

AWM 65

[3952]

NICHOLSON, BRYAN WALMSLEY

407195

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES  
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

# ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

## OFFICERS & AIR CREWS

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

SURNAME... NICHOLSON ..... NUMBER... Aus. 407195 .....  
 CHRISTIAN NAMES... BRYAN WALMSLEY .....  
 AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING... FLYING OFFICER FLY OBSERVER .....  
 DEGREES, DECORATIONS ETC. ....  
 PRESENT APPOINTMENT AND LOCATION... 21 OTU Marlow on Marlow 115 SQUADRON MARHAM NORFOLK .....  
 DATE OF BIRTH... 24th JULY 1911 ..... PLACE... THORNEYBURN NORTHUMBERLAND ENG. .....  
 EDUCATED... ORLETON SCHOOL SCARBOROUGH YORKS. - SCOTCH COLLEGE .....  
HAELAIDE S.A. - MUIRGEN BUSINESS COLLEGE HAELAIDE S.A. .....  
 DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE... 20th JULY 1940 .....  
 PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE... 3-4 YEARS CITIZEN FORCES + MILITIA .....  
ARMY SERVICE CORPS RANK - SERGEANT .....  
 PLACES OF TRAINING... No 2 I.T.S. SYDNEY - No 2 AOS No 2 B+GS and No 1 AMS .....  
CANADA - No 11 O.T.U. BASSINGBOURN .....  
 CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES...  
CLERK + TAXATION SPECIALIST - EXECUTOR TRUSTEE + AGENCY Co. of S.A. LTD .....  
22 GRENFELL STREET HAELAIDE .....  
 SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED), RECREATIONS, CLUBS ETC. SQUASH GOLF .....  
SHOOTING SWIMMING + SURFING MOTORING WALKING .....  
PHYSICAL CULTURE - AMATEUR SPORTS CLUB HAELAIDE .....  
 FATHER... REV. W.W. NICHOLSON (DECEASED) CHAPLAIN R.N. .....  
 WIFE... SUSAN JEAN NICHOLSON .....  
 CHILDREN... N/A .....  
 HOME ADDRESS... C/O EXECUTOR TRUSTEE + AGENCY Co. of S.A. LTD .....  
22 GRENFELL STREET HAELAIDE SOUTH AUST. .....  
 SIGNATURE... W. Nicholson g/p .....  
 DATE... 31/1/42 .....  
 DATE EMBARKED... 31st OCTOBER 1940 .....  
 DESTINATION... VANCOUVER B.C. .....  
 (These forms are to be filled in and handed to the Adjutant of the Unit immediately after receipt).

PRESS (Special to "Smith's Weekly")

London

8/10/42

Bulletin No. 52

OBSERVER'S OPERATIONAL TOUR

Flight Lieutenant Bryan Walsley Nicholson, observer of Adelaide South Australia, was educated at Orleton School, Scarborough, Yorkshire and at Scotch College, Adelaide. Prior to joining the R.A.A.F. in July 1940, he was a clerk and taxation specialist with the Executor ~~and~~ Trustee and Agency Co. Ltd., of South Australia, Ltd., Adelaide.

He was trained in Canada and arrived in England in June, 1941. He was posted to R.A.F. Wellington squadron, with which he did a tour of operations with Pilot Officer K.R. Symons, of Melbourne, as his wireless operator/air gunner.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was on the raid in September, 1941, on Turin. He flew with the Commanding Officer, and with Pilot Officer Symons as front gunner. The trip took nine hours 40 minutes. It was a beautiful moonlight night and they found they way easily using astro and map readings. They came over the Alps and down over the lakes and could see Geneva plainly "We had no opposition either going in or coming back" he said.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was on the raid on Berlin in November, 1941, when 37 aircraft were lost. His crew found their way out without trouble although heavy cloud and rain made visibility impossible.

"We came over land again right through the Ruhr from end to end, shot up all the way and coned most of the time. We finally crossed the French coast between Calais and Dunkirk," he said.

Icing did not trouble them that night. The worst icing he experienced, he said, was during a raid on Nuremberg when icing stopped both engines. They came down to 4000 feet and got one going but when they climbed both stopped again. "We were just going to bale out when they got going again," Flight Lieutenant Nicholson said. "We finally came back in broad daylight; we had been out nine and a half hours."

On the raid on Warnemunde on May 8, Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was with the Wing Commander. They were early over the target and there was no sign of any opposition at all. Then the guns opened up suddenly. "We saw one of our chaps coned in 80 searchlights," he said. "They were pumping stuff up thick and fast." The pilot made seven runs over the target to get photographs. The engine was hit and they came back most of the way on one. "I spent half the way home pumping oil", said Flight Lieutenant Nicholson. He was again with the Wing Commander on the 1000 bomber raid on Cologne. They opened the attack with incendiaries.

"It was completely dark when we arrived" he said. "There were no lights at all. The guns hadn't got cracking yet. The most dangerous part of the trip was hitting the other aircraft coming in. We just missed two. When we left the fires were just getting going, but as we crossed the coast and looked back it was burning beautifully."

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson considers the raid on Lubeck in March one of the most successful he experienced. He did nine raids on Essen, two of Bremen, one on Stettin, in October, 1941.

He was officially appointed squadron navigation officer in May, 1942. He found the work extremely interesting and enjoyable. His main duties were briefing the navigators, before they went off and interrogating them on their return. Before every raid he and the Engineering Officer went round with the Wing Commander and spent a few minutes with each of the crews to see that everything was all right. This was greatly appreciated by the men and facilitated quick take-off.

