

WM 65

[3972]

NORMAN, ROBERT ALEXANDER

400102

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

OFFICERS AND AIR CREWS

See 35 Sqn -

AW. 158^a / 139^a (D.F.C.)

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

See 46 file encl:

9/24/11/42

SURNAME... **NORMAN**.....NUMBER. **400102**CHRISTIAN NAMES... **Robert A.**.....AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING... **F/Lt W/C**.....DEGREES, DECORATIONS ETC... **D.F.C.**.....PRESENT APPOINTMENT AND LOCATION... **Flight Commander 1652 C.O. RAAF Marston Moor**.....DATE OF BIRTH... **2/7/16**.....PLACE... **MILDURA**.....EDUCATED... **Mildura Central High School**.....DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE... **May 1940**.....

PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE... ..

PLACES OF TRAINING... **Lemnos, Narromine, Calgary (Canada) Rindon (S.A.)**.....CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES... **Bank Officer**.....SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED), RECREATIONS, CLUBS ETC... **All Sports**.....FATHER... **R. W. NORMAN**.....

WIFE... ..

CHILDREN... ..

HOME ADDRESS... **84 Walnut Avenue, Mildura, Vic.**.....SIGNATURE... **R. W. Norman**.....DATE... **4/6/42**.....

DATE EMBARKED... ..

DESTINATION... ..

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

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

Overseas Headquarters,
Kodak House,
KINGSWAY, W.C.2.

PRO. FORMA,
P/R. 5.

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL

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NAME..... NORMAN, Robert Alexander NUMBER..... 400102
(In full)
RANK AND MUSTERING..... A/W.Cdr. Pilot DECORATIONS..... D.F.C.
NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE..... 2
X DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA..... Sept. 1940
CANADA..... Jan. 1941
Sept. 1941
DATE OF ARRIVAL UNITED KINGDOM..... 7th Feb. 1941
O.T.U. - A.F.U. etc..... 19 O.T.U. Kinloss
PRESENT UNIT..... 1663 Heavy Conversion Unit AIRCRAFT FLOWN..... Halifax
PREVIOUS UNITS (with dates) AND AIRCRAFT FLOWN..... Whitley, Halifax
..... 58 Squadron, R.A.F. 35 Squadron R.A.F.

DETAILS OF OPERATIONS (details of operations with dates to be given as fully as possible under the appropriate headings as shown)

- (a) Number Operational Hours (b) Number Operational Sorties, day-night
(c) Target bombed
(d) Attacks on enemy surface vessels - type size etc.
(e) Attacks on enemy submarines (f) Combats with enemy aircraft
(g) Other attacks and incidents. (h) Other Australians in crew.

(a) 215 hrs. (b) 34 sorties night
(c) 4/5/41 Brest..... 29/6/41 Bremen
6/5/41 Hamburg..... 5/7/41 Munster
8/5/41 Bremen..... 16/7/41 Hamburg
9/5/41 Mannheim..... 22/7/41 Frankfurt
27/5/41 Cologne..... 12/8/41 Essen
2/6/41 Dusseldorf..... 14/8/41 Magdeburg
11/6/41 Duisburg..... 16/8/41 Cologne
12/6/41 Schwerte..... 2/9/41 Berlin
25/6/41 Rotterdam..... 7/9/41 Berlin
27/6/41 Berlin..... 14/9/41 Brest

P.T.O.

use other side if necessary.

15.9.41	Hamburg
19.9.41	Stettin
29.9.41	Stettin
10.10.41	Essen
12.10.41	Nuremburg
14.10.41	Nuremburg
7.11.41	Berlin
9.11.41	Hamburg
25.11.41	Brest
30.11.41	Hamburg
30.5.42.	Cologne
1.6.42.	Essen
25.6.42.	Bremen
31.7.42.	Dusseldorf

September, 1943.

(Sgd) R.A. Norman. W/Cdr.

Form 1001 R/F 150
JANUARY, 1945
CONFIDENTIAL

TRAINING, NON-OPERATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL DETAILS

TO BE COMPLETED BY PILOTS ONLY.

Aus 4000102
No. *4000102* Rank. *(A) Lt. Col.* Name *R. A. NORMAN* Decorations *D.F.C.*
Pilot Date of Birth *2/7/1916* Marital Status *Married* Left Aust. *3/8/40*
Medical Category *A.B.*

TRAINING DETAILS

Unit	Location	Aircraft Types	Hours
Elementary flying training	<i>SEFTS (Aus. 21 0/43)</i>	<i>D.H.82</i>	<i>57.00</i>
Service flying training	<i>SEFTS Canada</i>	<i>Cansons</i>	<i>78.10</i>

ADVANCED TRAINING DETAILS

Unit	Location	Aircraft Types	Hours
Advanced flying Unit	<i>Nil</i>		
Operational training unit	<i>19.0.43 A.K.</i>	<i>Whitley</i>	<i>22.25</i>
Heavy conversion unit	<i>Nil</i>		
Lancaster finishing school	<i>Nil</i>		
Tactical exercise Unit	<i>Nil</i>		
Any other training details (not included above)			
Sub. total			<i>157.35</i> hours.

