

[3332]

AWM 65

MC CORMACK, DAVID WILLIAM

400232

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

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(BAR TO D.F.C.)

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ENCL. 24662

27/11. D.F.C.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

OFFICERS & AIR CREW

Missing 11.8.44
Killed 11.8.44

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

✓ See India file Enc: 25
See misc. file: 2029.

SURNAME... McCORMACK..... NUMBER... 400232.....
CHRISTIAN NAMES... DAVID WILLIAM.....
AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING... FLT. S/L AIR CREW (P).....
DEGREES, DECORATIONS ETC... D.F.C. AND BAR... M. in D......
PRESENT APPOINTMENT AND LOCATION... C.O. 615 Sq. DRN. FAIRWOOD COMMON. GRAM.
DATE OF BIRTH... 27th Nov. 1917..... PLACE... SEDDON. VICTORIA.....
EDUCATED... ST AUGUSTINE'S YARRAVILLE. C.B.C. VICTORIA PARADE. E.M.E.B......
.....
DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE... 22 July 1940.....
PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE... NIL.....
.....
PLACES OF TRAINING... #2 ITS. #4 EFTS. RAAF. #1 SFTS. RAAF. #55 PTD. RAE.....
CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES... ELEC. MECH. SEC. of V. SEC. of FOOTSCRAY S.C.
etc......
.....
SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED), RECREATIONS, CLUBS ETC. SWIMMING, WATER Polo.
FOOTBALL. GOLF. SQUASH. + FOOTSCRAY CLUBS.....
.....
FATHER... DAVID. RAUFH. McCORMACK. J.P......
WIFE... N/A.....
CHILDREN... N/A.....
HOME ADDRESS... 7 SEDDON ST. SEDDON. WIL. MELB. AUSTRALIA.....

SIGNATURE... D. McCormack. FLT.....

DATE... 1-2-42.....

DATE EMBARKED.....

DESTINATION.....

(These forms are to be filled in and handed to the Adjutant of the Unit
immediately after receipt).

December 31, 1944.

The following is supplied confidentially, and is not for publication before the New Year Honors list is officially released.

NEW YEAR HONORS LIST

One hundred and 81 Australians listed in the New Year Honors include Victoria Cross winners of two wars and several other men who have played a prominent part in Australian war history:-

Companion of the Order of the Bath

Air Vice Marshal Edmund Cuthbert HUDLESTON CBE (RAF). Born Dec. 30, 1906, at Perth, Western Australia. A/V/M Hudleston's appointment as successor to A/V/M L.O. Brown as Air Officer Commanding the Group supporting the First Canadian Army on the Western Front was the subject of an Air Ministry bulletin on Dec. 9. He is one of the youngest officers holding his present rank. A/V/M Hudleston was closely connected with the landings in Sicily, Salerno, Anzio and southern France. He was educated at Guildford Grammar School, W.A., went to Cranwell RAF College at 18, and after two years' training was posted to operational flying (Other details if required from Holborn 1513 or from Air Ministry).

Air Vice Marshal Frank Hubert McNAMARA V.C. C.B.E. (RAAF). Born April 4, 1894. Began flying in 1915 at Point Cook, Victoria, and was a lieutenant in the Australian Citizen Forces. He served in the last war in Egypt and in Palestine, where he was wounded and won the V.C. in 1917. After recovery in Australia he became a flying instructor in the Australian Air Corps. Later, from 1925-27, he was on exchange duty with the RAF at No. 5 Flying Training School at Sealand, Chester, England. He also served in the Directorate of Training at Air Ministry. He returned to Australia as second in command at Point Cook in 1927. He was at the Imperial Defence College in Britain in 1937, and then became Australian Air Liaison Officer in London. In January, 1943, he was appointed to his present post, AOC British Forces, Aden. His wife is Mrs Helene Marcelle McNamara, now living in Somerset.

Mentioned in Despatches

Group Captain W.H. KYLE D.F.C. (RAF). Born January 22, 1910 at Kalgoorlie, W.A. Like A/V/M Hudleston, he was educated at Guildford Grammar School, W.A. Soon after leaving school he sailed for England, where he joined the RAF. He was one of the first Australians to be granted a short service commission in the RAF. From the outset he demonstrated above-average ability as a pilot, and also proved a capable organiser. After some years in England, he was lent by the RAF to the RAAF and returned to Point Cook, Victoria, to take up instructional duties. G/C Kyle also instructed at Mascot and Richmond, NSW, and many pilots who later became famous passed through his hands. He was one of the first pilots to instruct in the prototype of the Wirraway. After two years he returned to the U.K. to rejoin the RAF and when the war began he joined a light bomber squadron which he later commanded. With the advent of the Mosquito, G/C Kyle immediately realised its possibilities, and gathered into his squadron men whom he could train for a highly-specialised job. One of the first pilots he called on was another West Australian, Squadron Leader (later Group Captain) Hughie Edwards (see Below). Together these two men organised and perfected a phase of bombing which was to strike into the very heart of Germany. G/C Kyle was the man who organised the famous daylight raid on Berlin early in the war. He is known throughout the RAF as "Digger Kyle."

(Continued on Page Two).

