

AWM 65

[4831]

STEELE, JONATHAN GEORGE

400128

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

## ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

## OFFICERS AND AIR CREWS

See Misc. Units  
Enc. 229  
AW. 736 (D.F.M.)

The following biographical details are required for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, LONDON.

SURNAME STEELE NUMBER 400128

CHRISTIAN NAMES Jonathan George

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING Sgt Air Gunner

DEGREES, DECORATIONS ETC 15 W.D. 218 Medal

PRESENT APPOINTMENT AND LOCATION Nato beach Camps

DATE OF BIRTH 26/1/1909 PLACE Kalgoorlie W.A.

EDUCATED Ingleswood High School  
Students Matriculation Academy

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE 27/5/40

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE NIL

PLACES OF TRAINING Ballarat, Eamonshead, Pershore, Waterhead

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES Commercial Traveller

SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED), RECREATIONS, CLUBS ETC.

M.C.C. Club Fitzroy Football Club 2 <sup>nb</sup> 5

G.T.A. Club

FATHER MRS Peter MANHEIN KORONG VALE  
VICTORIA

WIFE

CHILDREN

HOME ADDRESS 45.6. Lonsk Rd Lonsk Victoria

SIGNATURE John P. Steele

DATE 24/2/42

DATE EMBARKED 10/4/41

DESTINATION W.K.

(These forms are to be filled in and handed to the Adjutant of the Unit

218 m  
19/8/42229  
[AUS400128 SERGEANT J.G. STEELE, AIR GUNNER (Formerly 15 Sqn)]

In March, Steele was posted to No. 218 Squadron, Mareham, with a full crew. They were split up and Steele was crewed up with Pilot Officer J. Savage, R.A.A.F. as captain. No. 218 Squadron consists of Stirlings. Sergeant Willett who has now finished his tour of operations is also with the squadron as a wireless operator/air gunner.

Steele carried out 26 operations with No. 218 Squadron which brings his total up to 31. There is a rumour that his crew is to undertake a tour in America, flying a Stirling across the Atlantic for the purpose. The list of targets he has attacked with No. 218 Squadron is :

Cologne (Four - figure raid)  
Bremen (Four-figure raid)  
Hamburg (800 planes)  
Duisburg (Four times)  
Osnabruck  
Saarbrucken  
Lubeck.

Coming back from Bremen about two and a half months ago the Stirling was attacked by three ME110's of which Steele got a probable and the mid-upper gunner another. This was about the same time that Sergeant Griggs and crew shot down three fighters. The ME's came up underneath the Stirling over Flaki Island near the Dutch coast. One had a search light fixed to its nose. This eventually came in from the starboard quarter above. Steele fired at it with unverified results. The third ME came in from below at the port quarter and it broke off with smoke pouring from its body. Steele had given it a two second burst direct hit.

For the daylight raid on Lubeck see Air Ministry Bulletin No. 26 dated 17/7/42.

Steele on this historic raid went with the Commanding officer of the Squadron (Wing Commander Holder, D.F.C.) They set out about 6 p.m. on 16/7/42 and flew in a formation of six until 50 miles from Denmark when they lost formation in the cloud. They were at about 800 feet when they were attacked by three Me109's over Denmark. The Huns attacked nine times damaging the Stirling, but no one was injured. The Stirling took violent evasive action and climbed into the clouds. The Stirling's gunners damaged two of the fighters. Steele's link chute jammed during the engagement but he managed to get one gun firing for the last two attacks. His restraint from firing caused the last fighter to come in to 100

wards dead astern. Steele let him have a burst and the ME was claimed as damaged.

The Stirling, undeterred, went on to the target but as they were 15 minutes late owing to the fighter engagement they ran into a tremendous volume of flak, being the only plane over the target at the time. They went in at 5500 feet and bombed the submarine docks, the bombs being observed to drop close to the slipways. The fires lit by the previous aircraft were still burning.

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24/2/42

AUST/400128 Sergeant J.G.STEELE

Sergeant Steele left Australia on April 10, 1941, on the "Queen Elizabeth" and proceeded to the Middle East where he spent two weeks at Geniefa camp which is the Middle East Pool. The conditions in this camp have already been described by Sergeant M.R.H.Smith (Miscellaneous Units 34).

Of it, Sergeant Steele says "I told the Adjutant that I couldn't complain of the organisation because there was no organisation." From Geniefa he sailed to Capetown on the "Empress of Asia" and from there proceeded to Trinidad, Halifax and Liverpool on the "Strathnaver". The trip from Australia took over four months.

Sergeant Steele trained first on Wellingtons at Pershore, Worcs., and then did a conversion course on to Stirlings at Waterbeach, Cambs. From Waterbeach he was posted to No. 15 Squadron at Wyton, Hunts., where he remained for four months.

