

AWM 65

[767]

COLLIER, KENNETH ROY

422424

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

Missing 5-12-44

279

On 24/6/44 was  
at 71 Sq. 185  
Group (TAF).

ROY AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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

SURNAME... COLLIER ..... NUMBER... 422424 .....

CHRISTIAN NAMES... Kenneth Roy .....

AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING... P/O 7/0 Pilot .....

DEGREES ETC.....

DATE OF BIRTH... 5-11-20 ..... PLACE... Glebe Sydney Aust. .....

EDUCATED... Petersham I.H.S. Fort St. H.S. .....

DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE... 22-5-42 .....

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE... N.A. .....

PLACES OF TRAINING... R.I.T.S. - B.E.F.T.S. - 145.F.T.S (Canada) - 1.O.T.U (Canada) .....

CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES... Meat Inspector .....

.....

SPORTS (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC... N.N.S.I.S.C (Surf Club) .....

#9 Boys Club (Balmain Sydney Aust) - B.C.B. (Football) .....

FATHER... N.A. .....

WIFE.....

HOME ADDRESS.....

SIGNATURE... K. Collier .....

DATE... 17-10-43 .....

DATE OF REBAPTISATION... 15-1-43 .....

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS.....

CATEGORY..... INTERVIEWS.....

RADIO..... OTHER REFERENCES.....

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ROYAL AIR FORCE.

Page.....1

Date.....20.9.45

No. . . . . 54 . . . . . Group.

## PERSONNEL OCCURRENCE REPORT - R.A.A.F.

## Section 1 - Officers.

Entry	Rank	Name	Number	Branch	Date of Effect	Nature of Occurrence
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ACTING RANKS.

### "B" ATTACHMENTS.

1) P/O S.H. JOHNSON AUS. 427362 M.V.B. 21.9.43. Attached to R.M.A.F.  
" M.F. MICHAM " 426639 " " Overseas Headquarters  
w.o.f. date stated for  
duty with Welfare  
Section. Auth: O.C. Unit

# "E" LEAVE

2) P/O E.J. COLLIS. ANS.423644. 16W.B. 17.9.43. Recalled from leave on date stated. Returned 18.9.43. (3 days unexpired).

3) P/O. T.R. LOURY      AUS.426628    NAV.B. 17.9.43. Recalled from leave on  
date stated. (5 days  
unexpired).

4) F/O. P.N. BIGHAM      AHS.413415    NAV.B. 19.9.43. Recalled from leave on  
date stated. (2 days  
unexpired)

#### IV. HOSPITALS.

5) P/O N.H. NIXON      AUS.4717      PILOT. 13.9.43. Dis. from R.A.F.  
Medical Rehabilitation  
Centre, Loughborough  
on date stated.  
Auth: Rehabilitation  
Unit's P.O.R. Serial  
No. 36 dated 14.9.43.

### "G" PROMOTIONS.

6)	P/O	K. F. NOLAN	AUS. 420987	WALG.	1.8.43.	Promoted to the rank of
"	"	D. F. PARSONS	" 408006	W.A.V.B.	7.7.43.	Temporary Flying Officer
"	"	P.D. RIZOLLO	" 414958	WALG.	1.8.43.	v.o.f. date stated
"	"	S.G. TUCKETT	" 425076	PILOT.	30.6.43.	Auth: A.M. Letter no 577044/43/3.7.D/2 dated 15.9.43.

Continued.....2

*Miscellaneous*

*21 June 44*

21674

FOR AUSTRALIAN PAPERS ONLY

21.7.44

ATTN 113

UNION'S PROMISE TO AUSTRALIAN PILOT

The Australian pilot who prevented a flying bomb from falling on a town by turning it over with his wingtip when he ran out of ammunition, and caused it to fall out of control and explode in open country, has received many letters of thanks from residents of the town. *23 June 44*

One letter from a Southern England branch of the National Union of Railwaymen promised that railwaymen would do all they could to hasten the end of the war so the Australian could return to his "folks across the seas".

Flying Officer K. R. Collier, <sup>9153 422424</sup> of Balmain, New South Wales, the pilot, is grateful for the kind messages but declares that he did not merit the praise in the letters. The story of what happened that day came not from the taciturn Collier but from scores of eyewitnesses in the town who saw it happen.