Group Captain Hughie Idwal EDWARDS V.O. D.S.O. D.F.C (RAF). Born Aug. 1, 1914, at Perth, W.A. Third most highly decorated officer of the RAF, most highly decorated Australian airman. Served as cadet in RAAF in 1935 and next year was granted a short service commission in the RAF. He was promoted wing commander in May, 1941, and became C.O. of a RAF squadron. He was awarded the DFC in July, 1941, following an attack on a convoy off The Hague, and the VC, within days of the DFC, for an heroic attack on the heavily-defended port of Bremen. He won the DSO in January, 1943, after he had led a formation of Mosquitos in the van of the 100 light bombers which attacked the Phillips Radio valve factory. He was later appointed commanding officer of the RAF station at which one of the RAAF Lancaster bomber squadrons is based.

Group Captain J. Alexander O.B.E., C.(RAAF), who until a few days ago commanded a RAF station in south-west England on which an Australian Sunderland squadron is based, and is now about to return to Australia. He was born on April 3, 1907, at Brisbane, was educated at Brisbane High School, was seven years (1921-1928) in the cadet and Citizen Forces of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, and was a building contractor in civil life. He joined the RAAF in July, 1929. He left for service in Britain in June, 1942. G/C Alexander was awarded the Royal Humane Society's Silver Medal last September for saving the lives of two RAF men who were . . . in danger of drowning while tending a Sunderland in a 65 m.p.h. gale in the station alighting-basin. (Details available from Holborn 1513).

The late Squadron Leader D.W. McCormack D.F.C. and Bar (RAAF), former C.O. of "Churchill's Own," the famous RAF fighter unit of which the Prime Minister is honorary Air Commodore. Born Nov. 27, 1917 at Seddon, Victoria, he was educated at St. Augustine's, Yarraville, Victoria, and the Christian Brothers College, Melbourne. He was an electrical mechanic before he joined the RAAF in July, 1940. He was known as one of "Gillam's Boys," as "Churchill's Own," when he joined that unit, was led by the noted RAF pilot Squadron Leader (later Group Captain) D.E. Gillam DSO and Bar, AFC. The unit fought in France with Gloster Gladiators and then Hurricanes. For months S/Ldr. McCormack took part in sweeps against German shipping in the North Sea. He led a fighter formation which escorted Manchester, Halifax and Stirling bombers against the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau at Brest on December 19, 1941, during which more than 50 fighters were engaged in battle at once. Few of the Messerschmitts penetrated the British fighter screen, and all S/Ldr. McCormack's squadron returned safely. For his outstanding work . . . S/Ldr. McCormack was awarded the DFC. He was killed on August 11, 1944, while on a non-operational flight in Burma, to which theatre "Churchill's Own" had moved in May, 1942. He received the Bar to his DFC for operations against the Japanese in that country.

Other prominent Australian flying men in the New Year Honors list include Group Captain J.B. Graham MC, AFC (RAF) and G/C G.M. Lindeman DFC (RAFO)---C.B.E; and Squadron Leader D.G. Andrews DFC (RAAF)---Mentioned in Despatches.

Photographs:- Please telephone Holborn 1513.

....O....

F/W D. W. McCormack

DFC ~~380~~

in 615, Churchill's Own Sq.

10/12/42 - No.9.

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No.8697

"CHURCHILL'S OWN" ATTACK IN BURMA

Low level attacks on Japanese sea and river shipping has become a speciality of R.A.F. fighters operating from airfields in India. Recent activities include attacks on targets at Magwe Nyaughga and shipping on the Mayu and Kaladan rivers.

One of ten squadrons engaged is truly representative. Its personnel include an Indian officer who is in the R.A.F. and men from New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Rhodesia and Great Britain, and there is one pilot from South America. The commander of one formation is a youthful veteran who holds the D.S.O. and the D.F.C. and bar. Earlier in the war he was a flight commander in a famous squadron commanded by Wing Commander Malan, one of the outstanding pilots of the war.

The squadron leader in charge of flying also wears the D.S.O. He was one of the attackers of the Scharnhorst during that famous running fight in the English Channel, and on that occasion he sank at least two of the E boats which accompanied the Nazi battleships. Most of the British anti-aircraft gunners attached to the formation have seen action in Britain, one was among the last 600 to leave Dunkirk.

Two squadrons describe themselves with pride as being "Churchill's Own" and "Runciman's Own" after their respective Air Commodores. Both are auxiliary squadrons.

The Premier's squadron has a distinguished record of preying on German flak ships in the English Channel, while Leslie Runciman's, founded in 1932, made the first experimental Hurricane - bomber sweeps over Northern France, paving the way for the attacks that have destroyed so many Nazi targets.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS

(Released to Australian Press from India)

R.A.A.F. Bulletin No. 342

March 1, 1944.

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDS "CHURCHILL'S OWN" 615sq.

"Churchill's Own" --- one of the most famous fighter squadrons in the R.A.F. --- has a new commanding officer, an Australian.

He is Squadron Leader David William McCormack, D.F.C. and Bar, of Seddon, Melbourne, Victoria.

"Churchill's Own" was so named because the Prime Minister is its honorary Air Commodore, and takes a very personal interest in its activities.

Squadron Leader McCormack, R.A.A.F., became associated with "Churchill's Own" when he came to England, and German soldiers who manned the heavily-armed flak ships in the North Sea were the chief targets of the squadron. One day the squadron swooped on an enemy convoy, sank two flak ships, damaged five others, and sank a 4000 ton supply ship. Thirty Messerschmitt fighters gave battle and, in the running fight which followed, two were shot down.

