

AWM 65

[4305]

RATTEN, JOHN RICHARD

405111

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
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ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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SURNAME RATTEN NUMBER 405111

CHRISTIAN NAMES .. JOHN RICHARD

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING

DEGREES ETC

DATE OF BIRTH PLACE

EDUCATED

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE

PLACES OF TRAINING

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES

.....

SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC

.....

FATHER

WIFE

HOME ADDRESS

.....

DATE OF EMBARKATION

SIGNATURE

DATE

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Sanders, 6, Rev. ...
 St. Michael's, Chester Square.—H.C., 8.15, 12.15, 1.15, 3.30, 6.30, 8.15, 11, and E., 6.30, Canon F. H. Gillingham.
 St. Michael's, Cornhill.—M.P. and H.C., 11, Prebendary G. F. Saywell.
 St. Olave's, Hart Street (at St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street).—M.P., 11, and E., 3.30, the Rector.
 St. Pancras, N.W.—H.C., 8, 9.30 (sung), 12.15; M.P., 11, Rev. W. Chadwick; E., 6, the Vicar.
 St. Paul's, Covent Garden.—H.C., 9, 11.30 (sung); M.P., 11, and E., 6.30, Rev. Vincent Howson.
 St. Paul's, Knightsbridge.—H.C., 7.30, 8.30, 11.45 (sung); M.P., 10.45, Rev. R. W. H. Moline; E., 3.30, Rev. W. J. B. Scott.
 St. Paul's, Onslow Square.—H.C., 8, 12.15; 11, 6.30, and 8.45 (Men's Service), Rev. C. Barham-Gould.
 St. Paul's, Portman Square.—H.C., 8; 11, Rev. Colin Kerr; 6, Rev. John W. Earp.
 St. Peter's, Eaton Square.—H.C., 7.30, 8.30, 11.15 (Harwood in D); M.P., 10.15 (sung), Guards' Parade Service (open to public), Canon F. L. Hughes, Chaplain General; 11.15, Rev. Ivor Lewis; E., 6, Prebendary P. T. R. Kirk, A., "O Lord, increase

15/7/44 - No. 41

R.A.A.F. RELEASE NO. 665

WING COMMANDER J.R. RATTEN COMMANDS R.A.A.F. RECEPTION UNIT IN U.K.

New C.O. of a R.A.A.F. personnel despatch and reception centre in England is Wing Commander John Richard Ratten, 35, of Kingston Beach, Tasmania, who was associated with the comparatively early days of the growth of the big contribution Australia is making nowadays to the air offensive from Britain and Normandy.

He was the first Australian trained under the Empire Air Training Scheme to command a Spitfire Wing in Britain. He was posted to this command on May 11, 1943, after he had been in command for six months of the Second Australian Spitfire squadron formed in Britain.

Wing Commander Ratten was born on October 13, 1912 at Sheffield, Tasmania; was educated at Launceston Grammar School, the University of Tasmania, and the Mount Lyell School of Mines, and became a mining engineer and inspector of mines in Northern Queensland.

He is the son of Dr. V.R. Ratten, C.B.E., of Tasmania.

NEW C.O. FOR AUSTRALIAN BOMBER UNIT

Wing Commander W.A. Forbes, D.F.C., of Bundaberg, Queensland, has been appointed to command a Britain-based Australian Lancaster squadron.

Wing Commander Forbes rose from Pilot Officer to squadron leader in 17 months. He had been a squadron leader a year.

His D.F.C. followed a Lancaster attack last December on Peenemunde, the town where German scientists planned the flying bomb. His aircraft was attacked by fighters, but he pressed home his attack.

Born at Charters Towers, Queensland, in December, 1919, he became an advertising manager before he joined the R.A.A.F. in August, 1941. He was trained in Australia.

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDS SPITFIRE WINGWING COMMANDER J.R. RATTEN, D.F.C.

As the war progresses it becomes more evident each day that the R.A.F. is attaining mastery of the air. Many are the reasons for this, but in large measure it is because British workmen are giving to aircrews, superior aircraft to those of the enemy. Squadrons are being equipped with new and better versions of aeroplanes which have proved themselves over a period from the Battle of Britain.