SPECIAL COURSES

Type of Course	Unit	Location	Aircraft flown	Hours
		<i>19.0.43</i>		
Sub. total				hrs.

NON-OPERATIONAL FLYING DETAILS (e.g. INSTRUCTIONAL)

Unit and Location	Aircraft	Hours 1st pilot	Hours 2nd pilot	Total hours
<i>28 Bomber (Ugla)</i>				
<i>16.5.43 16.6.43 A.K.</i>	<i>Whitley</i>	<i>5.12</i>	<i>10.5</i>	<i>6.17</i>
Commenced <i>16/12/41</i>	Finished <i>12/8/43</i>	Sub. total		<i>6.17</i> hrs.
2nd TOUR				
Commenced <i>1.1</i>	Finished <i>/ /</i>	Sub. total		hrs.

OPERATIONAL FLYING DETAILS

Squadron(s) & location	Role of squadron (Bomber coastal etc)	Types of Sorties	Hours 1st pilot	Hours 2nd pilot	Total hours
<i>58 Bomber</i>		<i>Whitley</i>	<i>134</i>		
<i>28 Bomber</i>		<i>Whitley</i>	<i>2.15</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>2.60</i>
Commenced <i>19/4/41</i>	Finished <i>16/12/41</i>	Sub. total			hrs.
2nd TOUR					
<i>460 Bomber</i>		<i>Lancaster</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>19</i>
Commenced <i>20/1/43</i>	Finished <i>10/10/43</i>	Sub. total			hrs.
Total No. of Sorties	<i>36</i>	Total hours (Cpl)	<i>228</i>	<i>216</i>	hrs.
* Acting	Present Unit		Grand total		<i>10.50</i> hrs.
* Temporary					

DFC

Acting Squadron Leader Ro
(Flight Commander). Sq

of aircraft who through
keenness and determinat
a high standard of eff

R.A.A.F. Bulletin No. 264 - "A"

25th November, 1943.

R.A.A.F. LANCASTER SQUADRON C.O. IS
PRISONER OF WAR

News has been received that Wing Commander R. A. Norman, D.F.C., of Mildura, who was last reported missing after the raid on Hanover on the night of 8 October, is a prisoner of war in Germany. Relatives have been informed.

Wing Commander Norman was formerly commanding officer of Australia's senior Lancaster squadron in Britain. He took over on 1 September last from Wing Commander C. E. Martin, D.S.O., D.F.C. His last raid, on which he led the Lancasters from his squadron to Hanover, was considered as highly successful the Australian aircraft reporting the target "well alight" when they left it.

Wing Commander Norman had completed a "tour" of operations on Whitleys and Halifaxes, as well as having carried out several operational flights from conversion units, before he was posted to the Australian squadron. His targets include several raids on Berlin and Stettin and many on Ruhr targets.

He was awarded the D.F.C. in April, 1943, the citation describing him as a courageous and skilful captain who throughout his many operations had shown outstanding keenness and determination; his fine leadership as a flight commander had produced a high standard of efficiency in both ground and air crews.

After Wing Commander Norman was posted missing Wing Commander F. Arthur, D.F.C. who was born at Kogarah, New South Wales, was appointed to the command. He had been in command of a flight.

Wing Commander Martin and Norman are both pilots; Wing Commander Arthur is the first navigator to command a R.A.A.F. bomber squadron in Britain.

Wing Commander Norman was born at Mildura on July 3, 1916, and like Wing Commander Arthur, was a bank official. He entered the R.A.A.F. in May, 1940, and trained in Australia and Canada.

Until his last raid, Wing Commander Norman described as his "most exciting experience of a pretty ordinary career" a Whitley raid on the docks at Bremen when his aircraft was badly damaged by flak over the target. A big gash in a petrol tank made it doubtful whether the Whitley would make base, but Norman succeeded in getting the aircraft home.

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OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS, R.A.A.F., LONDON

PRESS

Bulletin No. 4

LONDON

9/2/42 (12 noon)

FROM WHITLEYS TO HALIFAXES

ENJOYABLE BOMBING

35-59d
Linton on Ouse
York

Among the most experienced captains of aircraft in Bomber Command is an Australian, Pilot Officer Robert A. Norman, of 84 Walnut Avenue, Mildura, Victoria. After long experience of flying over Germany both in two engined Whitley and four engined Halifax bombers he is resting from operations for a short while, but using his special knowledge to train others. He is teaching pilots of twin engined bombers how to handle the four engined Halifaxes.

Pilot Officer Norman, a powerfully built young man with a strong, quiet voice, was a bank clerk before he enlisted.

