AWM 65

3445

MC PHAIL, NOEL
413092

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

OFFICERS AND AIRCREW

AW. 958 A/55-A. D.F.M.
See Misc: 865 INT.

The following Biographical details are requested for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, LONDON,-

Photo. U.K. 1942.

Surname: McPHAIL Number: 413092

Christian Names: NOEL

Air Force Rank and Mustering: SGT/PILOT

Degrees, Decorations, etc: D.F.M. D.F.C.

Present Appointment and Location: R.A.A.F. P.R.C. BOURNEMOUTH

Date of Birth: 15/12/16 Place: SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

Educated: MARIST BROS HIGH SCHOOL MOSMAN SYDNEY

Date of Entering Service: 15/8/41

Previous Service Experience: 5 YEARS 1 ANTI AIRCRAFT BATTERY MILITIA GEORGES HEIGHTS MOSMAN

Places of Training in R.A.A.F.: No 1 I.T.S. No 11 E.F.T.S. BENALLA VIC. No 6 S.F.T.S. MALLALLA S. AUST.

Civilian Career and Activities: SALESMAN STUDIED DIESEL ENGINEERING AT SYDNEY TECH. College

Clubs, Recreations, etc: RECREATION SPENT IN ACTIVITIES WITH 1ST A/A BTY SWIMMING FOOTBALL ECT.

Fathers name: MR H. McPHAIL

Wifes name: ~~~

Children: ~~~

Home Address: 31 CONGEWOI RD MOSMAN SYDNEY

Signature: N McPhail

Date: 16/12/42

Date Embarked Australia: 17/10/42

Destination: UNITED KINGDOM.

RTA

1

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) McPHAIL, NOEL NUMBER A.413092

RANK & MUSTERING F/LT. PILOT DECORATIONS D.F.C. D.F.M.

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE 19 O.T.U.-A.F.U. etc. Not sure of course No.

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA 17/10/42
CANADA N.A.
S.AFRICA N.A.
DATE OF ARRIVAL U.K. 15/12/42

SQUADRONS 102 Squadron, Pocklington, Yorks.

AIRCRAFT FLOWN ANSON, TIGER MOTH, OXFORD, WELLINGTON, HALIFAX 11

COMMAND AND TYPE OF ACTIVITY BOMBER, MAIN FORCE

OPERATIONS OR TRAINING WITH AMERICAN PERSONNEL, SQUADRONS, OR AIRCRAFT N/A

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

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

(a) ~~220~~ 217 hrs. (b) 38 - Night (c) See over. (d) One (e) Nil

(f) Ten (g) 23/10/43 Mannheim engaged J.U. 88 over target by Mid Upper Gunner last seen going down in flames. 3/10/43 Cassel - hit by flak in target port inner engine broke away and fell out, port outer prop. damaged. Awarded immediate D.F.M. 15/2/44 - Oslo Fjord - While laying mines from 300 ft. fired on by flak ship or pilot vessel of about 50 ft. mounting a 20 m.m. cannon, gunners returned fire, registering hits by while doing a steep turn over the vessel. Enemy fire stopped. No opposition on second run over the vessel which was on our dropping zone. 19/2/44 - Leipzig ~~attacked by fire in target area fighter broke off attack at 50 yds. tail gunners guns~~ jammed owing to extreme cold and we suffered damage in the main starboard wing. (over)

DATE

SIGNATURE N McPhail F/L

Use other side, or attach extra sheets if necessary.

23/4/44

(g contd) Baltic hit by flak over Denmark intercomm. U/S etc. ttacked by 2 fighters M.E. 190 made five attacks evasive action taken by call light. On 5th. attack M.E. 190 blew up and went down in flames. Second fighter broke off attack. Gardening area reached, duty carried out. Off track as Nav. aids were damaged, coned and fired on by heavy ack ack, forced down to 1,000 ft. before getting clear. Gunners and pilot immediate award of D.F.C. 29/4/44. - St.Nazaire Mine drogue detached on take off, maximum air speed 145 m.p.h. duty carried out at low altitude.