When he received the letter from the N.U.R., Collier said, "I have some idea of what the railwaymen and women too in England and at home are doing and the long hours they are working to speed the end of this war. I should be thanking them, not them thanking me."

The letter from the N.U.R. reads:

"It is the unanimous wish of my members that I convey our most heartfelt thanks to you for all you did recently when an enemy 'jitterbug' was brought down in our neighbourhood.

"We should like you to know that we are aware that it was the courage and initiative of yourself that resulted in so many lives and so much property being saved from total destruction."

After declaring that they were mentioning this in their official records, the Union added: "There is little we can do to repay you for what you did, but if good wishes can help then the time will not be long before you are reunited with your folks across the seas and we railwaymen promise to do all we can to hasten this."

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COPY

"WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN"

'A Close up of the Flying Bomb'

by

Aus. 422424 F/O KEN COLLIER (Blebe)

(91 Sqdn. R.A.F.)

PRODUCED BY MRS. E.J. DAVY

CENSORED BY AIR MINISTRY - P.R.4

& J. STURGE-WHITING & G. LOOKER

TRANSMISSION: Pacific Service, Tuesday September 12th, 1944  
0515-0530 GMT.

RECORDED ON DOX 38917 Repeated at request of ABC at 0745 G.M.T. 22/3/44  
DURATION: 11'10"

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENT: This is London calling in the Pacific Service.  
"WITH THE AUSTRALIANS IN BRITAIN" - 'A Closeup of the Flying Bomb'.  
Flying Officer Ken Collier of Sydney was the first to destroy a flying bomb by pushing it over. At such close quarters he had an excellent view of it, and has been able to give us this very detailed description. Flying Officer Ken Collier...

The first we heard of the "flying blow lumps" - that's our name for the flying bomb, or doodlebug, or whatever you like to call it, was one morning at dawn. We were scheduled for patrol, and were having an early breakfast. One of the night fighter boys had just come in from a night patrol. He rushed into the mess and said: "The rocket jobs are coming over". We asked him what they were like - did anyone clobber any? He said: "No, we're not allowed to touch them yet because they're not sure what'll happen when we hit them. All we can see is a big flame". We heard a funny noise just afterwards and one of these things came over - fairly low and pretty fast; we saw the flame too, it was coming from its tail. A couple of our chaps screamed for it. About half-an-hour later one chap returned - he was our Flight Commander as a matter of fact - and beat the aerodrome up - dived over it you know, as a sign that he'd good news.

We rushed over to see what luck he'd had. He'd shot one down alright! We wanted to know what happened, what it was like, and how easy it was. It appeared he hadn't got the one we'd seen go over. I had vanished in cloud by the time he was airborne. But he chased another; had a poop at it from 300 yards, and hit it. He told us it rolled over and went down - and that it exploded as it hit the ground. He felt no reaction in his own aircraft at all. Later on we found that it wasn't safe to fire from closer than 300 yards - if the bomb exploded in the air you'd get a bit shaken up by it. We found out for ourselves that it was no good just sitting in and taking off when we heard one coming - the bombs were too fast and by the time we'd got up we'd lost them. So we started standing Patrols. By this time a regular technique had been worked out for dealing with the bombs. There are four lines of defence. The fighter boys had a go at them over the Channel; then they came to a belt of ack ack along the coast; after this there were more fighters (that was our hunting ground); and then there were the balloons.

We could see the bombs coming across, through the flak on the coast, and were often sitting pretty, just in the right position to get one when the flak would blow it up before we had our chance. This would make us pretty mad as there is keen competition between the ack ack boys and ourselves. We had a particular area to patrol, and it extended from the gun belt back to our fourth line of defence - the balloon barrage. If we hadn't got our bomb by the time it got into the balloon area, we had to give up.

One day we were all standing outside watching one coming straight at the aerodrome with a fighter behind it. The fighter began firing and we realised that if he got it it would just about fall on our drome. Everybody looked at each other and someone said "Don't let's be heroes". There was a general scatter and we all dived for the nearest ditch. He did get it and it landed about half a mile the other side of the drome. The R.A.F. Spitfire squadron I'm attached to is a mixed

onq. We've got Frenchmen, New Zealanders, Canadians, English, a Scot, a chap from Malaya and a Belgian. Our Intelligence Officer comes from the Argentine, and in the ground crew there are two Nigerians. Before the army captured so many of the flying bomb launching platforms we were kept pretty busy and as usual the ground crew were hardest worked of all keeping the aircraft serviceable.

