

AWM 65

[3605]

MERRIL, FREDERICK LESTER

416775

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

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

Surname... MERRILL Number. 416775
Christian Names... FREDERICK WESTER
Air Force Rank and Mustering... SGT. AIRMAN PHOT 3/4
Degrees, Decorations, etc... D.F.C.
Present Appointment and Location... R.A.A.F. P.R.C. BOURNEMOUTH
Date of Birth... 21/4/21 Place... PORT AUGUSTA, STH. AUST.
Educated... PORT AUGUSTA PRIMARY SCHOOL
ADELAIDE HIGH SCHOOL
Date of Entering Service... 11/9/41
Previous Service Experience... Nil
Places of Training in R.A.A.F... S.T.S. Pearce West Aus. 9.E.F.T.S.
Cunderdin West Aus. 4.S.F.T.S. Geraldton West Aus
Civilian Career and Activities... Clerk Local & Police
Comt., South Aust Govt.
Clubs, Recreations, etc... Football Baseball Cricket
Fathers name... CHARLES WESTER MERRILL
Wifes name...
Children...
Home Address... PORT AUGUSTA SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Signature... [Signature]
Date... 26/5/43.
Date Embarked Australia... 11/2/42
Destination... UNITED KINGDOM.

CINE-LANCASTER CREW COMPLETES TOUR

Five members of the crew of the Australian Lancaster from which the R.A.F.'s great "knock-out" blow on the Tirpitz was filmed - a film which has now been seen in cinemas on both sides of the world - have completed their tour of operations in Britain, and are being posted back to Australia for duties there.

In Britain they served with an R.A.A.F. squadron of R.A.F. Bomber Command.

The cameramen flying with the crew filmed many targets, but best remembered are the records produced of the R.A.F.'s three heavy-bomber attacks on the German battleship Tirpitz.

On the third and last of these, in Tromso Fjord, Norway, it was the Lancaster's gunner F/Lt. E.H. Giersch, of Brunswick, Victoria, who first reported that the battleship had heeled over, mortally damaged by the bombs.

A quiet celebration was held in the mess recently in honour of the crew.

The crewmen returning to Australia are F/Lt. Bruce Buckham, D.F.C., of Penshurst, New South Wales; F/Lt. Giersch, F/O R.W. Board, D.F.C., of Rose Bay, N.S.W. navigator; P/O L.G. Manning, Air Bomber, of Nelson's Bay, N.S.W. and F/O D.W. Proctor, rear gunner, of Sydney.

F/O E.J. Holden, wireless operator air-gunner, of Glen Iris, Victoria, will remain for a time on duty in Britain.

The remaining member of the crew is a R.A.F. man.

The crew completed one period of duty, attacking mainly German targets as a normal Bomber Command crew, then volunteered to carry on with flying the specially-equipped R.A.A.F. Lancaster used by the R.A.F. Film Production Unit, which not only bomb their targets, but also, by flying low around the area, obtain photographic records of the attack.

Buckham has another claim to fame which he established on his first tour when he won the D.F.C.

This was his "one-man air-raid" on Berlin, when because of technical troubles he arrived and bombed the city alone 35 minutes after the main bomber force had left.

F/O Board, the navigator, was recently awarded a D.F.C. for his skill, particularly on such trips as one attack on the Tirpitz, when the force first flew to Russian bases, attacked and returned after 11½ and 14½ hour flights in poor weather conditions.

Buckham and his crew took over the Film Unit flying duties from F/Lt. F.L. Merrill, D.F.C. of Port Augusta, South Australia, of the same R.A.A.F. Lancaster squadron, and whose crew was the first to complete a double period of operations on these duties.

Two camera-aircraft fly with the R.A.A.F. squadron. The second was until a few months ago flown by F/Lt. Keith Schultz, of Evandale, South Australia, who has just received a Bar to the D.F.C. both awards being earned for similar flights.

Schultz's navigator, F/O E. Pickard, of Melbourne, and gunner, F/O K. Flute, of St. Lawrence, Queensland, also received D.F.C.'s

/Buckham's.....

Buckham's Film Unit aircraft is now being flown by F/Lt. T.A. Perry, of Elwood, Victoria, and his crew.

Schults has been relieved by F/Lt. G.C. Skelton (R.A.F.) as Captain of the other Lancaster.

Skelton's crew is all-Australian.

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Photographs of F/Lt. Buckham (UK.1215), F/Lt. Giersch (UK.1219), F/Lt. Merrill (UK.1822) and F/O Flute (UK.1730). Are available at R.A.A.F. H.Q. Kingsway (Hol.1513) and R.A.A.F. H.Q. Melbourne.

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XXXXXXXXXX plain language:
 R.A.A.F. H.Q. (.) REPEAT AUSTRALIA WASHINGTON (.) R.A.A.F. L.O. RAFSEA

Note for filing:

FL 861 V DEFERRED January 18 1945

Down to the mark on page 2, this is RAAF 910 of 7/1/45 in signal form

D.F.R. for Wings (.) Bombers Out in Fifty Below Break Temperatures of 50 degrees below freezing point electric storms fog and icing conditions are some of the weather hazards facing the crews of Bomber Command as winter moved over Europe Break Since D-Day many sorties have been carried out in the most difficult weather conditions (.) When the R.A.F. and Australian and other Dominion heavies raided Heilbronn and Karlsruhe recently icing was severe and engine failure through iced-up carburetors was only narrowly avoided (.) Even airspeed indicators and artificial horizons with their alcoholic content froze Break Many of force came down below the dangerous cloud although freezing-level was almost quite on the deck unquote and crews reported that quote cars on the road looked as large as the engine nacelles unquote (.) As soon as the icing on the mainplanes thawed a little large pieces of ice flew off and drummed along the fuselage like fire from enemy guns Break When Yenne Kiesel was attacked recently similar conditions were experienced (.) Pilot Officer L. Woods D.F.C. (408453) airbomber of Hobart flew his aircraft back to base with a wounded pilot and iced-up instruments Break Sometimes air and ground crews have had to dig their aircraft out of snow on day before an operation (.) They they have cleared runways of up to 2 ft. of snow before taking off Break Squadron Leader Des. Sullivan D.F.C. (415192) of Caron W.A. and his crew at a R.A.A.F. Lancaster squadron have much respect for the weather (.) Over a target in Ruhr they found conditions made it impossible to bomb (.) Carrying out instructions Sullivan returned to base with the full bomb-load (.) But weather was bad there and they were diverted to another field (.) At the strange field Sullivan found he could not adjust his altimeter for the prevailing barometric pressure as stormy conditions on return journey had affected radio equipment (.) Torrential rain made night intensely dark (.) However the landing lights were just visible and Sullivan decided land (.) On the approach without altimeter to assist and with rain streaming down wind-shield Lancaster hit tops of some trees and only superb coolness on