In the face of fierce ack-ack fire, the squadron later shot-up eight Nazi "E" boats, sinking two, leaving another two in flames, and putting the rest out of action.

Squadron Leader McCormack was leader of a fighter squadron which escorted Manchester, Halifax and Stirling bombers on a raid on the German battle cruisers when they were at Brest. Few of the Messerschmitts which gave battle penetrated the British screen, and all McCormack's squadron returned to their base. For his work in Britain, McCormack was awarded the D.F.C.

When he arrived in India, McCormack remained with "Churchill's Own", and led many low-level long-range attacks over Burma with outstanding skill and courage. For his work in Burma he was awarded a bar to his D.F.C.

For a time McCormack was in charge of a fighter training unit, but now he is back with his old squadron, this time as its commanding officer.

.....cOo.....

F/Lt. D. W. MCCORMACK D.F.C. AUS-400232

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I applied for enlistment as Air Crew on Oct. 12th 1939, and was Medically examined on Oct. 13th 1940 passed fit and after an interview was placed on the Reserve.

after months of weary waiting was called up on July 21st. Reported to Melbourne, sworn in and entrained for #2 I.S.S. Bradfield Park N.S.W., in company with Charlie Banning, Jim Halhiner and others.

In the morning we arrived in Sydney and were met & driven to the camp. After a pleasant month of drill & lectures in lovely weather, I received the good news that

spent in the usual fashion

I reported to #2 E.D. Lindfield on 28th. Oct. 1940 and after 3 days boarded the "S.S. Awatea" and sailed on the evening of the 31st.

Also on the boat were some old friends of peacetime in Keith Truscott, Percy Sloan, John Ross, Bandy Wain and Eric Schraeder.

We eventually berthed at Auckland and had a good look around and sampled the local brew.

Off again to Suva and soon the Islands hove into view and all the lads in their tropicals were quick to be off and scout the town. A very pleasant concert &

I was to pass out with the previous course - #2.

Home for seven days leave and then back to Sydney and reported to #4 E.F.T.S. Based. #2 course had a fine lot of lads in it and I soon made the acquaintance of Keith Chisholm, Devenish - Beares, John Dean, Sheerin, Dave Stewart & the rest.

I was lucky enough to get a very good Instructor in P/O Geoff. Hoshin and spent a very pleasant two months under his tuition. The course passed out on Oct 17th 1940 and ^{we} were informed that we were off to Canada. X

Home again on Pre-Embarkation leave, which was

party had been arranged by the white inhabitants & was much appreciated by all, although our celebrations were somewhat impeded by the results of various needles that the Doctor had stuck into us.

Early in the next morning we were awakened by the gentle rolling motion of the boat & rushed to the windows, or I should say ports and got a last view of the beautiful Fijian Islands.

On through the blue waters of the Pacific spending the days in lectures & idling. The flying fish were a source of great interest & amusement. Then Honolulu, where we

although not allowed ashore,
~~we~~ ^{were} very well entertained by
ladies of the American Red
Cross who brought with them
a Hula dancing troupe and
also cases of pineapples, and
plenty of cigarettes and mag-
azines. Feis were around
everybody's neck and these
on sailing were cast back
into the water in accordance
with the local custom.

Then Victoria where
we were welcomed by Air
Vice Marshall Goble and other
Off to Vancouver and instead
of the promised three days
leave, we were marched
around the city blocks, bun-
dled on to a train and off
eastwards.

Still, when daylight came and we found the Dining Hall things brightened considerably. The Canadians were astonished to see a horde of hungry Blue-clad LAC's queuing up and we soon found ourselves answering dozens of questions and losing our bronze L.A.C. badges.

We very soon settled down to training and lectures. The Gals and Harvards were lovely machines to fly and the ground lectures quite interesting, and the weeks soon began to fly past.

The food and barracks were bad and the former was supplemented by hot dogs, peanuts & beer in the canteen.

The train was most comfortable and the three days soon passed. Our interest was aroused at the sight of the grandeur of the snow-clad peaks of the Rocky Mountains, and many a photo was taken, a lot of the lads seeing snow for the first time.

After the mountains, the plains were a direct contrast and the cities were inspected as thoroughly as possible in the train stopping time. I'm afraid that the welcome we got when we eventually arrived at #1 S.F.T.S. Camp

Borden was rather dismal. Being thrown out of a train into a pitch black morning with falling snow and a biting wind is not very helpful to one's feelings.

We left Borden without regret on Feb. 12th 1941. and proceeded to Rochcliffe Ottawa. We stayed here for some time and then were broken up and only John Roche, John Tully, Martin Sheldon, & a few others ^{myself} were left there. We had a week in Montreal on leave, visiting the W.A.G.'s there. They were pleased to see us and we had a good meal together.

Then off again to a station which to us was the last outpost of the Empire - a place called Debert. Everybody ate in the one hall, the meal consisting usually of a mess which the cook called stew.

We stayed in Debert for

in the evenings also after chumming up with the head cook we occasionally got a bacon & egg supper in the kitchen.

Examination time arrived and long was the candle that was burned at both ends during the final wait. Then the anxious days awaiting results. In the meantime we were all interviewed by a Commission Selection Board and I was lucky enough to eventually be honoured.