He was the first graduate of the Empire Air Training Scheme to pilot one of the new Halifax aircraft.

Norman joined the Royal Australian Air Force on May 1, 1940. Since the completion of his training in Australia, Canada and England he has taken part in many attacks on enemy territory. Fourteen of his operational flights have been in Whitleys, the aircraft first over Germany by night.

"The Whitley is a grand aircraft" he says. "Though I've had some fine times with these two engined bombers which look so ungainly when they're in flight, I'm in love with the Halifax, despite all its complications. My first operational flight was in the Whitley. I went as second pilot and took part in one of the early attacks on the German battle cruisers, the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, in the dock at Brest". He was taking part in a "nursery trip", as the airmen call the first few flights off a new pilot.

"You can't feel scared on your first trip", he says, "because there is so much to do and so much to interest you. Brest certainly gives you something to look at. We got a great reception on that occasion - flak coming up in all sorts of colours. It was a pretty sight."

It was a successful first flight too, because his crew were credited with obtaining a hit on the Gneisenau, and a photograph taken by their camera has been used as an illustration in Bomber Command, an official record of our bombing attacks.

It was also in a Whitley that Norman had the most exciting experience of what he calls his "pretty ordinary career". This was during an attack on the docks at Bremen, and this is how Norman describes it :
"We went over there in fairly good weather, and everything was nice. There was a reasonable amount of flak, but it didn't trouble us much at first. But but we had just dropped our bombs, and were turning away from the target, when we were caught in one of those great cones of searchlights that the Germans use. There must have been at least twenty searchlights, all concentrated on us.

"Then the anti-aircraft guns gave us all their attention, and shells burst above us. All the shells seemed to be about fifty feet above our heads, and the bits of metal from them fell on us just like rain. They made holes all over the aircraft without doing any real damage. Then one shell went through one of the leading edges of a wing without bursting and a splinter from another shell holed one of our petrol tanks.

"The gash in the tank was a huge one, but the self sealing device worked well, and we couldn't have lost much petrol. Meanwhile all

the members of the crew, except the navigator and myself, were air sick, because of the way I'd had to throw the aircraft about to get away from the shells and the searchlights. But the navigator didn't turn a hair, he guided me right all the time.

"We had been using the engines fairly hard, and we weren't sure at the time how much petrol we had lost, so I told the tail gunner to have a look at the dinghy and get it ready lest we had to come down in the sea. He reported that the dinghy was riddled with holes, so there wasn't much chance for us if we had to land. As it was we got back safely without any more trouble."

When Norman joined the Whitby squadron at a North of England aerodrome he noticed another pilot whom he thought he recognised. Looking closer he found that it was Sergeant Lisle whom he had not seen since they were together at Mildura High School. The Sergeant was also with him when they were transferred to a Halifax squadron.

Norman has flown over most of industrial Germany and over the busy enemy ports. He has taken part in two attacks on Berlin, six on Hamburg, two on Stettin and two on Neuremburg. He has attacked the Channel ports, as well as Kiel, Mannheim and Frankfurt. Although he feels he is doing a useful job training other pilots in the use of the Halifax, the conversion flight as they call it, he is impatient to get back to operational work. He wants "some more cracks at Jerry" he says.

"It has been a really enjoyable time so far", he says, "and I've made a lot of friends. I didn't know anybody when I came over to England but I know lots of people now, some of them Australians who live in this country. When I go on leave, I spend my time with them, often in Somerset. They're a grand lot of fellows with whom you work and fly -- mostly British, but some Canadians, New Zealanders and South Africans. I would like to see a bit more sun, and I'm not so fond of the snow which makes a mess, but otherwise I'm quite happy".

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Bio
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PRESS

LONDON

4/6/42

Bulletin No. 36

AUSTRALIANS IN HALIFAX

Flight Lieutenant Robert A. Norman, of Mildura, one of the most experienced pilots in Bomber Command, captained a ^{RAF} Halifax bomber on the ~~1,000-plane~~ ^{night} raids on Cologne and Essen. *as well as that on Essen two nights later.*

He said that Cologne was just a mass of flames, and over the target area, the anti-aircraft artillery had been completely silenced by the time he dropped his bombs. The ~~great speed and~~ ^{speed and} manoeuvrability of the four engine bomber stood him in good stead on his return journey from Essen when he ran into an extremely heavy barrage of shells. He dived, twisted and turned out of the flak and brought the Halifax home unscathed. *when he saw it,*

High praise of the navigating skill of Sergeant George Archer, of Brighton-le-Sands, N.S.W. has been paid by an R.A.F. veteran bomber pilot. Talking of his experiences on the Cologne and Essen raids the R.A.F. aircraft captain, who holds the D.S.O. and D.F.C., said that Sergeant Archer was the most able navigator he has ever been crewed with.

OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS, R.A.A.F., LONDON

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PRESS

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