Sullivan's part brought it to rest on the field Break quote Branches tore through sides of fuselage said Sullivan but we finally landed right side up and no one was hurt (.) When we saw aircraft next day we were amazed at our escape (.) Three engines had been torn loose and only thing in one piece was the fuselage dash its holding together had protected us (.) Only casualty was a rabbit found dead in the bomb-aimer's compartment unquote Break Note foregoing was released to Press Jan 7 (.) ^{To RAAF Release 910 of 7/11/45.} Following is addition ^{not released} Break As fogs and low clouds close in over British bases in winter Bomber Command aircrews must face diversion at end of long hazardous flights (.) Weary crews come in to strange messes snatch what sleep they can then take off again at first sign of clearing weather at their own bases to be ready again for possible operations that night Break ^{Strain} these diversions impose on aircrews is illustrated by fact that after a recent operation as many 200 heavy bombers have had to be diverted to a single airfield (.) Sometimes aircraft already out for many hours have had to wait on the circuit an hour more (.) Australian aircrews from one Lancaster squadron still remember most vividly the night when after long Berlin trip a captain called up control on a crowded circuit asking priority landing because of fuel shortage (.) He was ordered to leave area and abandon aircraft since others were in same predicament and there was no hope of hurrying him in (.) ^{Cumulo dash nimbus cloud is another menace of European winter skies which Australian aircrews have learned to dread (.) An R.A.A.F. ^{navigator} ~~pilot~~ F/O. D. ⁴²⁶¹³⁵ Morton of Brisbane recently reported climbing to five miles high in turbulent and icing conditions and finally running out through the front which still towered above nearly a mile higher (.) Another Lancaster captain ^{242 Sgt} F/L. P.L. Merrill D.F.C. (416775) of Port Augusta S.A. hit a cumulo-nimbus cloud form one night at 14,000 feet and his aircraft was on to its back with his instruments unserviceable (.) Merrill found the bomber out of a spiral dive and finally succeeded in levelling out at 2000 feet Break Australian ground staffs many of whom had never before seen snow work on airfields in bitter winds driving aleet and blanketing snow (.) When the snow is heavy clearing gangs are at work on the take off runways day and night to keep them serviceable (.) The dug out aircraft are towed to the head of the cleared stretch for take off (.) So bitter is the cold that recently the petrol froze in the fuel lines of R.A.A.F. bombers dash}

End of
RAAF
Release 910

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within
bracket
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by A16

a most rare occurrence Break but the Australian ground crews have adapted themselves magnificently to these arduous conditions and have maintained their high standard of workmanship (.). Always resourceful the Australians build dispersal huts as shelters from scavenged materials (.). One hut on a Lancaster base is kept constantly warm by an ingenious heating arrangement which burns only waste oil (.). Cpl. C.J. Watts (15639) of Sydney introduced the idea following a cooking stove pattern used in the Middle East where he formerly served Break. Excellent pictures suitable illustrate this airmailed D.P.R. January 12 1945 (.). Reference numbers GL.1731 1732 1775

(S.T. WRIGHT)
Flight Lieutenant, for
Air Vice Marshal,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING

Personal File - F/O. F. H. Merrill

COPY

Sgt. Halloran R.A.A.F.

AS BROADCAST

"WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN"

'Taking Newsreel Pictures'

463 Squadron

by

Aus.A.16775 F/O. Freddie Merrill, D.F.C. Port Augusta, S.A.
Aus.A.21300 F/O. John Hall, Sydney, N.S.W.

Produced by: Mrs. E.J. Davy
Censored by: M. of I. Mr. Looker and Mr. Grantham

RECORDED ON DL068379 DURATION: 12'44"
TRANSMISSION: PACIFIC SERVICE, TUESDAY, 2nd JANUARY, 1945
0615-0630 G.M.T.

ANNOUNCER: This is London calling in the Pacific Service. WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN. Today F/O Freddie Merrill, D.F.C. of Port Augusta, South Australia, and F/O John Hall of Sydney, are going to describe how newsreel pictures of bombing raids are taken. Freddie Merrill was the pilot, and John Hall the bomb aimer of the first aircraft detailed to work regularly with the Film Production Unit. Here is the story of their tour which they recorded some days ago:

MERRILL: Well, Johnny Hall and I and the rest of our crew did the whole of our second tour on a camera Lancaster, L - Love. Her insignia is a wedge-tailed eagle, clutching a bomb in one claw and a camera in the other, silhouetted against the Southern Cross. Our crew and that of Keith Schultz, another South Australian, were the first to operate in a camera kite consistently taking moving pictures, although one had been used from our Australian squadron before, but only spasmodically with a different crew each time. Right Johnny?

HALL: That's right Freddie. We covered only attacks by Bomber Command heavies, but the principles involved in filming operations are much the same in all types of aircraft.

MERRILL: And this Lancaster - the one we did our camera tour on - was specially fitted out for her job. Anything else Johnny?

