer coming in my direction, bullets crashed through the nose, came closer, miraculously passed in front of and behind me; the cockpit was flooded with oil, its pungent odour mingled with that of burning cordite. The kite lurched, commenced diving towards the sea. I looked through my "spy-hole", the pilot was sitting with blood streaming from one eye. "This", I thought, "is it!"

However, while there's life ... I quickly connected my dual controls. As I did so I felt an answering movement from the skipper. I wrote a note on paper covered in oil "Can we make base?" Came a nod in the affirmative (our intercom. had been shattered).

Looking out the port window it appeared that the roles were now reversed, the enemy was about to take the offensive. There we were, like two boxers in the final stages of a heavy contest, both groggy but not giving in. But he was near home, so climbed into the safety of a nearby cloud, flew away from the scene of the engagement, took over again from the skipper to allow him to relax, and reviewed the situation.

What a pickle - 350 miles from base, a wounded pilot, gunners? I remembered our second intercom system, switched over and could have yelled my head off when I heard a clear, calm voice saying "Hello No. 1 Hello No. 2". "Windi! what's happened behind?" "Shambles" was the reply "S.E. gone, wireless shot to pieces but Mush is trying to fix it".

Endeavoured to contact the skipper on this unit, without success. After a consultation with the gunners decided to fly due south, about 70 miles from land, as if we had made for Sicily to "coast crawl" home and been involved in further combat it could have had but one ending.

My prowess as a pilot was not great - whilst I could manage a reasonable course there was a definite tendency for the aircraft to climb; consequently at the end of about an hour we had reached 5,000 feet and were now sitting on a carpet of cumulus with clear blue sky above. The cold was apparently affecting the skipper for he passed me a note "dont climb any higher". It required a lot of concentration not to.

Constant contact was maintained with one gunner, the other was still working on the wireless set in an endeavour to repair it with a nail file!

At one stage I signalled the skipper, asking if he could take over while I checked the navigation. My methods were a bit ropery, however, for he didnt get

the peaning. Still, he was certainly looking a lot better than when we started the return journey. So in the vernacular, "there I was", but the general set up was rather different, juggling a nav board, checking the course and trying to fly. (In a fool's paradise, too, I learned afterwards - the plan was to sit on top of the cloud, the visibility was excellent, so that the possibility of being "jumped" was nil. Therefore, if anything hostile came on the horizon, the solution, to me, was "into the cloud". In the happier after hours the query was raised "what about instrument flying?" Cutain'.)

Thus we went winging down the Mediterranean, a wounded pilot, relaxing, a navigator-cum pilot and two air gunners trying to get a broken down crate back to friendly territory.

Suddenly over the intercom ... "I say, Mac, we've fixed it - I can send" out went the S.O.S. and a message to Malta.

At what I calculated was our best turning point I slowly banked to the west, fingers crossed. I looked again at the skipper, could he land it, or I? the reverie was interrupted by the Wireless Op. "I think I can get a bearing". He did. We turned a little more and a few minutes later there came into view the truly beautiful sight of Malta, sitting there in the clear blue sea with towering white clouds above - always a welcome sight, it had never been more so than now.

As we drew nearer I gave the lads in the back the picture, the skipper was wounded, how greatly, or otherwise, we didnt know. After nearly two hours rest he might be O.K., but again we didnt know - a shot up kite, with a sprog at the controls the possibility of a successful landing seemed remote, but, we agreed, had to be attempted. There could be no question of leaving anyone behind. I suggested that the gunners bale out over the island leaving me to make an attempt to get the kite down if the skipper was still u.s. Came the instant retort "What do you think we are? We're sticking"! Further argument was useless. They had made up their minds.

Kala Bay Filfla no aircraft about. I tried the intercom to the skipper again and wonders..... it was working! The skipper answered.... I asked the question "Can you land her?" "Yes.. O.K.... was the confident reply "Circle at 140 and I'll try to get the wheels down".

I breathed a grateful prayer and we crossed the coast towards Valetta. Circled. The wheels went down...came up...Again..... our hydraulics had been shot away. Well, fingers crossed again.....a belly landing.

We descended towards Ta Kali. "I'll make this one a dummy run".... but as we approached the aerodrome fence it became obvious that it could be a perfect landing....it was.... we touched down, a slight jar.... slithered across the grass--stopped --- silenceexit..... cars came speeding across the drome.....someone gave me a cigarett....we'd made it!

.....

This seems a helluva lot. However, it's the only way (and the first time) I feel like recording the event.

DEPARTMENT OF AIR.

Special.
Melbourne.
22.1.44.

Directorate of
Public Relations.
Bulletin No. 3150.

HE WANTED TO BE A PILOT.

Late in 1939 a young airman sat in the newly opened Royal Australian Air Force Recruiting Centre in Sydney interviewing day after day the long lines of young Australians who wanted to fly with the R.A.A.F.