Then came the grand evening when our wings were pinned on our tunics. What a celebration was held that night!

From then on everybody slept in their clothes. On the 30th March we awoke to find that the "Crystales" had anchored in lovely Loch Ewe in Northern Scotland.

On April 1st we were taken off by a naval cutter and driven to Acnasteen where we boarded a train for Glasgow where we spent the night, seeing a blackout for the first time also hearing the sirens. In the morning we caught the London train and eventually reached #3 P.R.C. Litchbridge. After four days in which we again stated our desires as to the branch of the Service we wished to join, a posting came through

a month, then off on the train to Halifax. We were mysteriously whisked through the streets to a small pier & then taken in a launch to our ship the "Crystales".

At last we were on our way to the war. The ship's personnel were good types & we were very soon comfortable. On the 11th March we sailed in convoy with about 35 other ships, a sight I shall never forget.

On the sixth day out, an aeroplane was sighted but luckily it was a Hudson being ferried to England. Then a signal was received stating that the Schamstadt & Greisner were out raiding.

days in London I reported to Valley and was quickly taken into the fold and given all the "gen". 615 Sq'dn was Churchill's Own & the County of Surrey Sq'dn. It had fought in France and Belgium with Gloster Gladiators and then Hurricanes. There had been two Aussies in the Sq'dn before Bill Fowler now a POW in Germany & W/c Holmwood who was shot down & after baling out was machine-gunned by the Huns. From all accounts they were grand types. Also in the present lot were two very good types Sgt Don Roberts & Ron Hamilton.

After four or five months of scrambles & conveys in a sandy drone we were completely

for Herb Sheldon and ^{my}self to go to #55 O.T.U. Isworth. Once more the hut-bags were packed & off we went next morning & reported in late in the evening.

Very soon, after flying baskets for a few hours we soloed on Hurricanes and what a thrill it was, although the amount of "prangs" had us a little scared. After a few hours we gained confidence and then began to really enjoy flying.

On the 5-5-41 our flight was sent to Guston and there we ran up the hours in solid training. Quickly the weeks flew by & on the 26-5-41 I was posted to #615 Sqdn at Valley Anglesey.

After 7 terrific

Hamilton (RAAF) missing. Wilkes, exploded
in sea. 2 Blenheims down + 1 badly
damaged. We got 2 109's + 2 dgd."

The trouble was that
after attaching the ships very
little ammunition was left to
defend ourselves if we got into
trouble.

Then another resulting
from a sweep up the coast -
"Found 8 E-boats. Sunk 2, 2 now
burning + the rest out of action
Bags of flak."

When the shipping stopped
coming through the channel we
were put on to working with
the new Hurricane-bombers
against factories + barge con-
centrations in northern France +
Belgium.

We used often go in

brassed off & were on the verge of madness when a posting came through for the Squadron to go to Banston to assume anti-flak duties. Whacho!

On 11-9-41 we landed at Banston and quickly got all the "gen". We were to escort Bletchleys at sea level & attack enemy convoys. Our job was to beat up the flak ships with cannon & m.g. fire & put them out of action.

To describe all the engagements we had would fill a book, but some of the entries in my log will suffice for example:-

"Attack convoy. - 4000 ton supply ship sunk, 2 flak ships sunk, 5 others damaged. Running fight with 30+ 109Es

were straight from OTU's and could hardly be expected to last long, so on the 26th Nov. 1941, we were posted to Angle S. Wales where we flew long-range Hurricanes on convoy patrols & sweeps round Southern Ireland. Also we made a couple of trips down South to go to Brest.

There we were informed that we are to go overseas, so now are flat out building up the Squadron again.

I assumed command of 615 Sqdn ^{when} ~~on~~ S/L Bellant departed to the USA on a lecture tour ~~in~~ December 1941 and was awarded the D.F.C. in Feb '42.

So now after moving to Fairwood Common we are nearly ready to go overseas & carry on the fight.

low over the coast on our own
 & beat up some place, for instance
 "Beat up Ostend Basin; 2 HE 9's
 destroyed & one dgd. Gasometer,
 factory & barges burning. Gun-
 posts stopped. Sticheleand + Potts
 missing. Ford badly wounded."

This went on week after
 week & although we were
 doing terrific damage to the
 Hun, the Squadron was slowly
 but surely being whittled down
 until there was only five of
 the original lot left including
 the 66 - S/L Gillam who was
 shot down into the drink & badly
 wounded. He was rescued by
 those wonderful people the
 Air Sea Rescue Squad.

The replacements we were
 getting, although very good types

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AIR FORCE MELBOURNE

AL.372 30/1/42.

For D.P.S. and D.P.R. Break.

Add to our AL.357 dated 30/1/42. This unofficial information for publication. Break.

Flight Lieutenant McCormack ^{was} is known as one of "Gillam's Boys" as he is one of the survivors of the original team ^{in Britain} led by the noted R.A.F. pilot, Squadron Leader D. E. GILLAM, D.S.O., D.F.C. and Bar. [McCormack, ~~is now~~ acting as a Squadron Leader of a Fighter Squadron, and led it while escorting the Manchesters, Halifaxes and Stirlings on the heavy daylight raid on the Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Prinz Eugen on December 19, ¹⁹⁴¹ ~~last~~. Battles between fifty fighters at a time took place but few of the Messerschmitts got through the screen. McCormack's Squadron all returned safely. Early in November a flight of three fighters led by McCormack fought it out with four Messerschmitts of which McCormack shot down one.