HALL: Well, besides our own complete crew, doing their normal operational duties, we carried two cameramen from the Film Production Unit. Arrangements had to be made for supplying them with oxygen and inter-com. Perhaps, Freddie, we should make it clear at this point that we were not personnel of the R.A.F. Film Unit which organised all this activity, but merely worked with them.

MERRILL: That's right. We were still attached to our own Australian squadron although we flew with any squadron Bomber Command directed us to go out with. And although we operated in a camera-aircraft we continued our ordinary operational duties. In that way, we the crew, dropped our bombs in Bomber Command attacks on various targets, and the film boys covered the attacks with their cameras, shooting their stuff at the same time.

HALL: I remember being a bit dubious at first about carrying two extra "bods" in the Lane, but the camera types were all good scouts and fitted in extremely well with the rest of us.

MERRILL: You mean you didn't like the idea of someone sitting above your head in the front turret dangling his feet in your face on a bombing run, don't you Johnny?

HALL: Well, that was one of the drawbacks of doing two jobs at once. But the camera lads were pretty careful, even the long and lanky "Lofty"...

MERRILL: That's Flight Lieutenant John Loftus, Royal Canadian Air Force.

/HALL

- HALL: He always said that as long as he could see my thick head sticking out below him, he felt safe from flak.
- MERRILL: It wasn't sticking out below him long that day on the way in past Rouen when a near burst of flak sprayed your face with splintered perspex!
- HALL: Now I think of it, up till the time we went on the Film Production aircraft, most of the films taken of the heavy bomber attacks were shot at night. They were great stuff - with their illuminating flares, flak-flashes, cascading target and indicators and swathes of incendiaries across the target area - but one night "do" on the films was very like another.
- *****
- MERRILL: Yes, we only went out on two nights, didn't we? But the first of those was exciting enough. That was to Argentan on D Day plus 1, and the camera boys got some shots of German tanks and transports being well and truly plastered.
- HALL: Then Givers was our second night trip, but it was a bit of a frost. A grim night that, but a good attack.
- MERRILL: Yes, we bombed all right, but weather conditions prevented us from getting much film that night. Do you remember all the boys were circling round the target at 5,000 feet in trailing cloud with their navigation lights on to avoid collision? It was an amazing sight - red, green and white lights moving in all directions - but no good for filming.
- HALL: Remember our first real daylight raid, Freddie? All our first tour was night stuff, and we weren't too sure what to expect with the change.
- MERRILL: The nearest we'd got to a daylight before was bombing the shore defences at Cherbourg at dawn on D-day. There was so much secrecy attached to the invasion that even when we were briefed for Cherbourg nothing was said about it. However, when we saw the masses of shipping moving in we soon realised the big show was on.
- HALL: Yes, but that time we started out at night and just went smartly in and out. What worried me on the new job was the thought of fighters attacking us all the way in and out as on night attacks, but without the same chance of our evading or fighting them as we had in the dark.
- MERRILL: But of course, when we did go on our first daylight op. we found that our fighter escort kept the enemy aircraft at a distance. We were flying that day with a famous "Daw-buster" squadron led by wing Commander Cheshire, who has since earned the V.C.
- HALL: It was an interesting trip that, Cheshire's squadron was the only one that day carrying 12-thousand pounders - beautiful bombs - and what they did to the target - a bus-bomb site - was terrific. It was good too, to see for the first time, what had been done on previous night attacks. We flew over areas, particularly coastal defences, absolutely laid waste.
- MERRILL: Well, we soon got used to daylight operations and were on such targets as Joigny La Roche - about a hundred miles south-east of Paris - the furthest Bomber Command had penetrated into enemy territory in daylight at that time.
- HALL: A spot-on attack that. The target indicator was bang on a round-house in the centre of the marshalling yards and the yards were just carpeted with high explosive, while the built-up area of the town with its French inhabitants was untouched. It made a fine film.
- MERRILL: Another long daylight trip was one a small force of us did over the submarine installations at Bordeaux, 1400 miles and only the last hour flown in darkness - it was in the summer of course.
- HALL: Pin-point bombing there, Freddie, and that small force took a hammering from the flak.
- MERRILL: The flak was the menace on daylight. It was more accurate, than at night. We always considered you'd be dead unlucky to receive a direct hit from it, but as you might expect, we found we came back from our daylights with more flak holes than we ever got at night.

- HALL: How about describing how the films of bomber attacks are obtained, Freddie?
- MERRILL: Well, normally, we got the gun on the target and the type of attack - incendiary or H.E. - at the time over the target, the state of the weather, and so on, and the camera boys worked out from this what type of film, lens and filters they'd be likely to need. Then we attended main briefing with the other crews to get the details of the trip, because besides filming, as I've said before, we also dropped our bombs.
- HALL: Sometimes when we operated with a squadron away from our own base we'd miss the main briefing and you'd have to brief us. At least once, you remember Freddie, you were still doing it as we crossed the English coast on the way out. It was almost like a fighter scramble that day, airborne in 20 minutes.
- MERRILL: But generally we had time to discuss the best way of attacking and filming the target. We had more or less of an open ticket and could do pretty much as we liked. Usually, we went in early, to try and get shots of the target before it was bombed. Then we'd film the leading aircraft opening their bomb doors and the bombs going away, all of which was taken by the cameramen in the nose turret. Then we made our own bombing run which was filmed by both cameramen - the one in the belly position following them all the way down to the target, as we flew straight and level through it. Then we'd make an orbit of the area while both men filmed it, the rear man moving to another camera in the special starboard side hatch.
- HALL: Immediately before the approach to the target the cameramen would hold their final matter over the intercom, checking the exposures necessary with the light meters and agreeing on the best exposure openings.
- MERRILL: The run was often complicated by our having to jockey for a suitable position for photography, and as we went in low, this entailed our seeing we were in no position to receive our own chaps' bombs.
- HALL: Sometimes, according to our gunners, they came unpleasantly close. Fortunately, the rest of us were too busy to be worried till afterwards.
- MERRILL: I sometimes had to tell the camera boys they'd get only one run and one orbit, because the pictures would be a dead loss if we weren't alive to bring them back.
- HALL: St. Cyr on the edge of Paris, was one of those targets. The flak was really hot that day, but our chaps got some of the best stuff I've seen. The front camera had some great shots of the force going in through anti-aircraft barrage, and the footage of our four-thousand pound "cookie" and one-thousand pounders going down was beautiful.
- MERRILL: The Film Unit was always waiting for us when we got back to base, and while we went to the briefing room and had a cup of tea, the film was unloaded and taken to the Film Unit Office. After we'd been de-briefed, a report was written and the film earned and labelled and sent by special despatch rider to the Film Unit Studios where it was developed and processed. Sometimes with important targets such as Caen, it was flown down by special aircraft. After that the rushes would be shown at Air Ministry, and what was not held up for security reasons was then distributed to the various film companies for inclusion in their newreels.
- HALL: And a few days later, cut and edited, and with a commentary dubbed in, the public could see it on the screens. We ourselves usually saw the originals on the squadron the next day.
- MERRILL: One show we photographed that got some pretty fast handling was the attack on German strongpoints and armour concentrations just outside Caen, the day the Second Army broke through. I understand those shots were rushed for view by the Prime Minister, General Eisenhower and the Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command. Both Schultz and ourselves were covering that and we spent about an hour between us filming the various phases.