(h) F/O Colin Robertson, Warrigal, Victoria - Tail Gunner
F/O Victor F.M. Carr, Grafton, N.S.Wales - Mid Upper Gunner

(i) Bomber Command

(c) -

30/7/43	Remschied	2/8/43	Hamburg
5/9/43	Mannheim	6/9/43	Munich
22/9/43	Hanover	23/9/43	Mannheim
27/9/43	Hanover	3/10/43	Cassel
18/11/43	Ludwigshaven	19/11/43	Leverkusen
22/11/43	Berlin	25/11/43	Frankfurt
26/11/43	Stuttgart	20/12/43	Frankfurt
20/1/44	Berlin	2/2/44	Kiel Bay (mine laying)
4/2/44	St.Nazaire (mine laying)	5/2/44	Oslo Fjord (mine laying)
15/2/44	Berlin	19/2/44	Leipzig
6/3/44	Trapps (Marshalling yard)	13/3/44	Le Mans (Marshalling yard)
15/3/44	Amiens (Marshalling yard)	22/3/44	Kiel Bay (mine laying)
23/3/44	Laon (Marshalling yard)	25/3/44	Aulnoye (Marshalling yard)
26/3/44	Caurtrai (Marshalling yard)	29/3/44	Vaires (Marshalling yard)
1/4/44	Texel Island (mine laying)	7/4/44	Texel Island (mine laying)
9/4/44	Lille (Marshalling yard)	10/4/44	Terginer (Marshalling yard)
20/4/44	Morliax (mine laying)	21/4/44	Lorient (mine laying)
23/4/44	Baltic (mine laying)	26/4/44	Villeneuve (marshalling yard)
27/4/44	Aulnoye (Marshalling yard)	29/4/44	St.Nazaire (mine laying)

102 Squadron 29/10/43.

AUS. 413092 FLIGHT SERGEANT M. McPHAIL, D.F.M., PILOT, OF SYDNEY

Flight Sergeant McPHAIL was trained in Australia and has done seven operational trips with No. 102 Squadron. They were:- Remschied, Hamburg, Mannheim (2), Hanover (2), and Kassel. His mid-upper gunner is Aus. 422412, Flight Sergeant V. CARR, of Grafton, N.S.W. and the rear gunner is Aus. 418570, Flight Sergeant C. G. ROBERTSON, of Warragul, Victoria.

Flight Sergeant CARR probably shot down a JU88 over Mannheim. McPHAIL'S crew saw a badly damaged Halifax being attacked so went up to try and free the others. The two gunners opened fire and the enemy aircraft immediately replied. However, the enemy aircraft went down leaving a trail of smoke and fire but the crew did not see it hit the ground. Immediately after that McPHAIL had to take evasive action from a Dornier which did not fire.

He won his D.F.M. as a result of the raid on Kassel.

"I don't know what happened but we were mixed up in flak over the target," he said. "When we got back to England one of the blades of the port inner propellor fell off and upset the balance of the engine. I couldn't throttle it back and the vibration caused the engine to drop out. As the port inner engine fell out it shattered the propellor of the port outer. We were forced down to 500 feet. When the engine fell out we were at 1500 feet and we lost 1000 feet while I was endeavouring to regain control. I landed with only the two starboard engines. The port outer was vibrating so much that it was useless."

.....

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

A.M.C.S.

File No.....

Encl. No.....

OVERSEAS MESSAGE.

Please transmit the following message in secret cypher :

TO :

FROM : OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS, R.A.A.F., KINGSWAY.

.....

Personal file

SECRET 28/9/44. 2258.

102 Sqn.

Aus. 413092 Flying Officer N. McPhail, D.F.C., D.F.M. of Mosman, N.S.W. - Pilot

He was on No. 19 course at Somers and trained in Australia at Benalla and Mallala.

He left in October, 42 on the Queen Mary travelled via America and arrived in the U.K. in December. From Bournemouth he went to PRE A.F.U. Cambridge then to A.F.U. Greenham Common, then to O.T.U. at Harwell. He converted to Halifaxes at 1663 Conversion Unit, Rufforth, and in August 43, joined No. 102 Halifax Squadron at Pocklington. He was crewed up with two other Australians, the mid-upper gunner Sgt. Victor F.N. Carr (now F/O D.F.C.) and the rear gunner Sgt. Colin Robertson (F/O D.F.C.)