(W.B. TART)
Squadron Leader, for
Air Commodore,
Air Officer Commanding.

COPY

615-

184/23/Air

AIR FORCE, MELBOURNE

A.L. 111

26/2/42

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FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS. BREAK.

AUST/400232 FLIGHT LIEUTENANT DAVID WILLIAM MCCORMACK, D.F.C., OF THE R.A.A.F. AND FORMERLY OF MELBOURNE HAS THE HONOUR OF TEMPORARILY COMMANDING ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS HURRICANE SQUADRONS IN THE BRITISH EMPIRE. IT IS KNOWN AS QUOTE CHURCHILL'S OWN UNQUOTE. HE HAS SHARED IN MANY HAIR RAISING OPERATIONS SINCE HE JOINED THE UNIT IN MAY 1941 AND SHARES WITH SQUADRON LEADER TRUSCOTT THE DISTINCTION OF BEING THE FIRST AUSTRALIAN EMPIRE AIR SCHEME TRAINEES TO COMMAND A SQUADRON. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS HIS JOB WAS TO BEAT UP THE HEAVILY ARMED GERMAN FLAK SHIPS WITH CANNON AND MACHINE GUN FIRE. DURING A BIG ATTACK ON AN ENEMY CONVOY IN WHICH A FOUR THOUSAND TON SUPPLY SHIP AND TWO FLAK SHIPS WERE SUNK AND FIVE OTHERS DAMAGED FLIGHTS OF THE SQUADRON HAD A RUNNING FIGHT WITH THIRTY REPEAT THIRTY 109E'S. QUOTE WE LOST TWO AND GOT TWO MCCORMACK STATES OUR TROUBLE WAS THAT AFTER ATTACKING THE SHIPS WE HAD LITTLE AMMUNITION LEFT TO FIGHT IT OUT WITH THE HUN UNQUOTE ON ANOTHER OCCASION DURING A SWEEP UP THE COAST THE UNIT FOUND EIGHT REPEAT EIGHT E BOATS. THEY SUNK TWO, LEFT TWO MORE BURNING AND THE REST OUT OF ACTION. QUOTE THERE WERE BAGS OF FLAK UNQUOTE MCCORMACK SAID BREAK LATER THE SQUADRON WAS PUT ON TO WORKING THE NEW HURRICANE BOMBERS AGAINST FACTORIES AND BARGE CONCENTRATIONS IN GERMAN OCCUPIED TERRITORY. ON THESE EXCURSIONS MCCORMACK WAS PROMINENT IN THE ACTIONS LEADING TO THE DESTRUCTION OF A NUMBER OF HEINKEL AIRCRAFT AND GUN POSTS. WEEK IN AND WEEK OUT MCCORMACK LED THE FLIGHT ON THIS DANGEROUS WORK, AND FULLY JUSTIFIED THE COMMENTS IN HIS D.F.C. CITATION QUOTE HE HAS AT ALL TIMES DISPLAYED THE GREATEST DETERMINATION IN THE FACE OF ENEMY FIRE UNQUOTE. EVENTUALLY THE COMMANDING OFFICER SQUADRON LEADER GILLAM D.S.O. D.F.C. AND BAR WAS SHOT DOWN BADLY WOUNDED INTO THE SEA BUT WAS PICKED UP BY THE AIR SEA RESCUE SQUAD. WHEN GILLAM LEFT ON A LECTURE TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES, MCCORMACK ASSUMED TEMPORARY COMMAND BREAK. THE UNIT FOUGHT IN FRANCE WITH GLOSTER GLADIATORS AND THEN HURRICANES. A PREVIOUS AUSTRALIAN COMMANDER WAS WING COMMANDER HOLMWOOD, R.A.A.F., WHO LOST HIS LIFE WHILE SERVING WITH THE SQUADRON.

(Sgd)

W.B. TART,
Squadron Leader, for
Air Commodore,
AIR OFFICER COMMANDING

Pilot Officer Ron Hamilton. Missing believed killed. 18/9/41

*Consolidated
File*

DEPARTMENT OF AIR

MORNING PRESS RELEASE

Melbourne,
17. 8. 44.

Directorate of
Public Relations
D.P.R.S. No. 4029.

'CHURCHILL'S OWN' COMMANDER KILLED

Squadron Leader David William McCormack, DFC and Bar, Australian commander of one of the most famous fighter squadrons in the Royal Air Force, Churchill's own, was killed in Burma on August 11 while on a non-operational flight.

Squadron Leader McCormack was born at Seddon (Vic.) in November 1917, and was educated at St. Coleman's Christian Brothers' College, Fitzroy, and Christian Brothers' College, East Melbourne. Prior to his enlistment in July, 1940, he was employed as an electrical mechanic at the State Electricity Commission.

After initial training at Bradfield Park (N.S.W.) he was posted to Mascot for elementary flying training. He completed his training in Canada in February, 1941, and was posted to Churchill's Own R.A.F. fighter squadron. This squadron has the Hon. Winston Churchill as its honorary Air Commodore, who takes a personal interest in its activities.