HALL:

One of the biggest shows we were on was the day a thousand odd British heavies did over the fighter airfields in Belgium and Holland. Of course, we couldn't cover all of that, it was so spread out, but we took in two targets round Gilrijen. One of these was attacked by two R.A.A.F. squadrons. Wing Commander Guy Gibson, V.C., who was controlling that particular sortie, said over the R/T that the bombing was so good that the only place left for him to drop his bombs was on the water tower.

MERRILL:

Yes, I remember him saying that.

HALL:

We got some wonderful footage that eventually went to the newsreels. The camera boys persuaded us to stay around so long we lost the main force and came out alone at rarely full power. We were moving so fast, that our Canadian mid-upper gunner, Flying Officer Ted Reed, reported a formation of Fortresses flying backwards above us.

MERRILL:

We had an interesting tour but I'd like to have gone on some of the trips that have happened since. For instance those 12-thousand pounder attacks on the TIRPITS, including the last one when they got her. Bruce Buckham covered those - that's Flight Lieutenant Bruce Buckham, D.F.C., of Penhurst, New South Wales.

HALL:

The film of the paratroop landings in Holland taken by Flight Lieutenant Roy Carden's crew were excellent too, even if Roy does come from Melbourne. I wish I'd been there even though they didn't drop any bombs.

MERRILL:

Yes, the whole of that trip was given over to getting footage. Flight Sergeant Bob Buckland of Sydney was on that job. Bob was with us on most of our trips and he took a lot of the newsreel shots that were shown in the cinemas. He was on the second TIRPITS job with Bruce Buckham, and also got some of the best pictures of the Calais and Brunswick shows.

HALL:

Bob Buckland and Peter Steel - both from Sydney, are the only two Australians with the Film Unit working cameras. Between them they've taken some grand shots and I hope they'll get a lot more. There are several crews flying camera kites of all types as a regular thing now.

MERRILL:

It's certainly an interesting job - and satisfying too. It always pleased me very much to think that cuts from our films would appear on the newsreels and show something of what the boys are doing on ops. I hope that some listeners have seen, and remember, some of the stuff that's been done, and will see other newsreels that are, perhaps, even now in the making - and will get from them some slight idea of the valuable work being done by Bomber Command.

ANNOUNCER:

That was a description of how newsreel pictures of bombing raids are taken. The speakers were F/O Freddie Merrill, D.F.C. of Port Augusta, South Australia, and F/O John Hall, of Sydney.

There will be another programme in this series - WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN - at the same time 0615 G.M.T. on Tuesday, January 16th.

November 7, 1944.

(Special to "British Picture News")

THESE MEN HELP MAKE THE BOMBING NEWSREELS
--- AND DROP THE BOMBS TOO

Cinemasgoers who have watched on the screen in recent weeks all the great attacks by Bomber Command on Brunswick, Duisburg, Flushing and Calais were looking at shots taken from Lancaster bombers whose own bombs went down to add to the fires its cameramen were filming. For the Lancasters from which the R.A.F. Film Unit films the operations of Bomber Command are also fully operational; they carry full loads of high explosive and run risks as great as, and sometimes greater than, other components of the great force.

Three R.A.F. Film Unit cameramen have recently been lost over Europe and an Australian pilot is also reported missing. The job isn't just a matter of sitting back and "taking pictures;" the cameramen may be called on at any moment to take over the jobs for which they have been trained -- pilot, navigator, airgunner, bomb-aimer as the case may be.

Film coverage of Bomber Command operations is carried out from R.A.F. Mosquitos and Australian Lancasters based in Britain.

EXTRA CIRCUITS

South Australian Flight Lieutenant Keith Schultz, D.F.C., veteran of 45 bombing trips, is one of the Film Unit's regular pilots.

"We make our bombing run and drop our bombs the same as the rest" he says. "The only difference having the cameramen with us makes is that whenever possible we do a couple of orbits to let them get their shots, instead of leaving the target area immediately as the other aircraft do".

Another South Australian who pilots the cine-planes, Flight Lieutenant F.L. Merrill, D.F.C., ⁴⁶³ of Port Augusta, carried cameramen with him on each trip of his second tour, visiting such targets as Argentan, Limoges, Bordeaux, Caen, St. Cyr, Bois de Casson, Joigny, La Roche and Caumont, where much of the material seen on newsreel screens the world over since D-Day was obtained.

When the German battleship Tirpitz received a direct hit and was damaged by several very near misses in Bomber Command's attack from a Russian base on September 15, Flight Lieutenant Bruce A. Buckhan, of Penhurst, New South Wales, piloted the Lancaster that carried the Film Unit crew. He was the pilot again on October 9 when the attack on the Tirpitz in Tronso Fiord, Norway, was filmed.