The total number of flying blowlamps extinguished by our squadron was about 170. Everyone in the squadron got some. The C.O. was top scorer with 25. Several others had over ten.

My most exciting experience was one day when we'd been doing rather a dull patrol. In the evening when we were just about ready to land I saw a doodle-bug come in over the coast. I chased it, and was gradually catching up on it. I kept firing short bursts...one of these must have hit it, for it slowed down and I caught it up fairly easily. By this time I'd used up all my ammunition. This made me a little mad, I must admit. I was determined not to let it get away at this stage of the game.

I came up along side it - on the right - and had a look at it. It looked rather sinister. What struck me first was that the stove-pipe on top was white-hot. It was dusk, and the flame shooting out at the back was rather bright - that gave it an eerie look. I was close enough to read the German writing on the side. I thought at the time it might mean "Use no hooks" or something like that. I still don't really know what it means. There weren't any other markings on it - no swastikas or black crosses. The top part of the bomb was a bronze colour. The under side was pale blue...I expect that's probably to make it blend with the sky, when there is any blue sky in England. The wings were rather square and stubby. There's a very solid look about them like a normal aircraft. The body was very slim and cigar-shaped. It was round, and tapered to a point at the finish. The nose was pointed too. The propulsion unit was set up on the rear end and there were two little elevators in the tail plane. These elevators kept wiggling. I expect that was the gyro-pilot trying to keep it flying on its set course. It seemed to get along straight and level, as if nothing on heaven or earth would move it from its course, or could worry the old gyro-pilot.

It gave me a feeling of powerlessness to sit there watching it travel on and not be able to stop it. The whole thing seemed to get along with a little shuddering effect - probably caused by the crude explosions in the propulsion unit. I couldn't hear any noise from it, of course, because I had a helmet on and there was the sound of my own aircraft.

I couldn't see where I'd hit it and it seemed to be going along quite O.K. I had a good look at the thing and then thought about how I could attack it. I thought I'd try out an idea I had to upset the gyro-mechanism. Then the flying-bomb would be out of control. I took a jab at the elevators with my wing, but got uncomfortably close to the flame so hastily moved out a bit. I decided I couldn't do much that way, and tried instead to manoeuvre my own wing under the wing of the flying bomb. But I suddenly noticed the wing of the bomb was red...so I moved again quickly, thinking it was red hot. Then I realised that it was the reflection of the red navigation light on my own wing. So I manoeuvred the position once more, with the bomb's wing resting on mine. I tipped my wing up and tilted the bomb until it slipped off and disappeared underneath me. That gave me a bit of a shock. I immediately hauled back on the stick and moved away.

Seeing that nothing spectacular had happened, and it hadn't decided to blow up when I touched it, I got a bit more confident. I decided I hadn't tipped it up to the angle required to topple normal gyros so I'd have another shot at it. I formed again, got my wing under it as before, only a bit further under to get better leverage. I tilted it slowly till I thought I had it over far enough, then gave it a final push and moved away to see what happened. Much to my delight it rolled over on its back and spiralled down. The flame went out before it got to the ground, and it exploded in a field near a town. There was a brilliant flash. I felt absolutely jubilant and a bit staggered - I think I said to myself "Gee - it can be done that way".

When these things go off you can see a ring of blast spreading out like a single ripple on water. It looks different from an ordinary bomb explosion - then you see just a flash and a puff of smoke. But with this you can see the blast, and it leaves a pall of black smoke. To me up there it looked about as big as one of the old Moreton Bay Pigs in the Domain in Sydney.

/This



This takes a good time in the telling, but really it was all over in a couple of minutes.

As soon as I'd seen it explode I told the controller on the ground over the R.T. that I'd just tipped one over. He sounded a bit astounded and replied "Please say again". So I told him again and he answered "Good show. Are you going to pancake now?". I was feeling pretty cocky so replied that I'd no more ammo but plenty of petrol so thought I'd look for a few more to tip over. Someone else chipped in on the R.T. and said "What a line".