During these months Sergeant Steele did five operational sorties and gained for himself the reputation of being an exceptional gunner in the air "though rather Bolshie on the ground".

He made two trips over Brest bombing the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, one bombing the docks at Wilhelmshaven, one attacking shipping at Dunkirk and one to Trondhjem Fjord in Norway. On the latter occasion, however, the plane iced up on the way out, they could not gain height and were forced to jettison their bombs and return home to base.

The trip that Sergeant Steele has reason to remember most was the second one over Brest which was made at night and through intensely heavy anti-aircraft fire. One of the Stirling's engines was hit by flak and put out of action and the fuselage was riddled with shrapnel. Nevertheless, the target was bombed and the aircraft made base on three engines. Sergeant Steele has as a memento of this occasion a large piece of flak which hit his gun turret. It is pure steel and engraved with German eagles.

155 pages

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42

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March 1942 posted to 218 sq. See Interview.

9/1/42

Aus. 400128 Flight Sergeant John George STEELE, R.A.A.F., No. 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron. Flight Sergeant Steele is a determined and efficient air gunner. On one occasion whilst mine laying, his aircraft was caught and held by two searchlights, and subjected to intense anti-aircraft fire. Displaying skilful shooting this air gunner put both searchlights out of action and a few minutes later he succeeded in extinguishing a third. On another occasion, during a daylight attack, Flight Sergeant Steele's aircraft was attacked by three Messerschmitt 109's. Three of his guns were put out of action. He continued to fire his remaining gun, repaired those damaged and meanwhile, gave an excellent running commentary on the attack, which enabled his pilot to take successful evasive action.

Steele's other success on return trip from Bremen (✓)  
Three ME 109's came up beneath Stirling over Dutch coast(.) One came  
in on starboard quarter and Steele opened fire(.) Broke off fire at another  
which came at them from port quarter and below(.) Steele's two second burst  
dead accurate and enemy aircraft broke off with smoke pouring from fuselage(.)  
Steele has done 31 operations including three four figure raids(.) Recently  
his captain has been Aus 402882 Pilot Officer J.R. Savage of Sydney

Aus 400128  
Sgt J.S. Steele  
formerly class agent  
farmer & club  
secretary.

Other refs under  
Lubeck raid on  
10/7/42



STEELE

J.G.

Prest. in RAF

WHEN?

9

*Foster, Lee*

STEELE J.G. (Capt in RAF)

B10  
Folder

EXTRACTS FROM ENCLOSURE NO. 229. (Mis.11) 19/8/42.

AUS. 400128 SERGEANT J.G. STEELE (AIR GUNNER former 15 Sqn)

*W.C. 1942*

(For the daylight raid on Lubeck see Air Ministry

Bulletin No. 26 dated 17/7/42)

*[One Australian on this historic raid was Sergeant J.G. Steele, who later received the D.F.M. He went further*

*the commanding*

~~Steele on this historic raid went with the commanding officer of the Squadron (Wing Commander Holder, D.F.C.)~~ They set

out about 6 p.m. on 16 <sup>July 1942</sup> and flew in a formation of six

until 50 miles from Denmark, when they lost formation in the cloud.

(They were at about 800 feet when they were attacked by three ME 109s

over Denmark. The Huns attacked nine times, damaging the Stirling,

but no one was injured, <sup>while</sup> ~~The Stirling took violent evasive action~~

~~and climbed into the clouds.~~ The Stirling's gunners damaged two

of the fighters. Steele's link chute jammed during the engagement,

but he managed to get one gun firing for the last two attacks.

His restraint from firing caused the last fighter to come in to

100 yards dead astern. Steele let <sup>him fire</sup> ~~him have~~ a burst and the ME

~~was claimed as damaged~~ *the attacker;*

The Stirling, undeterred, went on to the target but <sup>being</sup> ~~as~~

~~they were~~ 15 minutes late <sup>because of</sup> ~~owing to~~ the fighter engagement, <sup>& thus</sup> ~~they~~

~~ran into a tremendous volume of flak, being the only~~ <sup>one</sup> ~~aircraft~~

~~over~~ the target at the time, <sup>met very heavy flak.</sup> They went in at 5500 feet and bombed the

submarine docks, the bombs being <sup>seen</sup> ~~observed~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~drop~~ close to the

slipways. The fires lit by the previous aircraft were still burning.

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F/Sgt Steele's sense of humor  
just impressed the W/Cdr  
Holder on the raid on Subeds.  
When the Shuting was  
attacked by enemy aircraft,  
the guns had jammed,  
& ~~he~~ in the thick of  
the fight F/Sgt Steele  
suddenly let out a shout  
of laughter & called "look  
they must be sprogs —  
they're missing us!"

JOKÉ