Recently one of Australia's most famous fighter squadrons was re-equipped with the latest Spitfires. In command of the wing of which this R.A.A.F. Squadron is a unit is a young Australian who has already made a name for himself as a fine leader. This is Wing Commander J.R. Ratten, D.F.C. of Hobart, Tasmania. Wing Commander Ratten was the first R.A.T.S., trained pilot to receive this distinction - a distinction earned by his leadership and soundness in air combat.

A son of Dr. V.R. Ratten, C.B.E., he was educated in Tasmania and chose for himself a career as a mining engineer. His civil occupation took him all over Australia, and when war was declared he occupied a position as a mining inspector in the Queensland State Mining Department.

He was one of the first pilots to join the R.A.A.F. under the Empire Air Training Scheme, completing his course at Wagga, N.S.W. where he gained his commission.

He was posted overseas arriving in England just after the Battle of Britain.

Wing Commander Ratten joined a famous R.A.F. squadron where he gained invaluable experience which was to help fit him for his present job.

He has destroyed 4 enemy aircraft, has two probables to his credit, and damaged several others. Probably his best effort was during a recent fighter sweep over France. Leading his section over the Somme Valley he saw 5 F.W. 190s about a thousand feet below. Though outnumbered the section dived down to attack. Ratten quickly picked out one enemy aircraft and steep turned to attack from a range of 200 yards. One cannon jammed, and though he damaged the 190 with his remaining cannon, he failed to bring the enemy down. Two other 190s immediately jumped him in an endeavour to protect the attacked pilot, and in the general melee which followed Wing Commander Ratten lost the damaged F.W. The Germans broke off the attack and turned back toward their base. Ratten was fortunate enough to get on to the tail of a straggler and closing to within 100 yards he blazed away with his one cannon and machine guns.

Smoke commenced to pour out of the F.Ws. engine, but Ratten closed to 60 yards firing continued bursts. Suddenly the 190 burst into flames, flicked over on its back and crashed to earth. It was a fine effort considering that the Spitfire was attacking with a single cannon.

Wing Commander Ratten's wing have often been called upon as fighter escort to Flying Fortresses, work which he personally finds most interesting. Though the Spitfires are employed in a purely protective measure on these operations, they frequently encounter large formations of enemy fighters, and many interesting combats take place.

Recently sent as escort to Flying Fortresses on an Antwerp raid they were attacked by strong formations of enemy fighters. In the ensuing fight Wing Commander Ratten shot one F.W. 190 down and scored hits on a second. "I did not have much chance to see if the second aircraft crashed", said Ratten, "as things were a trifle mixed up at this stage, and I was too busy with several other Jerries who kept having a crack at me".

Wing Commander Ratten's section claimed one destroyed, and others damaged during this encounter. Though the Tasmanian has had many successful and exciting experiences he considers his best sortie was as escort to an Air Sea Rescue launch in search of a dinghy which had been seen close to the French Coast.

✓wing

PERSONAL FILE - W/CDR. J.R. RATTEN4/6/43 - No. 6

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST OR USE ON CLUB TAPES
BEFORE 0830 HOURS ON
FRIDAY JUNE 4, 1943

THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREFACING
ANY MESSAGE FILED WITH THE EMBARGO

Air Ministry News ServiceAir Ministry Bulletin No. 10474FIGHTER COMMAND'S FIRST AUSTRALIAN WING LEADER

The first Australian to lead a Spitfire wing of Fighter Command on offensive operations is Wing Commander J.R. Ratten, a mining engineer from Kingston Beach, Tasmania.

From a station in the Home Counties he flies a Spitfire with the name "Shangri-la" painted on the fuselage, also on the fuselage is a drawing of "The Saint" (from the series of detective stories) under which is the word 'Tekkie', a New Zealand lucky charm which is also his wife's nickname.