But it was getting dark by then so I went home. The Intelligence Officer walked up to the kite (it wasn't mine that day - I'd borrowed someone else's) and asked if I'd had any luck. When I told him I'd tipped one with my wing, he said: "Go away. Don't kid me". I said: "Sure I did. Take a look at the wing tip; there should be some paint off". There was too. Everyone seemed to be quite happy about the incident except the chap who owned the aircraft.

That isn't the orthodox way of dealing with these things, of course, although a few others have been brought down in the same way. The usual way is to shoot them down. And now, the days of the flying bomb seem to be just about over. The one sure way to finish them is to capture their bases, and the army are busy on that.

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CLOSING ANNOUNCEMENT: That was a recorded talk by Flying Officer Ken Collier of Sydney.

On September 7, Mr. Duncan Sandys, M.P., chairman of the Flying Bomb Counter-measures Committee, announced that, with the possible exception of a few last shots, the Battle of London was over. War on Hitler's secret weapon V1 had been in progress for eighteen months. From information supplied by our intelligence services, it had been possible for concentrated air raids to be made during that time on the experimental station at Peenemünde, and on many of the skillfully camouflaged launching sites and storage depots. Had it not been for these measures, the attack would have begun sooner and been far heavier. As it was, the London district and certain areas of Southern England had been subjected to bombardment for eighty days, but the battle had eventually been won. Deepest gratitude is due to the men and women of Anti-Aircraft Command, and to British, Dominion and Allied airmen whose unceasing vigilance, gallantry and sacrifice saved many lives.

In a recent broadcast, Flying Officer KEN COLLIER, of Sydney, Australia, a fighter pilot in the R.A.A.F., told how, on one occasion when attacking a flying bomb,

## He Tipped It Out of the Sky

Flying Officer/Collier



THE first we heard of the 'flying blowlamp'—that is our name for the flying bomb or doodlebug—was one morning at dawn. We were scheduled for patrol, and were having an early breakfast. One of the night fighter boys had just come in from a night patrol. He rushed into the mess and said: 'The rocket jets are coming over.' We asked him what they were like—did anyone clobber any? He said: 'No, we're not allowed to touch them yet because they're not sure what'll happen when we hit them. All we can see is a big flame.'

We heard a funny noise just afterwards and one of these things came over, fairly low and pretty fast; we saw the flame too, it was coming from the tail. A couple of our chaps scrambled for it. About half-an-hour later one chap returned—he was our flight commander as a matter of fact—and he dived over the aerodrome as a sign that he had good news.

We rushed over to see what luck he had had, and found that he had shot one down all right! We wanted to know what happened, what it was like, and how easy it was. It appeared he hadn't got the one we'd seen go over. It had vanished in cloud by the time he was airborne; but he chased another, had a pop at it from 300 yards, and hit it. He told us it rolled over and went down, exploding as it hit the ground. He felt no reaction in his own aircraft at all.

Later on we found that it was safe to fire from closer than 300 yards as, if the bomb exploded in the air, you would get a bit shaken up by it. We found out for ourselves that it was no good just sitting in and taking off when we heard one coming—the bombs were too fast and by the time we had got up we had lost them.

### 'That Was Our Hunting Ground'

So we started standing patrols. By this time a regular technique had been worked out for dealing with the bombs. There were four lines of defence. The fighter boys had a go at them over the Channel; then they came to a belt of anti-aircraft guns along the coast; after this there were more fighters—that was our hunting ground—and then there were the balloons.

We could see the bombs coming across, through the flak on the coast, and were often sitting pretty, just in the right position to get one, when the flak would shoot it up before we had our chance. This would make us pretty mad as there is keen competition between the anti-aircraft boys and ourselves. We had a particular area to patrol, and it extended from the sun belt back to our fourth line of defence—the balloon barrage. If we hadn't got our bomb by the time it got into the balloon area, we had to give up.

The R.A.F. Spitfire squadron I am attached to is a mixed one. We have Frenchmen, New Zealanders, Canadians, English, a Scot, a chap from Malaya and a Belgian. Our intelligence officer comes from the Argentine, and in the ground crew there are two Nigerians. Before the army captured so many of the flying bomb launching platforms we were kept pretty busy and the ground crew were hardest worked of all, keeping the aircraft serviceable.