These Men Help Make the Bombing Newsreels - 2

Australia's two cameramen with the Film Unit -- Flight Sergeants Peter Steel, pilot, and Bob Buckland, wireless air gunner -- have also appeared as leading characters in a Film Unit feature on the work of the Royal Australian Air Force in Britain.

They were selected while awaiting posting at a reception depot in England. Neither had acted, even in an amateur way. Peter Steel had worked as an adding-machine mechanic and Bob Buckland was a medical student at Sydney University.

When they had finished their job on the film, they asked whether they could join the R.A.F. Film Unit to be trained as cameramen, and were accepted. Between them, they have been responsible since for many fine shots, from the bombing of flying bomb bases to the recent air-borne invasion of Holland.

FILMED AIRBORNE INVASION

Buckland, with Flight Lieutenant Roy Garden, of Melbourne, as pilot, took much of the footage exposed on Sunday, September 17, on the airborne invasion near Arnhem. The Lancaster operated without bombs on this occasion.

Two Stirlings and two Mosquitos carrying film cameramen went with them, but one Mosquito was forced back when the pilot was wounded early in the attack. The remaining Mosquito, the Stirlings and the Lancaster forged on, and the latter, carrying two operators and three cameras, obtained some of the best material on that day, which subsequently appeared in the newsreels.

The Lancaster took off from the same airfield as the Stirlings and overtook the air armada in mid-Channel, where it flew alongside and around the huge formation. The great mass of aircraft, although tightly packed, covered such a large area that the cameras could range over only one small portion of it at one time.

Garden piloted the Lancaster in with the first wave, which, being at low altitude, encountered some flak, but this danger was checked by accompanying fighter-bombers. It took more than half an hour to film the operation.

.....cOo.....

BROADCAST

Personal File (S) - Mrs Coates

Personal file - F/lt. F. Merrill

"WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN"

SPEAKERS:

David Bernard

George Locker

Aus. 416775 F/lt. Freddie Merrill, D.F.C., of Fort Augusta, S.A. (463 Squadron.)

Aus. 21639 F/O. Johnny Speirs, of Lidcombe, Sydney. (467 Squadron.)

Aus. 415192 S/ldr. Desmond Sullivan, D.F.C., of Caron, S.A. (463 Squadron.)

Aus. 410321 F/lt. Roy Garden, of Key, Melbourne. (463 Squadron.)

RE-RECORDED ON IBM 2567

DURATION: 13'39" WITH CUTS

PRODUCED BY MRS. E.J. DAVY

CENSORED BY G. LOCKER, AIR MINISTRY

P.R. & REC. NEWSROOM M.C.I.

TRANSMISSION: Pacific Service Tuesday October 10th, 1944 - 0615 - 0630 GMT.

ANNOUNCER: This is London calling in the Pacific Service. "WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN". Here is David Bernard with the recordings he made at an R.A.A.F. Lancaster Squadron during the weekend.

BERNARD: The radio, the newscasts, the movies, and speedier and more efficient communications have all played their part in bringing us closer together. You can see evidence of this in all sorts of ways....On our part, the deep blue of the R.A.A.F. is as familiar as the uniforms of our own men, and as I sit here, I know that the scene before my eyes is one that is well known to you....you've seen it at your cinemas, you've heard descriptions of it over the radio. There's always something dramatic about it...I can see from here the long black runways, the Lancasters in their sombre dark colours, looking, as all writers seem to put it...."like prehistoric monsters". These Lancasters played a part in the liberation of Europe long before D-day; they've been playing still as great a part in the battles since then. But most of the accounts that we hear are the terse, laconic phrases used by the Air Ministry..."Lancasters bombed Orlais in daylight; there was little cloud, and their bombs were seen to hit the target". There's a wealth of colour behind those words, and it's in an effort to let you hear more personal

continued/

accounts of the work that your men are doing over here that I've brought the BBC's recording gear to this squadron. The squadron has been far from idle during the last few months, and with me now is a pilot who has flown with it for two tours. He came off operations recently and is now working in the nerve centre where operations are arranged. He's Flight Lieutenant Freddie Merrill, and he comes from Port Augusta, South Australia. Here he is.....

MERRILL:

Well, now we're back to what seem to be the only targets left for us...and almost all our attacks are on Germany itself. At the beginning of the battle in Europe, we were concentrating on targets in the occupied countries.. in more direct support to the ground troops..now the results of our bombing are of a more long-term character. And once again we hear the boys talking about the places we used to know and the opposition that we knew as well. Don't forget that Germany is by no means negligible as far as the night skies are concerned and the Luftwaffe can still give us a headache or two. I remember, last night when we'd attacked Bremen, the boys were talking about the night fighters they'd seen...some of the gunners managed to get a few shots in at them and beat them off.

But to go back a bit..since D-day most of the trips that we did to the occupied countries were in daylight. This was a bit of a change for us, but we used almost the same tactics as for night bombing except that the forces were much more concentrated. It was great to see the country that we'd been flying over for so long in the darkness, now unrolling beneath us...we could see the results of our previous attacks, and I remember particularly the Pas de Calais area where the flying bomb sites used to be... it was just like a stretch of desert with great holes all over it...some of these holes had been planted there by us!

But we found that the ackack was much more accurate..there wasn't much room to move around in those tight formations so you just had to hope for the best..but it was surprising how few aircraft were shot down..there were plenty of flak holes in the kites but we came through it pretty well.