Wing Commander Ratten has made about 150 offensive sweeps from this country. He was a mining engineer in Queensland when war broke out, and entered the R.A.A.F. One of the first recruits in Australia to be asked to transfer to the Empire Training Scheme, he completed his training in Tasmania and came to Fighter Command in November, 1941.

The wing Commander carried out over 70 offensive sweeps while with a squadron at Fighter Command's top scoring station. On one occasion he and three other pilots were attacked by three F.W.190s over France. They destroyed two of them and probably destroyed the third.

"Since those days tactics have changed and whereas at one time the Hun could decide whether to engage or not, we now have the initiative, and can, if we are lucky, bring him to combat" he said today.

"My section has what it calls its tea party, on which our Spitfire wing gives cover to Whirlwind bombers or Typhoon bombers in attacking German fighter airfields. We had a successful raid on Tricqueville the other day and I think there is no doubt we destroyed several F.W.190s on the ground".

NOTE. Photographs of Wing Commander Ratten are available at B.I.P.P.A.

S/L RATTEN
(Contd)

This Squadron is, of course, a comparatively young one, and up-to-date we've not had a great amount of experience with the Hun, but what is lacking in experience is, I'm sure, more than made up in keenness, and I've no doubts whatever that as time passes we will make our mark as a fighter-Squadron. (HEAR, HEAR!)

On every occasion, when we've been on operations, everyone has done his job like a veteran. On a memorable occasion when four of our sections were the first to detect a fairly large Hun raid, supported by fighters in strength, notwithstanding that it was the first time that any of the pilots concerned had seen a 190 they all immediately attacked much superior numbers and were largely responsible for delaying and finally breaking-up the raid. In this action was Sergeant Norman Swift damaged a Ju.88 and would, no doubt, have destroyed it had he not been attacked by 190's and had to break off the action. During this action also Flying Officer Jack Gorway (?) was shot down but through great determination and coolness successfully bailed out at remarkable low height, and after overcoming numerous difficulties was picked up and returned to the Squadron next day - a very cold man! (LAUGHTER)

The keenness and team-work in the Squadron is excellent and there is no lack of harmony whatever. We're fast becoming a strong team and I would like to say here that I'm very honoured and proud to lead the Squadron.

ROY LEE:

I had to hear that story of how Pilot Officer Geoffrey Galwey, who comes from Ravenshoe, North Queensland, spent his night in the channel and danced on top of a light-buoy. Squadron Leader Ratten got the story from him for us.

S/L. RATTEN:

Well Jeff, tell us what it was like when you jumped and had to walk home on this 'do' (?)

F/O. G
GALWEY:

When I had to jump out I didn't think I could make it; it was like coming on to a railway station to catch an important train to the Melbourne Cup or something and see her just leaving the station! And I had the usual reactions - I didn't think of my past or anything like that - I felt like swearing. At the same moment, I thought I'd have a go at it, so I pulled the hood release, the hood didn't come away so I bashed the cover with my fist, undid my oxygen gear and sat on (?) release and luckily at that stage the aircraft was upside-down and I fell out! And as I was leaving the aircraft I thought it was the moment of impact and I was hitting the water and it felt like being in water as I left the aircraft and it seemed strange to be still conscious. So I pulled the ripcord and there was a sudden jerk and I found myself floating a few feet off the water and I entered the water at that moment, and I was very pleased about all that.

RATTEN:

And what did it feel like floating about all night in this dinghy of yours?

GALWEY:

Well, it was cold - that was the main thing, but for a while I had plenty of entertainment - they were still bombing the coast and there were bombers passing over and plenty of stuff coming up, and at one stage a Jerry aircraft crashed into the water about a quarter-of-a-mile from me. A little later on I saw a light on the water which I knew must be a Jerry pilot and I didn't want any company so I sneaked away from him, and I kept paddling towards the light and as I got to the light I thought I'd make it and I gradually found myself drifting away and realised that I'd been swept round the light and was paddling up current. Well, I paddled pretty hard and it kept me warm and then I got a bit browned-off and I stopped paddling, and I got very cold! (LAUGHTER). So I started paddling again and did plenty of exercise; I didn't stop paddling all night. Eventually about six o'clock in the morning with my experience of missing the other light I got a bit cenny and I happened to make the light and get aboard.

