

AWM 65

[4241]

PRENTICE, RONALD HERBERT
420265

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

RTH

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

PRO. FORM.
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) PRENTICE Ronald Herbert NUMBER A. 420265

RANK AND MUSTERING F/Lt Pilot DECORATIONS

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE 21 O.T.U. - A.F.U. 4(6)OTU AFU

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA } 22.5.42
CANADA } 13.2.42 DATE OF ARRIVAL U.K. 23.2.42
SEMI-AFRICA }

SQUADRONS 461

AIRCRAFT FLOWN Sunderland

COMMAND & TYPE OF ACTIVITY 19 Sp. Anti-Sub & Convoy Escort

OPERATIONS OR TRAINING WITH AMERICAN PERSONNEL, SQUADRONS, OR AIRCRAFT

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

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

(a) 600 hrs. Feb 43 - April 45 (b) 48 sorties approx 90 45 day 45 night

(c) 1 U Boat as in file 28.1.44 (d) as for (a) Nil

(e) as for (c)

(f) no actual combat (g) Nil

(h) J.C. Soode J.P. Brunner (i) Nil

J.P. Long J.H. Lucas (i) Nil

J.P. Williams J.P. Roberts

J.P. Gasey J.P. Roberts

J.P. Horley

J.P. Archer

J.P. Bennett

J.P. Lewis

DATE 8. 6. 45 SIGNATURE Prentice

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

OFFICERS AND AIRCREW

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

Surname..... PRENTICE..... Number..... AUS. 420365

Christian Names..... Ronald Herbert.....

Air Force Rank and Mastering..... F/O Officer Pilot.....

Degrees, Decorations, etc..... Nil.....

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

Date of Birth..... 1. 4. 1920..... Place..... SYDNEY AUSTRALIA

Educated..... Middle Harbour Public School.....
..... Neutral Bay Inter High School.....

Date of Entering Service..... 11. 10. 1941.....

Previous Service Experience..... 9 Months 20/9 Infantry Bn.....

Places of Training in R.A.A.F. No. 2 ITS Bradfield..... No. 4 EFTS Mascot
Canada No. 14 SFTS Rymer..... No 16GRS Charlestown

Civilian Career and Activities..... Bank Officer Rural Bank of N. S.W.
Teller.....

Clubs, Recreations, etc.....
Swimming Tennis Golf Cricket.....

Fathers name..... William PRENTICE.....

Wifes name..... Nil.....

Children..... Nil.....

Home Address..... 52 Macpherson St Cremorne Sydney N.S.W. AUSTRALIA

Signature..... Prentice.....

Date..... 25. 2. 43.....

Date Embarked Australia..... 23. 5. 42.....

Destination..... CANADA.....
UNITED KINGDOM.....

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST IN OVERSEAS BULLETINS OR USE ON CLUB TAPES BEFORE 2330 B.S.T. ON SATURDAY, MARCH 4, 1944 (i.e. FOR SUNDAY PAPERS). NOT TO BE BROADCAST IN THE MIDNIGHT NEWS OF MARCH 4/5, 1944. THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREPACING ANY MESSAGES FILED WITH THE EMBARGO.

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 13136

FLAK OUT-WITTED: U-BOAT DESTROYED

Taking such sharp evasive action that one of his crew was knocked unconscious, the Captain of a Coastal Command R.A.A.F. Sunderland outwitted the gunners of a German U-boat and made two low-level depth charge attacks on it, destroying the enemy. After the U-boat had blown up, survivors were seen in the water.

The Sunderland, captained by 21 years old F/Lt. R.D. Lucas, of Sydney, NSW., was on anti-submarine patrol several hundred miles west of Ireland when the front gunner spotted the wake and conning tower of a U-boat on the surface.

Although the flying-boat attempted to make use of partial cloud cover, the enemy sighted it and opened fire with all guns at 3,000 yards range.

"The flak appeared as a continuous stream from six cannons interspersed with machine gun tracer," said F/Lt. Lucas. "Instead of aiming at us, the enemy put up a box barrage through which we would have to pass to make an attack.

"I made as though to climb above the barrage and then, when the U-boat lifted it, I promptly dived under. It was violent evasive action all right and it shook up some of the crew -- my navigator was thrown around so violently he was knocked out -- but it was effective."

At 1,000 yards range, the Sunderland's front gunner, F/Sgt. G.H. SIMMONDS, of Grimsby, Lincs., returned the enemy fire with immediate and terrific effect. At 400 yards, the U-boat attempted avoiding action with a sharp turn to port and at 200 yards the enemy's fire was silenced.