The boys have had some exciting times on these trips.. perhaps one of the more unusual happened to F/O Zac Tanner - he's the only English pilot on the squadron. It happened

continued/

during the daylight attack that we made on Boulogne. After he'd let his bombs go, his kite was plastered by flak and one of his engines was shot clean out of the wing...it must have shaken him a bit...then the aircraft caught fire so he ordered the crew to bale out. Well they all got out and landed behind our own lines but as soon as Zac left the controls to bale out himself, the aircraft started to spin and as a result he was forced against the sides to such an extent that he couldn't make his way to the door, so he went back to the controls to get her level again. The kite was still burning, but by this time he was almost on the ground, and by one of these great strokes of luck he saw one of our landing strips right beneath him, so he decided to set her down. He skidded along the strip successfully and the moment the plane came to rest he jumped out and ran as fast as he could, as he thought she was going to blow up, but the fires died down and he went back...and managed to get the photographic equipment out..The tag to the story is that his wireless operator, when he baled out, landed right in the middle of a bunch of Canadians who immediately sent him to their nearest airfield and he was flown home to England.. well, that attack on Boulogne was at ten thirty in the morning and he was back in England by noon.

Well, that's one of the stories that don't often get told, but, on the whole, these incidents are the exception rather than the rule, and jobs like last night's affair on Bremen there seems to us to be hardly a story to tell... Johnny Speirs was on that do, why don't you have a yarn with him David?

LOCKER:
(Not recorded)

David Bernard took Freddie Merrills' suggestion and went looking for Flying Officer Johnny Spiers. He found him down near one of the hangars; he was talking to some other Australian lads who'd come over from a neighbouring squadron to spend forty-eight hours with them - rather a busman's holiday. David told him what Freddie had been saying, and now Johnny Spiers, who comes from Lidcombe in Sydney by the way, what have you got to say about your trip to Bremen the other night?

SPEIRS:

Well, David, as Freddie said, there isn't much to tell about the attack last night. We started for Bremen at dusk and didn't run into any trouble until we got to the target. There were bags of searchlights and one or two night fighters...my mid upper gunner Johnny Burnham from Melbourne saw a night fighter low down over the target, and we saw a plane diving down with flames and sparks flying from it, then there was a great sheet of flames as she hit the deck. Then, when

continued/

we were over the target we had to be on the alert to avoid collision with the other aircraft that were concentrated there, and we had to dodge the incendiaries that were falling from the other kites. As a matter of fact, a couple of our machines were hit by incendiaries which didn't do much damage - they just go straight through the kite, and if no one is in the way then no one's hurt.

Anyway we pranged the target and got back to base O.K. I was on quite a few of the daylight attacks..the one that I liked best was the bombing of the airfields in Holland, Belgium and Germany. It gave us a great deal of satisfaction to be plastering these targets that had been sending up the fighters that worried us on our night trips. There were over a thousand British bombers out on that job, and believe me, these airfields were properly blown about. On the way back, we could see the ones that had been attacked by other squadrons and there were craters all over the runways..the buildings housing the admin officers were in ruins..yes, I enjoyed that trip.

But then I enjoy myself most of the time anyway, they're a good lot of lads here including a smattering of English types who fit in with the Aussies on this R.A.A.F. squadron...hang on.

LOCKER:
(Not recorded)

Now before David Bernard ever got to this R.A.A.F. squadron he'd heard of one of the most spectacular attacks they had made...it was on the Dortmund-Ems Canal. So he thought you'd be interested to hear about it first hand, and when he found Johnny Spiers he was with one of the pilots who took part in this raid. He's here with me now - Squadron Leader Desmond Sullivan from Caron, Western Australia. What were your impressions of the attack, Des?

SULLIVAN:

Well, I thought before we went out on that night attack we were going to do a fair amount of damage because it was very well planned, and there wasn't much chance of us missing even such a small target.

Our route was so arranged that we dodged most of the flak, in fact all we saw was away to the starboard. When we got to the target we found that it was obscured by low cloud so we all went down to far below our

normal bombing height and circled round while we watched the marking. The target marker was beautifully placed between the two canals and in the light of the flares presented a wizard bombing picture..and from our height we simply couldn't miss.

The fighters began to arrive at the end of the attack and followed us for some distance, tagging a few of our kites on the way home - but from Holland the rest of the trip was uneventful.

My bomb aimer W/O. Gifford took a photograph as we bombed and when we got back to base it was developed straight away...it gave a very clear picture of the canals...and it was quite obvious that the attack was going to have a chaotic effect on the lock gates...which was certainly proved by the photographic reconnaissance unit when they went over next day.

It just goes to show that the Lancaster can be used to great effect in pin-point bombing, as well as in the major mass attacks.

GARDEN: Well, I was on that job as well but I think that one of the most interesting jobs that I've had to do recently was during ~~XXXX~~ the big airborne attack on Holland.

LOCKER:
(Not recorded.) That voice belonged to Roy Garden from Kew, in Melbourne. He apparently didn't think so much of that trip to Dortmund. But now he brought up a new and startling topic...What on earth was a Lancaster doing in the Airborne attack? How did you happen to get there Roy?

GARDEN: I flew the only Lancaster to take part in the operation, but our part wasn't to do any bombing, my machine carried, instead of bombs, cameras and cameramen - one of them was a fellow Australian - Flight Sergeant Buckland from Melbourne.

Our job was to take photographs of the Airborne attack on Arnhem as we saw it. It was morning when we left - a beautiful sunny day, and we joined in the stream of aircraft as they went out. We flew side by side with the gliders and the troop carrying planes. They were slower than us and they were flying in pretty tight formation so we went up and down the column, as it were, taking pictures of them. Just before we crossed the Dutch coast we saw a couple of gliders that had broken their tow ropes and fallen in the sea - there were R.A.F. rescue launches already on the spot picking them up.

The only flak that we encountered was over Arnheim itself when a few ack ack guns opened up, however our own fighter escort were right on the job strafing their position. The whole show was one of the most impressive sights that I've ever seen - the sky seemed to be absolutely filled with aircraft - and by the time we left we saw the Dakotas coming in dropping supplies by parachute. These parachutes were of all colours, and we did a couple of circuits to get pictures of them. I suppose by now you must have seen these very same photographs that we made in your local newspapers - I saw them myself and thought that the cameraman did a really good job.