For months, McCormack took part in sweeps against German shipping in the North Sea. On one occasion, his squadron swooped on an enemy convoy and sank two "flak ships", damaged five others and sank a 4,000 ton supply ship. Thirty Messerschmitt fighters gave battle, and in the running fight that ensued, two of them were shot down.

In the face of fierce anti-aircraft fire, the squadron later shot up eight Nazi "E" boats. Two of them were sunk, two left in flames, and the rest put out of action.

When the squadron was equipped with the new Hurri-bombers McCormack led it on raids on German factories and barge concentrations and shot up a number of gun positions and grounded bombers. In the face of enemy fire, he showed dogged determination and

pressing home low-level attacks.

He was leader of a fighter squadron which escorted Manchester, Halifax and Stirling bombers on a raid on German cruisers at Brest on December 19, 1941, during which more than 50 fighters were engaged in battles at once. Few of the Messerschmitts penetrated the British fighter screen guarding the bombers. All of McCormack's squadron returned safely to base.

For his outstanding work on these missions, McCormack was awarded the D.F.C.

After moving to India in May, 1942, where he was once again with Churchill's Own, he led many long range low-level attacks over Burma with outstanding skill and courage. The majority of these attacks necessitated flights of 240 miles to targets over the Chin and Lushai Hills, which rise to a height of 10,000 feet. Attacks were made in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire against vital Jap bases and supply lines. He was awarded a Bar to his D.F.C. in June, 1943.

For several months, S/Ldr. McCormack commanded the combat section of an Air Fighter Training Unit, after which he returned to his old squadron Churchill's Own as Commanding Officer.

Paying a tribute to the late S/Ldr. McCormack, the Minister for Air (Mr. Drakeford) said today: "The command of 'Churchill's Own' fighter squadron was one of the highest honours any Australian pilot could achieve. Squadron Leader McCormack's record is one of distinction and courage, and he is another gallant young Australian whose courage has culminated in the supreme sacrifice for his country. I have known him since his early boyhood and always admired his enterprising and aggressive spirit. He was a lad of exceptional qualities.

"I have conveyed a message expressing my deepest sympathy to his bereaved parents."

S. L. McCormack
D.F.C.

23/2/42

AUST/400232 FLIGHT LIEUTENANT D.W.McCORMACK, D.F.C.

I applied for enlistment as air crew on October 12, 1939 and was medically examined on February 13, 1940, passed fit and after an interview placed on the reserve.

After months of weary waiting I was called up on July 21. Reported to Melbourne, sworn in and entrained for No. 2 I.T.S., BRADFIELD PARK, N.S.W. in company with Charlie Manning, Jim Falkiner and others.

In the morning we arrived in Sydney and were met and driven to the camp. After a pleasant month of drill and lectures in lovely weather, I received the good news that I was to pass out with the previous course, No. 2.

Home for seven days leave and then back to Sydney and reported to No. 4 E.F.T.S., MASCOOT. No. 2 course had a fine lot of lads in it and I soon made the acquaintance of Keith Chisholm, Devenish-Meares, John Dean, Sheerin, Dave Stewart and the rest.

I was lucky enough to get a very good instructor in P/O Geoff Hoskin and spent a very pleasant two months under his tuition. The course passed out on October 17, 1940 and we were informed that we were off to Canada.

Home again on pre-embarkation leave which was spent in the usual fashion. I reported to No. 2 Embarkation Depot, Lindfield, on October 28, 1940 and after three days boarded the Awatea and sailed on the evening of the 31st.

Also on the boat were some old friends of peace time in Keith Truscott, Percy Sloan, Jock Ross, Bandy Wawn, and Eric Schraeder.

We eventually berthed at Auckland and had a good look round and sampled the local brew. Off again to Suva and soon the islands hove into view and all the lads in their tropicals were quick to be off and scour the town. A very pleasant concert and party had been arranged by the white inhabitants and was much appreciated by all, although our celebrations were somewhat impeded by the results of various needles that the doctor had stuck into us.

Early the next morning we were awakened by the gentle rolling motion of the boat and rushed to the windows, or I should say, ports and got a last view of the beautiful Fijian islands.

On through the blue waters of the Pacific spending the days in idling and lectures. The flying fish were a source of great interest and amusement. Then Honolulu, where we, although not allowed ashore, were very well entertained by the ladies of the American Red Cross Society who brought with them a hula dancing troupe and also cases of pineapples, and plenty of cigarettes and magazines. Leis were around everybody's necks and these on sailing were cast back into the water in accordance with the local custom.

Then on to Victoria where we were welcomed by Air Vice Marshal Goble and others. Then off to Vancouver and instead of the promised three days leave, we were marched around the city block, bundled on to a train and off eastwards. The train was most comfortable and the three days soon passed. Our interest was aroused at the sight of the grandeur of the snow clad peaks of the Rocky Mountains and many a photo was taken, many of the lads seeing snow for the first time.

After the mountains the planes were a distinct contrast and the cities were inspected as thoroughly as possible in the train stopping time. I'm afraid that the welcome we got when we arrived at No. 1 S.F.T.S. camp at Borden was rather dismal. Being thrown out of a train

into a pitch black morning with falling snow and a biting wind is not very helpful to one's feelings.

Still, when daylight came and we found the dingy hall ~~thing~~ things brightened considerably. The Canadians were astonished to see a horde of hungry blue-clad L.A.C.'s queueing up and we soon found ourselves answering dozens of questions and losing our bronze L.A.C. badges.