Other Australians in the squadron with Flight Lieutenant Nicholson were Flying Officer F.M. Critchley, D.F.C., and Pilot Officer J.E. Perry Gilgandra, N.S.W.

PRESS (H) ~~1444/4444/4444/4444~~

London

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On the raid on Warnemunde on May 8, Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was with the Wing Commander. They were early over the target and there was no sign of any opposition at all. Then the guns opened up suddenly. "We saw one of our chaps coned in 80 searchlights," he said. "They were pumping stuff up thick and fast." The pilot made seven runs over the target to get photographs. The engine was hit and they came back most of the way on one. "I spent half the way home pumping oil", said Flight Lieutenant Nicholson. He was again with the Wing Commander on the 1000 bomber raid on Cologne. They opened the attack with incendiaries.

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AUS407195 FLIGHT LIEUTENANT B.W.NICHOLSON, OBSERVER, OF ADELAIDE

He was on No. 4 (0) course at Bradfield Park and left Australia on October 31, 1940, on the Awatea. He trained at No. 2 A.O.S., No. 2 B. and G.S., and No. 1 A.N.S. in Canada. He arrived in England on June 23, 1941, on the Moddale, and was posted to No. 11 O.T.U. at Bassingbourne. On August 20, 1941, he went to No. 115 Wellington Squadron at Marham.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson did 29 operations with No. 115 Squadron, 24 of them with AUS Pilot Officer A.J.Leslie, pilot (killed at an O.T.U. after being screened), and AUS Pilot Officer K.R.Symons, wireless operator/air gunner. These were all night bombing raids except one which was a daylight nuisance raid on the Ruhr.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was on the raid in September, 1941, on the Royal Arsenal at Turin. He flew with the Commanding Officer, Wing Commander Freeman, and Pilot Officer Symons as front gunner. The trip took nine hours 40 minutes. It was a beautiful moonlight night and they found their way easily using astro and map readings. They came over the Alps and down over the Lakes and could see Geneva plainly. "We had no opposition either going in or coming back" he said.

"At Turin they had one gun which they pointed straight up in the air and popped off every now and <sup>THEN</sup> again" ~~Flight Lieutenant Nicholson said.~~

The Wing Commander went down to 2000 feet to bomb and had to circle round twice to gain height to get back over the ~~Alps~~ Alps. This put a strain on the one overload petrol tank and they ran out of petrol crossing the sea. They landed safely at an aerodrome on the coast.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was on the disastrous raid on Berlin in November, 1941, when 37 aircraft were lost. His crew found their way out without trouble although heavy cloud and rain made visibility impossible.

"We dropped out stuff in a concentration of flak which we hoped was Berlin," he said. "Then on our way back we got a wrong M.F. fix which put us out to sea and got us hopelessly lost. We came over land again right through the Ruhr from ~~xxxxx~~ end to end, shot up all the way and coned most of the time. We finally crossed the French coast

"between Calais and Dunkirk." Icing did not trouble them much that night, he said. The worst icing he experienced was during a raid on Nuremberg when icing stopped both engines. They came down to 4000 feet and got one going but when they climbed both stopped again.

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On the raid on Warnemunde on May 8, Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was with the Wing Commander. They were early over the target and there was no sign of any opposition at all. Then the guns opened up suddenly. "We saw one of our chaps coned in 80 searchlights" Flight Lieutenant Nicholson said. "They were pumping stuff up thick and fast. They never got a light on us but we saw six aircraft go down." The pilot made seven runs over the target to get photographs. The engine was hit and they came back most of the way on one. "I spent half the way home pumping oil," said Flight Lieutenant Nicholson. He was again with the Wing Commander on the 1000-bomber raid on Cologne. They opened the attack with incendiaries.

"It was completely dark when we arrived" he said. "There were no lights at all. The guns hadn't got cracking yet. The most dangerous part of the trip was the risk of hitting the other aircraft coming in. We just missed two. When we left the fires were just getting going, but as we crossed the coast and looked back it was burning beautifully."

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson considers the raid on Lubeck in March one of the most successful he experienced. He did nine raids on Essen, two on Bremen, one on Stettin, in October, 1941. This trip took nine and a half hours and the Wellington carried an overload tank.

He was officially appointed squadron navigation officer in May, 1942, after acting in that capacity for three or four months while still operational. He found the work extremely interesting and enjoyable. His main duties were briefing the navigators before they went off and interrogating them on their return. Before every raid he and the Engineering officer went round with the Wing Commander and spent a few minutes with each of the crews to see that everything was all right. This was greatly appreciated by the men and facilitated quick take-off.

On one of the 1000-bomber raids they got 20 Stirlings and 18 Wellingtons off in under three quarters of an hour.

Flight Lieutenant Nicholson was posted from No. 115 Squadron to an O.T.U. on September 29, 1942. Other Australian<sup>FM</sup> in No. 115 Squadron were Flying Officer <sup>FM</sup> Critchley, D.F.C., (observer), now in ~~Canada~~ Canada on an advanced navigation course; Pilot Officer Brian Maher, (observer), missing; Pilot Officer <sup>402-751 P/O J.E. PERRY OF GILGANDRA NSW</sup> Jeff Perry (pilot) at an O.T.U. at North Luffenham; Pilot Officer Alan Weller (pilot), missing with Maher.