He grew to know many of the first R.A.A.F.S. course men who have now become famous all over the world. He met, as raw recruits, such aces as Wing Commander C.R. Caldwell, D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar, Polish Cross of Valour; Wing Commander G.A. Martin, D.S.O., D.F.C.; Squadron Leader E.L. Ifould, D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar; Squadron Leader F.A. Arthur, D.F.C.; Squadron Leader R.E. Thorold-Smith, D.F.C.; Squadron Leader H.G. Pockley, D.F.C. and Bar and many others who took their place in what was probably Sydney's first wartime enlistment queue.

But he himself wanted to fly. Interesting as the job was, it lacked action, and after repeated applications he obtained permission to retransfer. Now, after having completed 70 operational sorties and serving for two years in the Middle East, Flying Officer Kenneth George McKenzie, of Owen, South Australia, ex-recruiting clerk, is himself a veteran.

But only once - and by chance - did he achieve his ambition to pilot an aircraft, on a sortie from Malta in a Maryland.

The Maryland took off at dawn from Ta Keli aerodrome; circled the Island of Malta, and set course for the target. It was a pleasant, uneventful trip half way to Cephania, where cloud forced the aircraft down to 1000 feet. Flying beneath this canopy, the sunlight ahead appeared as a thin red line on the horizon.

The red line faded, and in its place came the enemy coastline - high green hills above brown cliffs rising out of the blue of the Mediterranean. Against this background, across the crew's line of vision, suddenly flew an aircraft, a Cant aeroplane. The Maryland turned in to attack, and at that critical moment the intercommunication system failed. The first attack brought no return fire; the great grey enemy aircraft was trying to manoeuvre out of danger. A smoke float was thrown out to sea, evidently as a signal to those on shore.

Burning Cordite: The Maryland came in again, smoke pouring from one of the enemy's engines. Then, as the Maryland began its third attack, its guns jammed. As it turned away it presented an ideal target to the enemy rear gunner, and he made the most of his opportunity. The Maryland was raked from end to end.

McKenzie in the observer's position, saw vivid red tracer coming towards him, but passing in front and behind. The bullets crashed into the nose; the cockpit was flooded with oil, its pungent odour mingling with that of burning cordite. The Maryland lurched and began diving towards the sea.

McKenzie looked through his "spy-hole" and saw the pilot sitting with the blood streaming from one eye. He connected the dual controls, and as he did so felt an answering movement from the Captain. McKenzie wrote on a piece of oil-covered paper, "Can we make base?" and the Captain nodded.

McKenzie took the Maryland up into the safety of a cloud and set course for home, 350 miles away. McKenzie managed to contact the gunners on the second intercom system, and they informed him that the rear was a shambles and the wireless unserviceable. Then he called up the Captain, but without success. Consulting the gunners again, he decided to fly due south, 70 miles from land and to return well clear of the coast of Sicily.

"My prowess as a pilot was not great," said McKenzie. "While I managed to steer a reasonable course the aircraft showed a distressing tendency to climb, and consequently at the end of about an hour we had reached 6000 feet and were sitting on a carpet of cumulus with clear blue sky above. Unfortunately the cold seemed to affect the skipper who passed me a note asking me not to climb any higher. I concentrated on keeping down, but it was difficult. I signalled to him asking whether he felt well enough to take over while I checked the navigation, but he didn't seem to understand my meaning; so I juggled with the navigation board, trying to check the course and fly at the same time. Meanwhile one of the gunners was working on the wireless set with a nail file, and he called me up suddenly to say he had fixed it, and was sending out an S.O.S. and a message to Malta".

At what he calculated was the best turning point, McKenzie slowly banked to the west with his fingers crossed. The wireless operator got a bearing and a few minutes later, Malta came into view, a beautiful sight, set in a clear blue sea with towering white clouds above it. It had always been a welcome sight to the crew, but never more so than then.

Bale out? "As we drew nearer" said McKenzie, "I gave the lads in the back an idea of our chances, we had no idea how badly the skipper was wounded, and I might have to attempt a landing. I suggested they might bale out, but this they emphatically refused to do.

We came in over Kala Bay. I tried the Skipper's intercom again - and to my astonishment he answered. I asked whether we could land her, and his voice was quite confident when he answered, "Yes, O.K. Circle at 140 and I'll try to get the wheels down".

"I breathed a grateful prayer, and we crossed the coast towards Valetta and circled the drone. But our hydraulics had evidently been shot away, and the wheels stuck. The pilot prepared for a belly landing".

But the Maryland touched down with only a slight jar, slithered across the grass in an almost perfect landing, and came to rest.

There was a moment's "deafening silence" after the roar of engines. Then cars raced across the airfield to meet the crew. Someone handed McKenzie a cigarette. The ex-recruiting clerk who had wanted action, with an aircraft under his control, had had his wish.

Authorized by L. J. H. H. D.P.R.