We very soon settled down to training and lectures. The Yales and Harvards were lovely machines to fly and the ground lectures were quite interesting, and the weeks soon began to fly past.

The food and barracks were bad and the former was supplemented by hot dogs, peanuts and beer in the canteen in the evenings and also after chumming up with the head cook we occasionally got a bacon and egg supper in the kitchen.

Examination time arrived and long was the candle that was burned at both ends during the final swot. Then the anxious days awaiting results. In the meantime we were all interviewed by a Commission Selection Board and I was lucky enough to be eventually honoured.

Then came the grand evening when our wings were pinned on our tunics. What a celebration was held that night!

We left Borden without regret on February 12, 1941 and proceeded to Rockliffe, ~~Exeter~~ Ottawa. We stayed there for some time and then were broken up and only John Roche, John Tully, Mark Sheldon, a few others and myself were left there. We had a week in Montreal on leave visiting the W.A.G.'s there. They were pleased to see us and we had a good moan together.

Then off again to a station which to us was the last outpost of the Empire, a place called Debert. Everybody ate in the one hall, the meal consisting usually of a mess which the cook called stew. We stayed in Debert for a month and then off on a train to Halifax. We were mysteriously whisked through the streets to a small pier and then taken in a launch to our ship the "Chrystales".

At last we were on our way to the war. The ship's personnel were good types and we were very soon comfortable. On March 11 we sailed in convoy with about 35 other ships, a sight I shall never forget.

On the sixth day out, an aeroplane was sighted but luckily it was a Hudson being ferried to England. Then a signal was received stating that the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were out raiding. From then on everybody slept in their clothes. On March 30 we awoke to find that the Chrystales had anchored in lovely Loch Ewe in Northern Scotland.

On April 1 we were taken off by a naval cutter and driven to Achnasheen where we boarded a train for Glasgow where we spent the night, seeing a black out for the first time also hearing the sirens. In the morning we caught the London train and eventually reached No. 3 P.R.C. After four days in which we again stated which branch of the service we ~~wished to join~~ wished to join a posting came through for myself and Mark Sheldon to go to No. 55 O.T.U., Usworth. Once more the kit bags were packed and off we went the next morning and reported in late in the evening.

Very soon after flying Masters for a few hours we soloed on Hurricanes and what a thrill it was, although the amount of "prangs" had us a little scared. After a few hours we gained confidence and then began to really enjoy flying.

On 5/5/41 our flight was sent to Ouston and here we ran up the hours in solid training. ~~Quickly~~ the ~~hours~~ weeks flew by and on 26/5/41 I was posted to No. 615 Squadron at Valley, Anglesey.

After seven terrific days in London I reported to Valley and was quickly taken into the fold and given all the "gin". No. 615 was "Churchill's own" and the County of Surrey squadron. It had fought in France and Belgium with Gloster Gladiators and then Hurricanes. There had been two Australians in the squadron before; Bill Fowler, now a prisoner of war in Germany and Wing Commander Holmwood who was shot down and after baling out was machine gunned by the Huns. From all accounts they were grand types. Also in the present lot were two very good types, Sergeants Don Roberts and Ron Hamilton. After four or five months of scrambles and convoys in a sandy drome we were completely brassed off and were on the verge of madness when a posting came thorough for the squadron to go to Manston to assume anti-flak duties.

On 11/9/41 we landed at Manston and quickly got all the "gin" We were to escort Blenheims at sea level and attack enemy convoys. Our job was to beat up the flak ships with cannon and m.g. fire and put them out of action.

To describe all the engagements we had would fill a book, but some of the entries in my log book will suffice for example :

"Attack convoy - 4000 ton supply ship sunk, 2 flak ships sunk, 5 others damaged. Running fight with 30 109E's. Hamilton (R.A.A.F.) missing. Milne crashed in sea. 2 Blenheims down and one badly damaged. We got 2 109E's and one damaged."

The trouble was that after attacking the ships very little ammunition was left to defend ourselves if we got into trouble.

Then another resulting from a sweep up the coast : "Found 8 E boats. Sunk 2, 2 more burning and the rest out of ~~action~~ action. Bags of flak".

When the shipping stopped coming through the channel we were put on to working with the new Hurricane bombers against factories and barge concentrations in Northern France and Belgium. We used often to go in low over the coast on our own and beat up some place for instance "Beat up Ostend basin, 2HE59's destroyed and one damaged. Gasometer, factory and barges ~~burning~~ burning. Gun posts stopped. Strickland and Potts missing. Ford badly wounded".

This went on week after week and although we were doing terrific damage to the Hun, the squadron was slowly but surely being whittle down until there were only five of the original lot left including the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader Gillam who was shot down into the drink and badly wounded. He was rescued by those wonderful people the Air Sea Rescue squad.

The replacements we were getting, although very good types were straight from O.T.U's and could hardly be expected to last long so on November 26, 1941 we were posted to Angle, South Wales where we flew long range Hurricanes on convoy patrols and sweeps round Southern Ireland. Also we made a couple of trips south to go to Brest.

Here we were informed that we are to go overseas so are now flat out building up the squadron again. I assumed command of 615 Squadron when S/Ldr Gillam departed for U.S.A. on a lecture tour in December 1941 and was awarded the D.F.C. in February, 1942.