Well, that's one of the more unheard-of jobs that Lancasters are doing these days. Our main work is that of a heavy bomber crew and it's in that capacity that I've done most of my work. I remember when we raided Stuttgart a few weeks ago. I have never seen a town in the state that Stuttgart was when we left it that night - it was an incendiary attack, and these are always the more spectacular to watch. The opposition wasn't nearly as great as we expected. There were few fighters about, but we didn't see any ourselves - we did see bags of our own aircraft. They were quite easy to see in the light of the terrific fires that were burning on the ground - you could see the streets lit up by the burning buildings, and by the time we left the fires had spread right over the city. It was just one seething mass of flame and the tail gunner Flight Sergeant Wally Hayward of Sale, Victoria told me that he could see the fires glowing long after we'd left.

* * * * *

14.8.44.

AIR MINISTRY NEWS SERVICE

Air Ministry Bulletin No.15136.

AUSTRALIAN CREW'S LONGEST DAYLIGHT FLIGHT

Two Australian Lancaster squadrons operating with R.A.F. Bomber Command yesterday made their longest daylight flight. They were in the R.A.F. precision attack on the U-boat shelters at Bordeaux, on the west coast of France. All but the last hour of their 1,400 mile flight was in daylight.

Although pilots said their aiming point, a strong concrete shelter, looked like a pin-point from the height from which they attacked, the bombs were seen to burst right across the target.

Flight Lieutenant F.L. Merrill, a pilot from Port Augusta, South Australia, was on his bombing run when he was caught by flak. His aircraft was holed in 12 places: the bomb aimer's compartment, the tail plane, the fins and the fuselage, were all hit. (263)

Flying Officer J.B. Hall, of Belmore, N.S. Wales, his bomb-aimer, was concentrating on his bomb sight when the window in front of him was shattered, and a piece of flak flew past his head. "Pieces of the window hit my face, said Hall. "But there was no time to bother about damage. So I got back to my bomb sight straight away."

Four of Hall's bombs were seen by the crew to fall right across the target area.

Flight Lieutenant A Morris, of Elizabeth Bay, N.S. Wales, also had his aircraft holed as he was making his bombing run, but he kept on his course and bombed. Less than 24 hours before, in the raid on the factory at Russelsheim, Morris had one engine fail shortly after he reached the English Coast on the outward journey. He carried on into Germany on three engines, bombed his target, and got safely back.

Flying Officer R.J. Mayes, of Kingstown, Queensland, who had his main plane, tail unit, and bomb doors hit by flak as he was running up to bomb, said: "It was a very small target but we pranged it all right."

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Copy of Citation of Award D.F.O.

Acting Flight Lieutenant Frederick Lester MERRILL (Aus. 416775) Royal Australian
Air Force No. 463 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron.

This officer has flown on a number of sorties including many hazardous flights
against strongly fortified European targets. His achievements and outstanding leadership ^{ship} /
have done much to maintain the high morale of his squadron.

Copy of Citation of Award D.F.C.

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NON IMMEDIATE AWARD. Gazetted 15th Aug: 44.

Personal file: - F/Lt. F.L. Merrill.

15/8/44

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 15162

FOR AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS

AUSTRALIANS BOMB THE ENEMY'S AIRFIELDS

Three Australian Lancaster squadrons and an Australian Halifax squadron working with R.A.F. Bomber Command took part today in the heaviest attack ever made by the Allied forces against the Luftwaffe. R.A.F. Bomber Command alone bombed nine of the enemy's night fighter airfields, dropping 5,000 tons of bombs to crater the runways and the airfields themselves.

Group Capt. D.W.F. Bonham-Carter, who is in command of the airfield where two of Australia's Lancaster squadrons are stationed, led his crews in an attack on one of the Dutch aerodromes. "The bombing was extremely well concentrated", he said.

F/Lt. F.L. Merrill, of Port Augusta, South Australia, the pilot of the last Lancaster to leave the same target, added, "there was just a little heavy flak but no fighters. All we could see when we left was a dirty pool of black smoke and dust. Airfields elsewhere were being just as thoroughly plastered".

"I have never seen better bombing" declared F/Lt. A. Morris, a Lancaster pilot from Sydney. "There was a terrific concentration at the intersection of the runways. The weather was exceptionally clear, and we could see our target from 20 miles away. When we got closer, we could pick out every detail. We left it covered with smoke which billowed up to about 7,000 feet."

~~Wing Commander~~
Wing Officer

C.P. McCoy, of Noerrie, Victoria, a Lancaster pilot, who attacked another airfield, said "as we went in to bomb, I could see our target very clearly, and I'm sure we made no mistake. About 10 or 15 minutes after the attack began, clouds of grey-brown smoke mushroomed up to 5,000 feet. There was no flak. As I looked back after we had dropped our bombs, I saw other bombers going in. Their loads were going right down on the target".

F/Sgt. J.A. Spicken, a bomb aimer from Brisbane, was in another of the nine attacks and described how he saw airfields blazing and covered with clouds of smoke. "While we were over our target", he stated. "I do not think that I saw one bomb go wide. Each of the runways was hit. Flak was very accurate over our target - unpleasantly close, in fact. We were holed, but not seriously. There was accurate flak, too, when we were on our way home, and again at the coast. We had a wonderful screen of Spitfires and were not once troubled by enemy fighters".

Personal File:
1/22 F. L. Merrill.

SECRET

A.C.A.A.

Aus. 41675 Flight Lieutenant FREDERIC LAWLER MERRILL, pilot, of Fort Augusta, South Australia.

He was born on April 21, 1921, and educated Fort Augusta state and Adelaide High School. Before he joined the R.A.A.F. on September 9, 1941, he was a clerk. He was trained at No. 5 I.T.S. Pearce (No. 20 course), and at the E.F.T.S. and S.F.T.S. in West Australia. Posted as a sergeant pilot to No. 1 E.D. he left Australia for the United Kingdom via New Zealand and America. From the reception depot at Bournemouth he went to No. 15 A.F.U. (Pilots), Greenham Common, and from there to No. 16 O.T.U. at Upper Heyford. From the conversion unit at Winthorpe he went to No. 463 all-Australian Lancaster squadron. He completed a tour with the squadron, and his targets included Berlin (7 times) Stuttgart (4) Leipzig (2) Frankfurt (2), Munich, Essen, Brunswick, Augsburg and Schweinfurt.