RATTEN:

And what did you do when you got on top of this buoy? (LAUGHTER)

/GALWEY:

Distinguished Flying Cross

14/6/43.

420A.

Acting Squadron Leader (now Wing Commander) John Richard RATTEN, R.A.A.F.
No. 453 (R.A.A.F.) Squadron. This officer has completed a large number of
sorties and has led the squadron and often the wing with great skill. He has
rendered excellent service, setting a most praiseworthy example. Squadron
Leader Ratten has destroyed one and shared in the destruction of another
enemy aircraft.

315

AS BROADCAST

WITH THE AUSTRALIAN FORCES IN BRITAIN

R.A.A.F. PERSONNEL INTRODUCED BY ROY LEE

Censored by R.S. Lee, R.A.A.F. and R.A.F.

Tuesday 29th December, 1942. 07.45 - 08.00 G.M.T.

Recorded Tuesday 22nd December 1942; on MLO.1012: dubbed on to DOX.8874 on Wednesday December 23rd, 1942. To be dubbed again on Saturday 26th December, 1942. on to DOX.8898 (for Transmission)

Fade in a few bars of "The Road to Gundagai"
(disc 10)

Followed by opening announcement

Fade up "The Road to Gundagai"

ROY LEE:

That coo-ee was some of your men sending you their Christmas greetings from a party I attended just before Christmas. It was with an R.A.A.F. Fighter Squadron where all the flying personnel are Australians. The Station Commander, Squadron Leader Cyril Gadney, one of England's famous Rugby football referees, the only non-Australian in the company, proposed the toast of the squadron. In his speech, Squadron Leader Gadney said -

S/L GADNEY

Well now, you haven't been here very long with us but from the very moment you arrived here you have put up an extraordinarily good show. Our job, as you know, at the Station is to administer you, to see that you can get up into the air and do your stuff, but that job has been made extraordinarily easy for us by the grand way in which you've behaved. We know you haven't been here a great time, but during that time we've come to like you extraordinarily well. When you came here I noticed in the vicinity the people - the girls particularly probably - they looked at you very hard, wondered probably what the dark-blue uniform was, but I notice now that most of them seem to say 'good morning', 'good afternoon' to you in a very friendly way so obviously you've made friends very, very quickly.

We're very proud to have a Dominion Squadron here, at this Station, particularly at Christmas time, and we shall go out of our way to give you a really rattling fine Christmas; I can promise you turkey definitely on Christmas Day!

You're taking part in the functions of the Station and I can say already that our rugger side has been very definitely improved by your play and I hope that you'll help us to win the section of the Cup which we are playing for.

You're a grand Squadron - you're putting up a damned fine show both in the air and on the ground, and we're extraordinarily proud of you.

Now Australia seems an extraordinarily long way away, but I hope the people at home - at Australia, at your home - will know that you're in good hands and we're giving you as good a time as we possibly can this Christmas.

ROY LEE:

Squadron Leader J.R. Ratten, who comes from Hobart, Tasmania, is in command of the squadron. He replied to the toast and after thanking the Station Commander, said -

coming up, and at one stage a Jerry aircraft crashed into the water about a quarter-of-a-mile from me. A little later on I saw a light on the water which I knew must be a Jerry pilot and I didn't want any company so I sneaked away from him, and I kept paddling towards the light and as I got to the light I thought I'd made it and I gradually found myself drifting away and realised that I'd been swept round the light and was paddling up current. Well, I paddled pretty hard and it kept me warm and then I got a bit browned-off and I stopped paddling, and I got very cold! (LAUGHTER) So I started paddling again and did plenty of exercise; I didn't stop paddling all night. Eventually about six o'clock in the morning with my experience of missing the other light I got a bit canny and I happened to make the light and got aboard.