These three completed thirtysix operational sorties together and were screened in April of this year. The targets they attacked include Berlin (three) Mannheim (two), Kassel (two), Hanover (two), Leipzig, (eighteen German targets in all). They flew Halifax IIs. which towards the end of 1943 became too costly to fly deep into the heart of Germany and were switched first on to minelaying then on to French targets. McPhail's crew laid mines in Kiel Bay, the Baltic, St. Nazaire, Lorient. Prior to the invasion they concentrated almost solely on French marshalling yards.

McPhail won an Immediate D.F.M. after an attack on Kassel in October last year. His Halifax ran into a lot of flak bombing the target, and he is not certain, but believes it possible, that the bomber was hit in one engine. "The aircraft was vibrating badly all the way home" he said. "We got back over the coast and were at about 1500 feet approaching base when a blade of the port inner ~~inner~~ propellor flew off. Before I could do anything about it the engine started to break away from the fuselage.

A tremendous vibration had been shaking the aircraft and it went temporarily out of control and into a spiral dive. It had dropped to about five hundred feet when the engine fell out completely. As it came away it knocked and damaged the port outer propellor.

McPhail managed to regain control after the engine broke away and called up the airfield and came in on the circuit on the two good engines. He came in very high right over the drome, then after he had lined up on the aporoach out the two starboard engines and glided down. No damage was done to the Halifax in landing.

McPhail, Carr and Robertson all won immediate D.F.Cs after a minelaying trip to the Baltic in March of this year. Crossing the Danish coast on the way out about a hundred miles from the target their Halifax was hit by a burst of flak which tore a big hole in the fuselage on the port side, blew out the intercommunication system and badly damaged the D.R. compass. The crew decided that as the engines were functioning they would go on, using the emergency light system in place of the inter com. A long flash of light was to mean corkscrew port, quick flicks dive to starboard.

Very soon the bomber was attacked by two fighters. "The first indication I got was the signal to dive to port " McPhail said. "I had just started the manoeuvre when we were hit by two cannon shells which exploded just behind the mid upper gunner. I heard the crash as they exploded and saw the flash."

Meantime Carr and Robertson were fighting back. The fighter, an FW 190 made five attacks in all and right through the fight McPhail continued to manoeuvred on the emergency lights. After the first attack the Halifax was not hit again and McPhail could see the enemy tracer flying past, above and below missing them all the time. Sometimes he could see the return fire from his gunners. The FW attacked from the rear sometimes from above sometimes from below

Finally on the fifth attack the enemy came in from the starboard up and McPhail dived towards him. "I thought for a second that we were going to collide but I continued turning into him"he said. "He broke off his attack and in doing so exposed his belly. This gave the mid upper gunner his chance and he got in a ten seconds burst. We saw him catch fire and the rear gunner saw him fall through the mist in flames and the glow on the ground as he exploded."

Meantime the second fighter had been hovering round putting in halfhearted attacks, but had not actually fired. "He came in once or twice but we evaded" McPhail said. "He wasn't able to position himself for a proper attack and when the other one went down he disappeared." The bomber went on and the mines were laid in the allotted areas. On the return journey the crew experienced great difficulty in keeping on course owing to the damaged compass. Eventually they came out over a defended area and for five minutes were held in intense prdicted flak. McPhail turned back into enemy territory, flew round the defended area and out over the North Sea back to base without further trouble.

On their last trip on April 27 the crew were detailed to lay mines at St. Nazaire. The Halifax was loaded with four mines which made it impossible to close the bomb doors completely. Taking off the bomber roused a flock of birds at the end of the runway and Mc Phail said he could see them all round rushing past. The crew believe that one went in the open bomb doors. "We can only think it was one of the birds because something went in and accidentally released one of the mine parachutes" he said. "This came loose, hung down into the slip stream and billowed out. It then caused a lot of drag and I could only get 145 miles an hour maximum speed out of the aircraft."