"We swept over at 50 feet," said F/Lt. Lucas, "and as my bomb firing switch went unserviceable, the depth charges were released by the first pilot, F/O. R.H. PRETTICE, of Sydney, who took his time from me. This stick fell slightly short, but as we flew over we could see the effect of the front gunner's shooting. On and around the conning tower there were ten bodies and no sign of life at all.

"The U-boat, however, appeared undamaged, and we promptly circled for a second attack. This time, the depth charges exploded on each side, slightly abaft of the conning tower.

"We were circling once again to take pictures when a minute after the attack, an explosion was seen in the U-boat, which simply disintegrated, leaving a large patch of oil on the surface and a litter of wreckage, debris and bodies, both alive and dead."

As it had been the navigator who was preparing to photograph the attack before he was knocked unconscious by the evasive action, no photographs were taken.

Although the Sunderland belonged to an R.A.A.F. Squadron of the Command, the crew comprised Englishmen and a Canadian as well as Australians.

Before the war, the Captain was in a Sydney real estate office, the first pilot worked in a bank, the front gunner was a dance band musician, and the navigator, F/Sgt. C.D. BREMER, of Burwood, Victoria, was an insurance clerk and is generally regarded as a good "probable" for Australia's post war Test Match eleven as wicket-keeper.

It was exciting while it lasted," said the front gunner, voicing the feelings of all the crew, "but above all, it was some compensation for the hours we have put in on patrol over the Atlantic and seen nothing. This makes you feel it has all been worth while and we all hope it's only the first of many U-boats."

"We've been flying together as a crew for about three months," said the Captain. "Our predecessors had christened the Sunderland 'Hop Along', and we stuck to the name, which seems to have brought us some luck."

Spase.

461-102

PERSONAL FILE - P/O. R.H. PRENTICE

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS

(For Australian papers)

To be read in conjunction with Air Ministry Bulletin on U-boat sinking held for release in London Sunday papers.

Not to be published before Air Ministry Bulletin

R.A.A.F. Bulletin No. 347

March 3, 1944.

SEVEN CLERKS HELP "KILL" U-BOAT

Seven peace-time clerks were included in the crew of a Coastal Command R.A.A.F. Sunderland which recently sank a U-boat in the Atlantic after evading a formidable box barrage of flak fire.

The captain of the Sunderland, Flight Lieutenant R.D. Lucas, was a clerk in a Sydney real estate office and the first pilot, Flying Officer R.H. Prentice, worked in a Sydney bank. They travelled together to Canada for training under the Empire scheme. Although originally posted to different squadrons they came together again when they crossed the Atlantic.

The navigator, Flight Sergeant C.D. Brenner of Melbourne, was an insurance clerk, and his companion in the galley helping to take photographs of the "kill" during the Sunderland's violent evasive action was Flying Officer H.D. Roberts, air gunner, who was a costing clerk in Adelaide before enlisting.

Flight Sergeant W.J. Dorcey of Leaderville, Western Australia, was a clerk with a firm of agricultural machinery merchants and Flight Sergeant S.T.G. Bunnett was a clerk in Ferntree Gully, Victoria.

The Canadian member of the crew, Sergeant Brannen of Wood's Harbour, Nova Scotia, is another bank clerk.

The front-gunner, who silenced the U-boat's gunners by accurate and well-timed fire during the run-in, killing or wounding 10 men on the enemy's conning tower platform, was a saxophonist in a dance band in peace-time. He was Flight Sergeant G.H. Simmonds, R.A.F. of Grimsby, England.

Thrown violently to the deck during strong evasive action, a well known Australian cricketer ^{F/SGT C.D. BRENNER} was knocked unconscious and missed photographing the first attack on a U-boat which was destroyed.

"As soon as action stations sounded," he said, "I went amidships to take photographs of the attack with a hand camera. An air gunner, Flying Officer Roberts, was in the galley cooking a meal but he threw it overboard

immediately. It was just as well, for the next thing we knew there was a terrific barrage and the captain threw the flying-boat about so violently we were thrown to the deck.

"I was knocked out for a time and missed the first attack but Flying Officer Roberts helped me up and I recovered in time to grab the camera and 'shoot' the second attack which ended with the U-boat blowing up"

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(For Australian papers)

To be read in conjunction with Air Ministry Bulletin on U-boat sinking held for release in London Sunday papers (5/3/44).

Not to be published before Air Ministry Bulletin

(13136) dated 4/3/44.

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