So now after moving to Blairwood Common we are nearly ready to go overseas and carry on the fight.

BAR To D.F.C.

18/6/43.

414A.

Acting Flight Lieutenant David William McCORMACK, D.F.C., R.A.A.F., No. 615 Squadron
Flight Lieutenant McCormack has been actively engaged on operations in India since October, 1942. He has achieved excellent results on long distance sorties over difficult country. As a pilot and Flight Commander, his cool courage and skill have been invaluable to his squadron. In attacks on Mandalay and Akyab, despite considerable opposition he allowed no obstacle to deter him from completing his tasks successfully.

279
DFC

Acting Flight Lieutenant David William McCORMACK, Royal
Australian Air Force, No. 615 Squadron. This officer has
carried out a large number of operational sorties, many of which
have been low level attacks on objectives in Belgium and Northern
France. He has at all times displayed the greatest determination
in the face of enemy fire, pressing home his attacks to the utmost.
On one occasion, although wounded by enemy fire, Flight Lieutenant
McCormack descended to almost ground level to achieve success.
He has set an inspiring example to all.

6 Feb 1942

R.A.F. AWARDS

Attacks on Objectives in France

The King has approved the following awards in recognition of gallantry displayed in flying operations against the enemy:—

DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

Sq. Ldr. John Darwen, No. 152 Squadron, has led his squadron, and sometimes a wing, on numerous sorties against enemy ports, industrial centres, and shipping. Throughout these operations, which have called for a high degree of skill and determination, Sq. Ldr. Darwen has displayed courageous leadership and he has undoubtedly contributed materially to the successes achieved. He has destroyed one and damaged four hostile aircraft.

Actg. Sq. Ldr. Cyril Norman Stanley Campbell, No. 72 Squadron, has taken part in operational flying since the war began. He took part in air operations in France from September, 1939, to May, 1940. Since his return to this country Sq. Ldr. Campbell has performed excellent work both in operational flying and as an instructor. He has led the squadron on several sorties and his excellent leadership and initiative displayed on all occasions has contributed materially to the successes achieved. He has also performed valuable work in connection with rescuing pilots from the sea, often remaining on patrol in the vicinity in spite of the presence of enemy fighters. Sq. Ldr. Campbell has destroyed one enemy fighter and probably destroyed another.

Actg. F/Lt. David William McCormack, R.A.F., No. 615 Squadron, has carried out a large number of operational sorties, many of which have been low-level attacks on objectives in Belgium and Northern France. He has at all times displayed the greatest determination in the face of enemy fire, pressing home his attacks to the utmost. On one occasion, although wounded by enemy fire, F/Lt. McCormack descended almost to ground level to achieve success. He has set an inspiring example to all.

F/O Francis Howard Williams, R.A.F.V.R., No. 152 Squadron, has taken part in numerous escorts to bomber formations which have attacked enemy shipping and important land targets. These operations include three daylight raids on Brest and low-level attacks on Rotterdam, Ymuiden, and Alkmaar. Throughout, F/O Williams has shown great leadership, courage, and devotion to duty.

DISTINGUISHED FLYING MEDAL

Sgt. Arthur Charles Spencer, No. 101 Squadron, one night in January, 1942, was the navigator-bomb-aimer of an aircraft which successfully attacked Hamburg. Bombs were released over the target but the aircraft was hit by enemy fire and Sgt. Spencer received a wound in the left thigh. Although in great pain he continued his navigational duties; he also set down courses for use in case he collapsed. When it was found that all the bombs had not been released he dragged himself to the bomb-aimer's position and jettisoned the remaining bombs. Showing great fortitude, Sgt. Spencer then navigated the aircraft safely back to this country.

Personal file

He Leads "Churchill's Own" Fighters

From JAMES STUART
Evening Standard Air Reporter

"Churchill's Own," the Auxiliary Air Force fighter squadron of which the Prime Minister is honorary Air Commodore, which is now on the Burma front, has an Australian as its squadron commander—Squadron Leader David W. McCormack, D.F.C. and Bar, of the Royal Australian Air Force.

McCormack, who comes from Melbourne, first saw action in this country with the Premier's unit. In those days the squadron was largely engaged in "beating up" German flak ships in the North Sea, and attacking formations of E-boats. In one engagement they sank two of an E-boat flotilla, left one in flames and damaged five others.

Afterwards, with another squadron, McCormack led a fighter formation against the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau in the dash up Channel in February 1942.

Later he rejoined "Churchill's Own" in India, and led many attacks over Burma, winning the Bar to the D.F.C. he had won earlier in England. Then he had a short spell as C.O. of a fighter training unit but has now returned to his old squadron as commanding officer.



S/Ldr. D. W.
McCormack

No 615 Sq. ~~RAF~~ RAF

Evening Standard.
31/3/44.

RAF Bulletin
NO 342 28
1/2/44.

AUST/400232 FLIGHT LIEUTENANT D.W. McCORMACK, D.F.C.

I applied for enlistment as air crew on October 12, 1939 and was medically examined on February 13, 1940, passed fit and after an interview placed on the reserve.

After months of weary waiting I was called up on July 21. Reported to Melbourne, sworn in and entrained for No. 2 I.T.S., BRADFIELD PARK, N.S.W. in company with Charlie Manning, Jim Falkiner and others.

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