McPhail went on although it took the crew an hour and a half to climb to six thousand feet. They arrived over the target half an hour late but all the mines released and fell in the mining area. Once they were

gone the bomber made base with ease.

McPhail, Robertson and Carr are now instructing at 27 O.T.U.

DFM 1/11/43. 958A

Aus.413092, Flight Sergeant Noel McPHAIL, Royal Australian Air Force, No. 102 Squadron. One night in October, 1943, this airman piloted an aircraft detailed to attack Kassel. The sortie was successfully accomplished and Flight Sergeant McPhail flew the aircraft safely to base. Whilst making his approach to land, the bomber began to vibrate violently. It was seen that a blade of one of the propellers was missing. Before the necessary remedial action could be taken the engine fell away. The aircraft momentarily went out of control but, by a superb effort, Flight Sergeant McPhail regained control at 500 feet from the ground and finally landed the aircraft. His skill and coolness undoubtedly saved his aircraft and its crew from disaster. This airman has undertaken several sorties and his good judgment has been well evident on all occasions.

Stay here

AOC
SofR
Mrs Coates.

Personal file — F/Lt. N. McPhail

R.A.A.F. RELEASE No.506 19.5.44. No.32.

D.F.C. FOR THREE AUSTRALIAN MINE-LAYERS

So often dismissed in Air Ministry communiques with the cryptic reference, "and mines were laid in enemy waters", a recent mine-laying mission has won the award of D.F.C. to three Australians, who were also associated in a sensational flight last October. They are Flight-Lieutenant Noel McPhail, D.F.M., of Sydney, and Pilot-Officers V.F.M. Carr, of Grafton, New South Wales, and C.G. Robertson, of Warragul, Victoria.

"As pilot and air gunners, respectively, these officers have completed a large number of sorties, involving a wide range of targets," their citation says. "They have invariably displayed a high standard of skill, courage and devotion to duty - qualities which were well illustrated during a recent mine-laying mission."

Before reaching the mining area their aircraft was hit by ack-ack fire, damaged, and almost immediately intercepted by a fighter, which attacked persistently. The citation adds:- "Flight-Lieutenant McPhail manoeuvred with great skill, however, and Pilot-Officers Carr and Robertson used their guns with great effect to drive off the attacker, which is believed to have been shot down. These officers displayed great determination throughout."

As a Flight-Sergeant less than seven months ago, Flight-Lieutenant McPhail won the D.F.M. for bringing a "three-engined" bomber back from a raid on Kassel - one engine dropped off after they crossed the English coast. Actually, McPhail brought the aircraft back on his two starboard engines. Carr and Robertson were associated with him as mid-upper and rear gunners on that flight, during which they were "mixed up with some flak" over Kassel, as McPhail said later.

Over England on the way back, the blade of the port inner-engine flew off. With its balance upset, the engine vibrated and fell out, smashing the port outer-engine's airscrew as it fell. By what the citation described as "a superb effort" McPhail regained control, although the aircraft lost 1000 feet and was flying at 500 feet, before he did so he eventually landed safely.

For this feat, he was congratulated by the Commander-in-Chief, Bomber Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, and the Air Officer Commanding the R.A.A.F. Overseas, Air Vice Marshal H.N. Wrigley.

Besides the "probable" of their recent award-winning mine mission, Pilot-Officer Carr is believed to have shot down a Ju.88 over Mannheim.

Born and educated in Sydney, McPhail was a salesman before the war. For five years he was on the strength of an Australian anti-aircraft unit. He joined the R.A.A.F. in August, 1941, and was trained in Victoria and South Australia.

Carr and Robertson joined the R.A.A.F. within a day of each other, in May, 1942, and both were trained in Australia. Carr was in the furniture trade before enlisting, and Robertson was a shop assistant.

- - - - -

ENCLOSURE

Spare

Copy of Citation of Award of D.F.C. (Immediate)

Acting Flight Lieutenant Noel McPhail, D.F.M. (Aus.413092)No.102 Sqdn.

Pilot Officer Victor Francis Milton Carr (Aus.422412) No.102 Sqdn.