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I came up alongside it—on the right—and had a look at it. It looked rather sinister. What struck me first was that the stove-pipe on top was white-hot. It was dark, and the flame shooting out at the back was rather bright, which gave it an eerie look. I was close enough to read the German writing on the side. I thought at the time it might mean 'Use no hooks' or something like that. I still don't really know what it means. There were no other markings on it—no swastikas or black crosses. The top part of the bomb was a bronze colour; the

under side was pale blue—probably to make it blend with the sky, when there is any blue sky in England. The wings were rather square and stubby.

There was a very solid look about them. They looked very strange because they had no ailerons like a normal aircraft. The body was very slim and cigar-shaped. It was round, and tapered to a point at the finish. The nose was pointed too. The propulsion unit was set up on the rear end and there were two little elevators on the tail plane. These elevators kept wiggling. I expect that was the gyro-pilot trying to keep it flying on its set course. It seemed to get along straight and level, as if nothing in heaven or earth would move it from its course.

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### 'It Leaves a Pall of Black Smoke'

When these things go off you can see a ring of blast spreading out like a single ripple on water. It looks different from an ordinary bomb explosion—then you see just a flash and a puff of smoke. But with this you can see the blast, and it leaves a pall of black smoke. It was all over in a couple of seconds.

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That isn't the orthodox way of doing with these things, of course, although a few others have been brought down in the same way. The usual way is to shoot them down. And now, the days of the flying bomb seem to be just about over. The one sure way to finish them is to capture their bases, and the army is busy on that. (Broadcast in the BBC's *Pacific Service*)

There are virtually no carpets being produced just now as war needs come first, but plans have been made in many of our textile and carpet factories. After the war you will see the hand-workers playing their part in a number of ways.

In their little country workshops you will find weavers and spinners making many experiments designed to rid machine-made goods of much of their 'sameness.' True to their old tradition of working in harmony with contemporary architecture, they will be found devoting their time to experimenting with synthetic materials and in trying to improve colour renderings.

I do not mind prophesying that they will do much. Already our weavers have raised their work from a peasant craft to a highly scientific art. By their study of both foreign and home architecture and of overseas styles and methods, they have learnt to blend many cultural ideas into a single motif—a motif that is individual, refreshing and modern, yet in keeping with present day needs. They have already done that in their hand-work; they will do the same for the machine; and I think you will agree that individuality is more necessary than ever these days.

With this idea in mind, then, they can try out their new materials and their new colours on their old hand-looms, and they can discard any features that prove unsuitable when they come to make up their design. In that way they can be sure of producing something that is original, yet something that is also practical; something that is possible for the giant machines of our mills and carpet factories to copy.

Then there is the question of dress. Many of London's leading fashion houses are now making greater use of our hand fabric printers to help them bring more life into their models. These women are working to a centuries-old tradition. They cut wood-blocks from their designs, prepare their colours, and beat out their patterns on to material lengths by means of mallets. Virtually, they are doing much the same work as the monks who set the fashion for making and binding leather books; the principles are the same.

All the beautiful chintzes of earlier periods were made this way, until machine methods all but ended the craft. Now the craft is being revived to help the machine that nearly spelt its end. An ironical thought, perhaps, but it does show, I think, that we are getting a better sense of balance into our production. I do not wish to imply that the fashion houses are turning to hand methods of production. On the contrary, they will continue to use their magnificent plant and machinery—they will probably develop even better machinery in time; but they do realise that they must introduce the individuality of the hand-workers as well.

### **Essence of British Craftsmanship**

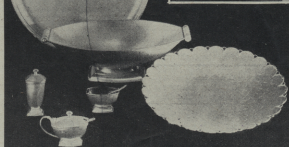
Then, again, many furnishing firms are planning to employ craftsmen of the old school to make their 'originals.' Like the weavers, they will work in harmony with architecture. They may base some of their ideas on some of our past masters like Chippendale, Sheraton or Hepplewhite. At any rate, they will aim at producing furniture on traditional lines. That is to say, they will see to it that their beauty lies in their graceful execution rather than in any deliberate attempt at decoration. That is the essence of British craftsmanship.

Now you might think that the same results could equally well be obtained simply by employing an artist to make the designs and letting him pass on his blue-prints to the factories; but far from it. That has been tried time and time again in most of our industries, and it just does not work. I repeat what I said earlier, that experience has shown it is because designs have so often been executed by men without a practical knowledge either of the particular craft or of its basic material, that machine-made goods have tended to become inferior to the hand-made. The craftsman must control production.