RATTEN: And what did you do when you got on top of this buoy? (Laughter)

GALWEY: Well, I started jumping up and down and I got very tired of that. Then I started doing the Charleston and I 'Charlestoned' for about an hour and then I climbed up onto the light, a precarious thing and it was fairly high and a bit rough, and held myself over to the light hoping that someone would see the light wasn't working. It was very dangerous and most uncomfortable and I got very cold so I climbed down again and 'Charlestoned' again until daylight. Then I hung everything that I could find on the buoy, including bits of my dinghy which I ripped up and tied up on it, and decorated the thing a bit, and about eight o'clock I was very glad to see a rescue launch coming out to get me.

ROY LEE: After that we drank the toast to the folks at home, proposed by Flight Lieutenant Kelvin Barclay from Peterborough, South Australia. I haven't got time to give you all his story but one thing he said was -

F/L K.
BARCLAY I know that all of us are thinking particularly of our homes and our families, they don't seem to be so very far away really, because with Christmas we remember how all of us make a very great effort to get together at Christmas.

ROY LEE: Flight Lieutenant Henry Sharp, from Sydney, the Squadron Medical Officer, replied to this and after talking about the changed conditions back in Australia, from which he's recently arrived, gave this assurance to you folk at home.

F/L (Dr)
H. SHARP. I can think that I can say that everyone here is in the very best of health also that we're warmly clad and adequately housed and that we're all getting as much good and nourishing food as we can possibly eat.

ROY LEE: The Squadron has a fine singer in Pilot Officer Tom Swift from Camberwell, Victoria, and I'll have to end this broad-cats with the song "It's worth fighting for".

TAKE IN SONG BY P/O SWIFT DISC.9

COPY

184/23/Air

plain language

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

PL. 143 14 May 1943

R.A.A.F. Spitfire Squadron now flies behind R.A.A.F. Wing Leader(.) Aus. 405111 Wing Commander J.B. Batten of Kington Beach Tasmania is first Australian E.A.T.S. pilot lead home based fighter wing(.) Relinquished command Australian Squadron to Aus. 407662 Squadron Leader K.M. Barclay of Peterborough South Australia former flight commander(.) Operating non stop in Fighter Command offensive squadron carried out many sweeps enemy territory well as patrols during April(.) Bombers and fighter bombers including Whirlibombers and Bomphoons escorted in attacks airfields docks transports(.) Latest operation as cover daylight forces raiding Boulogne May 13(.) Other R.A.A.F. pilots now holding important commands United Kingdom are Aus.44 Group Captain J. Alexander of Redcliffe Queensland commanding Flying boat base Aus. 132 Wing Commander G. Hartnell commanding permanent Sunderland Squadron Aus.171 Wing Commander D.L.G. Douglas D.F.C. of Sydney commanding E.A.T.S. Sunderland Squadron Aus. 402059 wing Commander C.E. Martin D.F.C. of Cassilis commanding an R.A.A.F. Lancaster Squadron Aus. 406356 wing Commander R. Holmes of Carnarvon West Australia commanding R.A.A.F. Hampden Squadron Aus. 400102 Wing Commander R. Norman of Mildura commanding R.A.F. Conversion unit

(W.B. TAIT)
Squadron Leader, for
Air Vice Marshal
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING

COPY

184/23/Air

Air Force, MELBOURNE

A.L. 985

7/10/42

AUS405111 Flight Lieutenant John Richard RATTEN of Kingston Beach Tasmania is temporarily commanding latest R.A.A.F. Spitfire squadron which now operating in fighter sweeps over Occupied France. Temporary appointment to post due to illness of Commanding Officer Squadron Leader E.V. Morello R.A.F. Ratten in civil life is mining engineer and prior to joining up was inspector in Queensland Department. Born at Sheffield Tasmania and is son of Dr. V.R. Ratten, C.B.E.

R.A.A.F. bomber squadron commanded by Wing Commander K.W. Kaufmann D.F.C. has unique distinction of possessing Australian twins both navigators. They are AUS404975 Sergeant Norman Talbot Mason and AUS404987 Sergeant Neville Ray Mason of Yeppoon Queensland. Enlisted January 5, 1941, and arrived United Kingdom June 1942.

Sgd W.B. TART,
Squadron Leader, for
Air Vice Marshal,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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