Returning from Berlin during his second operational flight, Merrill was wounded in the head by flak while over the Ruhr.

On his fourth trip, to Berlin, fighters made "passes" at him all the way there and back. When they were three parts of the way to the target, two fighters attacked, one after the other. The mid-upper ^{gunner} opened fire, and the first fighter went down in flames. The mid-upper fired a burst at the second fighter, which also broke off, with smoke coming from him.

During his first raid on Brunswick one motor cut out before he had crossed the enemy coast, and they flew to the target and back on three motors. Returning from Brunswick on his second raid there he was ooned by searchlights and fired at by ack-ack for 50 minutes, but he returned to base with only 10 flak holes in the aircraft.

He arrived 10 minutes late over Berlin in one raid, and all Berlin's ground defences concentrated on him but he returned to base safely, although his aircraft was severely holed.

After nine days leave, Merrill resumed his second tour, flying one of the two Film Production Unit aircraft on his squadron. The guns have been removed from the nose turret and a cine camera fitted to the gun mountings, which have been modified to accommodate the camera. Special clear-vision perspex, which has the effect of cutting out the distortion usual from looking through perspex, is fitted to this turret. Where a ^{belly} ~~side~~ turret would

normally be, a trap door has been incorporated, and a detachable cine camera installed for taking shots such as bombs falling towards the target. There is also a position in the starboard door of the aircraft through which further film shots can be taken.

Special arrangements are made for supplying oxygen to the two extra crew members, who operate the cameras. The camera operators are Flight Lieutenant John A. Loftus, of the R.C.A.F., and Pilot Officer John Morris, R.A.F. As soon as they return from a raid, the films are sent to the Pinewood Film studios for development.

Merrill's aircraft filmed the recent raid on marshalling yards at Joigny La Roche, south east of Paris, which was the farthest bomber command had until then penetrated into enemy territory in daylight. The Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, General Eisenhower, and the C. in C. of Bomber Command have seen the films as soon as they have been developed.

The aircraft carries the same bomb load, despite the cameras.

Most of Merrill's work lately has been done on daylight bombing raids. The most successful photographs were taken at Caen (when heavy bombers dropped 5000 tons in about an hour), Beauvoir (flying bomb depots), St. Cyr, Joigny La Roche, and Bois de Casson (flying bomb depots).

Merrill's crew is:- Flight Lieutenant F.L. Merrill, pilot; ^{RAAF} Flying Officer J.B. Hall, bomb aimer; ^{RAAF} P/O H. O'Toole, w/op; Pilot Officer J. Knight, R.A.F. navigator; Flying Officer E.J. Reed, R.C.A.F. mid upper gunner; Flight Sergeant P.B.J.L. Danckwardt, R.A.F. rear-gunner; Sergeant M.F.L. Rawsthorne, R.A.F. engineer; Flight Lieutenant J.A. Loftus, R.C.A.F. and Pilot Officer John Morris, R.A.F., Film Production Unit photographers.

Schultz's crew:- Flight Lieutenant K.E. Schultz, R.A.A.F. pilot; Flying Officer E.T. Pickard, R.A.A.F. navigator; Flight Sergeant E. Woolston, R.A.F. bomb aimer; Sergeant P. Bishop, R.A.F. engineer; Flying Officer W. Dawes, R.A.A.F. mid upper gunner; Warrant Officer K.E. Fletcher, R.A.A.F. wireless operator; Pilot Officer K. Flute, R.A.A.F. rear gunner; Flight Sergeant R. Buckland, R.A.A.F. and Pilot Officer T. Kimberley, R.A.F. Film Production Unit photographers.

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R.A.A.F. Release No. 575

June 9, 1944.

THEY SAW INVASION BEGIN

Among the bomber men, a vivid realisation that something big was afoot first came to the crew of an Australian Lancaster piloted by Flight Lieutenant F.L. Merrill, of Port Augusta, South Australia, when, returning at dawn from their target, they saw the myriad ships of the invasion armada crossing the Channel.

They had taken off in the small hours, with the last formations of Bomber Command, on what was to them just another sortie in the pre-invasion softening-up. Their target was a coastal gun-battery and this they bombed about 5a.m.

On the way in they could see the bombs of earlier aircraft bursting on other coastal batteries. Over the target there was no ground fire, but they saw three bombers go down, indicating that enemy fighters were in the vicinity.

They were scheduled to be among the last of the night-bombers to bomb their target that night, and thus were among the first to see the invasion begin.

They came down below the clouds on the way back, rounded the south western side of the Cherbourg Peninsula, passed over a then seemingly empty French coast, and set course for home. Nearing Alderney Island, off the tip of the peninsula, the whole island seemed suddenly to burst into flame as the anti-aircraft defences opened up - unsuccessfully - on the Lancaster ahead.

A few minutes later the invasion fleet came into view. "A couple of aircraft carriers began weaving hastily as we passed, apparently thinking we were enemy aircraft," said Merrill.

At base, Merrill and his crew slept, then took off again before midnight and bombed crossroads in a French village. In the bright moonlight almost everything below was clearly visible, but they were amazed at the apparently complete absence of movement or gunfire.

"We told the boys when we got back 'they're either fighting with bows and arrows or going round quietly stabbing the Jerries,'" said Merrill.

F/Lt. Merrill's mid-upper gunner is a Canadian, Flying Officer E.J. Reed, of Victoria, B.C. The rest of the crew comprises two Australians and three R.A.F. men.

F/Lt. Merrill was born 21/4/21, educated at Adelaide High School, became a clerk of court, entered the R.A.A.F. September, 1941, and trained in Australia.

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