You probably do not realise it, but few of our craftsmen ever work to a blue-print. Even the decorative wrought iron-workers only make the roughest of pencil sketches. They trust to their eye and their knowledge of their metal to help them get their fine proportions; more often than not the finished article differs considerably from the original sketch. On the other hand, once the craftsman has fashioned his piece to his complete satisfaction, the detailed drawings can be made from it, and from those drawings the same article can be reproduced by machinery in any numbers



*Earthenware flower-pots glazed in pastel colours. The decorated pieces were painted by Duncan Grant. Although transfer and litho printing is often used, a great deal of china and pottery is still hand-decorated as well as being hand-thrown*



*Modern silverware, designed by artist-craftsmen, but factory produced*

you like without losing in the make-up. Indeed, much of the superb wrought-iron work in our homes today was designed in our village smithies and then wrought in the foundries.

I have just time for a word about decoration. It is here that the craftsman is having, perhaps, his most important influence on machine production. I mentioned earlier that articles designed by artists sometimes had a rather artificial appearance. That is because he adds his decoration with the sole object of making his piece look nice. The craftsman has a very different line of thought. He fits his decoration to serve some functional purpose, as well and that is why his work always looks natural.

Return for a moment to the silversmith. If he is making a teapot, he will add his decoration at the joins; he will do this with the double object of hiding them and of giving greater strength to a naturally weak spot. It is just the same with the glass-maker, who will cut his glass or add his ornamental tears only in places designed to give a better grip to the drinker.

You can see, then, that the hand-craftsman has an extremely important influence to impart to the machine. More and more of our industrialists are growing to realise it. They are acting upon it, too. The revolution is still in its infancy, but it is growing and will affect us all in time.



*A leading English weaver makes material by hand for the machine to copy*



June 26, 1944

The R.A.A.F. in the InvasionThird WeekAUSTRALIAN BOMBERS AND FIGHTERS  
ATTACK FLYING BOMBS

Attacks on flying bomb installations and the bombs themselves have been the outstanding feature of the Royal Australian Air Force's part in the third week of the invasion.

Australian heavy bombers attacked installations in the Pas de Calais twice on Saturday as part of strong forces despatched by Bomber Command. One force of Halifaxes seemed to have caught the Germans by surprise. All was quiet when the attack began, and it was only after a heavy concentration of bombs had gone down that the enemy began firing. There were several explosions in the target area before the attack came to an end, one of them going off in a very vivid yellow flash. During the flight the crews saw flying bombs coming from the direction of France. An airgunner saw one of them blown up on the way.

Lancasters crews which attacked another installation reported that the target area was well marked by the Path Finder Force (which includes many R.A.A.F. men), and that the attack appeared to have been very well concentrated.

Several flying bombs have been intercepted over or near the Channel and destroyed by R.A.A.F. men serving with Britain-based Tempest and Spitfire squadrons. One at least has shot down two--Flight Sergeant D. Mackerras, of Pymble, New South Wales, a Tempest pilot who has also shared in the destruction of at least one other with a R.A.F. pilot. Other successful chasers of the "Doodlebug" are Warrant Officer R. Adcock, of Rozman, New South Wales, and Flight Sergeant H.J. Bailey, of Booborowie, South Australia (each of whom has shot one and shared in destroying another), and Flight Lieutenant George R. Houston, of Geraldton, Western Australia.

One R.A.A.F. fighter pilot serving in a R.A.F. squadron dealt with a flying bomb by upsetting it with his wing-tip. He is Flying Officer Kenneth Collier, of Glebe, New South Wales. He was one of three pilots pursuing the bomb. When its engines had been silenced he drew level with it, then tipped it on its side with his wing-tip, diverting its downward course. It did little harm when it fell.

R.A.A.F. men in bomber crews have reported seeing flying bombs travelling toward southern England. A typical report comes from an Australian Lancaster pilot who, returning from an attack on a German airfield, saw, in the

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## R.A.A.F. in the Invasion---2

starlight, a "formation" of the flying bombs travelling ahead, and slightly below, toward London. They were about just above a layer of cloud, travelling at a seemingly uniform speed at about the same height. The bombs passed from view beyond the clouds. They were never within reach of the Lancaster's guns.