Pilot Officer Colin George Robertson (Aus.418570) No.102 Sqdn.

As pilot and air gunners respectively these officers have completed a large number of sorties, involving a wide range of targets. They have invariably displayed a high standard of skill, courage and devotion to duty, qualities which were well illustrated, during a recent mine-laying ~~firecombat~~ mission. Before reaching the target the aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire and sustained damage. Almost immediately the aircraft was intercepted by a fighter which attacked with much persistence. Flight Lieutenant McPhail manoeuvred with great skill, however, and Pilot Officers Carr and Robertson used their guns with great effect to drive off the attacker which is believed to have been shot down. These officers displayed great determination throughout.

1101/8/P.1.
105A.

plain language.

R.A.A.F. H.Q.

IMPORTANT PL. 570 P. 16 May.

RESTRICTED (.) THIS SIGNAL IS MY PL. 570 P DATED 16 MAY AND INCLUDES ONE D.S.O. THREE D.F.C's (.) FURTHER MY PL. 564 10 MAY FOLLOWING IMMEDIATE AWARDS WILL BE GAZETTED 19 MAY (.)

D.F.C. ACTING FLIGHT LIEUTENANT NOEL McPHAIL, D.F.M. (413092) NO. 102 SQUADRON PILOT OFFICER VICTOR FRANCIS MILTON CARR (422412) NO. 102 SQUADRON PILOT OFFICER COLIN GEORGE ROBERTSON (418570) NO. 102 SQUADRON(.) AS PILOT AND AIR GUNNERS RESPECTIVELY THESE OFFICERS HAVE COMPLETED LARGE NUMBER SORTIES INVOLVING WIDE RANGE OF TARGETS(.) THEY HAVE INVARIABLY DISPLAYED HIGH STANDARD OF SKILL, COURAGE AND DEVOTION TO DUTY, QUALITIES WHICH WERE WELL ILLUSTRATED, DURING RECENT MINE-LAYING MISSION(.) BEFORE REACHING TARGET AIRCRAFT WAS HIT BY ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE AND SUSTAINED DAMAGE(.) ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AIRCRAFT WAS INTERCEPTED BY FIGHTER WHICH ATTACKED WITH MUCH PERSISTENCE(.) McPHAIL MANOEUVRED WITH GREAT SKILL HOWEVER AND CARR AND ROBERTSON USED THEIR GUNS WITH GREAT EFFECT TO DRIVE OFF ATTACKER WHICH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN(.) THESE OFFICERS DISPLAYED GREAT DETERMINATION THROUGHOUT(.)

(H.W.HALE)
SQUADRON LEADER,
FOR AIR VICE MARSHAL,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING.

Brought Bomber Back Minus One Engine

IT HAD DROPPED OFF

Returning from a recent raid on Kassel an Australian pilot safely landed his bomber at base without the port inner-engine, which had dropped off, a feat which has won the award of the D.F.M.

The pilot, Flight-sergeant Noel McPhail, of Sydney, New South Wales, has been congratulated by the Commander-in-Chief Bomber Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, and the Air Officer Commanding the R.A.A.F. Overseas, Air Vice-marshal H. M. Wrigley.

The citation to McPhail's award states that his skill and coolness undoubtedly saved the bomber and its crew.

"We were mixed up with some flak while over Kassel," said McPhail.

"When we were back over England I noticed a blade of the port inner-engine fly off. It upset the balance of the engine, and I could not throttle it back.

Down to 500ft.

The vibration caused the whole port inner-engine to drop out. As it did so, it shattered the port outer air screw.

"The bomber had dropped hundreds of feet and was only 500ft. above the ground."

McPhail, by what the citation describes as a "superb effort," regained control and finally landed safely.

The crew included two other Australians, Flight-sergt. Victor Carr, of Grafton, New South Wales, mid-upper gunner; and Flight-sergt. Colin Robertson, of Warragul, Victoria, rear gunner.

The others of the crew were R.A.F. personnel.

McPhail has taken part in raids on Hamburg, Mannheim, Hanover and Ruhr targets.

Evening Standard
4.11.43

Personal file —
F/Sgt N. McPhail