The Australian Mosquito night fighters have been engaged principally on other work, but their pilots, too, have seen the bombs crossing the Channel, and in some instances have been able to open fire on them, although no successes have yet been confirmed. One formation of R.A.A.F. Mosquitos reported seeing numbers of them spread out over a two-mile front, heading north, and watching them caught by the English shore searchlights and A.A. fire.

The R.A.A.F. Mosquito fighter-bombers played an important part in the destruction of flying bomb installations early this year when the R.A.A.F. began its attacks on the sites. They made many attacks on the installations in January, February and March, bombing from only 50ft. to make sure of hitting the small targets. At times they made two sorties in a day in these attacks. The low flying brought its dangers from flak, and the aircraft were hit often, but the attacks were pressed home. British and New Zealand squadrons flew with the R.A.A.F.

As well as continuing these attacks on the flying bomb installations, the R.A.A.F. fighter-bombers carried out several other attacks in enemy territory during the week, together with the R.A.A.F. heavy-bomber units.

On Wednesday night they attacked targets in Normandy, and the same night R.A.A.F. Lancasters attacked targets in the Ruhr. Next night the fighter-bombers strafed and bombed objectives behind the German lines at Dreux, while the Lancasters added their weight to Bomber Command's attack on Rheims. On Friday night the Mosquitos bombed and strafed railway targets in France and a permanent enemy encampment in a wood. Early on Saturday Australian Lancasters formed part of a force which attacked railway targets in France again. They were about 250 miles south of the main battlefield, and ~~wuzzzzz~~ the attacks were designed to check the movement of reinforcements at an early stage in their struggle to reach Normandy. The railway marshalling yards at Saintes, to the north of Bordeaux and at Limoges were bombed in order to destroy large concentrations of rolling-stock as well as to cut main lines. Limoges was the Australians' target.

Both attacks took place about 2 a.m.--the darkest hour--and it was not

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R.A.A.F. in the Invasion--3

until past 6 a.m. that the last aircraft returned to base. Crews reported that the weather was clear over both targets, and that the bombing had been highly concentrated.

On Saturday night the Australian fighter-bombers, making an armed reconnaissance to the south-west of Paris, shot up four enemy trucks and two armoured fighting vehicles between Argentan and Dreux. The same aircraft attacked motor transport moving toward Dreux. One vehicle was left in flames and others damaged. The fighter-bombers remained away from their main base throughout the day, operating on successive sorties from advanced bases in France.

Enemy road and rail junctions were bombed and road convoys and German troop encampments situated in woods were strafed. Pilots reported a successful attack on the railway yards at Meziidon, where fires were left burning. A motor vehicle was seen to catch fire and explode.

The Luftwaffe has been difficult to meet, but during the week another enemy aircraft was destroyed by the guns of an Australian Lancaster, bringing the R.A.A.F. squadrons' post-invasion score of kills to 19. This does not include successes by R.A.A.F. men serving in R.A.F. or other Dominion squadrons.

Australian Spitfires provided low cover over the invasion area through the week and, with the Coastal Command R.A.A.F. Sunderlands, carried out protective patrols, while R.A.A.F. Beaufighters continued their watch on enemy shipping moves.

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R.A.A.F. Release No. 602.

June 27, 1944.

Note to Provincial Newspaper Editors:-

These reviews are supplied for use as desired, without acknowledgment. It is suggested that they may provide a regular feature for your journal, and help tell more widely the story of the R.A.A.F., in the European theatre. If desired, of course, any section of the review may be used as an individual news item. It is pointed out that some of the items may already have been published in sections of the Australian Metropolitan Press; these reviews are designed to cover news-items which, because of wartime limitations, may not have been cabled to Australia.

With the

R.A.A.F. OVER EUROPE

(By Air Mail from London)

More stories of Australian airmen operating in the European theatre --- many of whom are directly engaged in the western and southern Continental invasions --- are told in this latest budget of R.A.A.F. news from London.

UPSET FLYING BOMB WITH WING

An R.A.A.F. fighter pilot serving in a R.A.F. squadron dealt with one of the flying bombs aimed at London by upsetting it with his wing-tip. He is Flying Officer Kenneth Collier, of Glebe, New South Wales. He was one of three pilots pursuing the bomb. When its engines had been silenced he drew level with it, then tipped it on its side with his wing-tip, diverting its downward course. It did little harm when it fell.

Among R.A.A.F. men in bomber crews who have reported seeing the bombs flying toward southern England is S/Ldr. H.F. Slade, a Lancaster pilot who, returning from an attack on a German airfield, saw, in the starlight, a "formation" of the flying bombs travelling ahead, and slightly below, toward London. They were just above a layer of cloud, travelling at a seemingly uniform speed at about the same height. The bombs passed from view beyond the clouds. They were never within reach of the Lancaster's guns. Squadron Leader Slade was born in Wales, but joined the R.A.A.F. in Australia, where for a time he was a public works contractor at Bourke, New South Wales.

Within the first 10 days of the flying bomb innovation, several of them were destroyed over or near the Channel by R.A.A.F. men serving with Tempest and Spitfire squadrons. Flight Sergeant D. Mackerras, of Fybble, New South Wales, a Tempest pilot, was among those who destroyed two, and he shared also in destroying at least one other. Other successful chasers of the "Doodlebug" were Warrant Officer R. Adcock, of Mosman, New South Wales; Flight Sergeant H.J. Bailey, of Booborowie, South Australia (each of whom has shot one and shared in destroying another); and Flight Lieutenant George R. Houston, of Geraldton, Western Australia.

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## R.A.A.F. Over Europe - 2

F/Sgt. McKerras was born at Camperdown, Victoria, on November 7, 1920 educated at Ultimo Technical School, and joined the R.A.A.F. on May 22, 1942. He was a member of the North Bondi Surf Club.

### FILES WITH COAL-BLACK ENGINEER.

S/Ldr. H.F. Slade D.F.C., a Welshman who was a New South Wales works contractor before he joined the R.A.A.F. in July, 1941, nowadays pilots a Britain-based Lancaster with a coal-black negro engineer sitting near him.

He is Warrant Officer B.L.I. Johnson, a man of pure African negro stock, who came from the Bahamas to join the R.A.A.F. very soon after the war began. He remustered from ground to air crew when the flight engineer mustering was introduced, and has flown with Slade ever since the Penarth-born R.A.A.F. pilot chose his crew late in 1943.

Slade became a squadron leader a few days ago. Eight and a half months ago he was a flight sergeant. In Australia he lived at Bourke, New South Wales.

### PILOT IN PARACHUTE DRAM.

Flung from his Halifax when it suddenly turned upside down, F/Lt. B.J. MacDermott, pilot, of Sydney, reached for the rip-cord of his parachute and found that it was not on his chest. Hurling toward the ground, he remembered that his parachute had been clipped to his harness, and, looking up, saw the pack, still unpulled, following him down. The long straps of the harness, which usually pull out to their full length only when the parachute opens, had jerked up above his head. Hauling on the straps to bring the parachute within reach, he managed to seize and pull the rip-cord, and floated down to safety.

The incident occurred after a bombing operation over Achres, France. Something went wrong with the controls, and when over England MacDermott ordered the crew to bale out near an airfield. MacDermott turned the aircraft toward the sea, but it dived, turned on its back, and threw him out. The Halifax crashed harmlessly in a field.

### D.S.O. FOR "LAST TRIP" SCHERF.

A D.S.O. has been awarded Squadron Leader Charles C. Scherf, D.F.C. and Bar, of Emuville, the New South Wales Mosquito intruder pilot, who, serving with a R.C.A.F. squadron in Britain, since January 27 destroyed 23 enemy aircraft in four months.

When he had completed his tours he was allotted the post of Intruder Controller, and was thus grounded; but one day he took time off for "one last trip" with the squadron and on that trip he destroyed two enemy aircraft in the air and three on the ground. They called him "Last Trip" Scherf after that.

Later he went back for two more day-off operations, and when finally he announced he had definitely finished operational flying he had a "spare time" score of eight destroyed in the air as well as many on the ground. Five of the eight were shot down in 15 minutes on his last trip --- four in five minutes.

His grand total is 14½ destroyed in the air and nine on the ground, as well as many damaged.

Squadron Leader Scherf has a wife and two young children in Australia. He was born on May 17, 1917, at Emuville, New South Wales, and educated at Emuville and Traveler public schools, N.S.W. He was a grazier before he joined the Royal Australian Air Force on September 12, 1941. He was trained at Armidale and Maitland, N.S.W. and embarked for Britain on October 17, 1942.