

AWM 65

[4005]

O'DONNELL, KEVIN PATRICK
411810

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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

SURNAME O'DONNELL.....NUMBER BUS 41810.....
CHRISTIAN NAMES K.E.V. IN PATRICK.....
AIR FORCE RANK AND MUSTERING S.G.T. PILOT.....
DEBTS ETC.....
DATE OF BIRTH 30th June 1930.....PLACE MARRICKVILLE SYDNEY.....
EDUCATED DEARBOROUGH COLLEGE M. VILLE C.B. COLLEGE STURTHFIELD.....
DATE OF ENTERING SERVICE 30th Jan 1942.....
PREVIOUS SERVICE EXPERIENCE MAY 25th 1941 to July 6th 1941 RAAF.....
PLACES OF TRAINING 2 I.T.S. 8 E.F.T.S. (AUSTRALIA) 20 F.T.S. 31 GRS 31 A.T. 6 CANADA.....
CIVILIAN CAREER AND ACTIVITIES JUNIOR ENGINEER. WALTER BOARD. SYDNEY.....
SPORT (TEAMS REPRESENTED) CLUBS ETC. CYCLING. ST GEORGE LEAGUE. C.R.B.C......
FATHER HUGH PATRICK O'DONNELL (DECEASED WARRIMUR DIST. NSW).....
MOTHER NIL.....
HOME ADDRESS 36 MALAKOFF ST. MARRICKVILLE N.S.W......
SIGNATURE [Signature].....
DATE 20th Sept 1943.....
DATE OF EXPIRATION 19th Aug 1942.....

HEADQUARTERS USE ONLY - DO NOT FILL IN

AWARDS.....
CATEGORY..... INTERVIEWS.....
RADIO..... OTHER REFERENCES.....
.....
.....
.....

RTA

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

IRO. FORM.
I/R. 5.

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

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL.

The following biographical details are required for R.A.A.F.

Historical Record Overseas Headquarters. These forms are to be filled in and returned to the Officer Commanding Repatriation Disposal Section, No. 11 (R.A.A.F.) P.D.R.C.

NAME (in full) ~~FRANK O'DONNELL~~ ^{KEVIN PATRICK} NUMBER A. 411810.

RANK AND MUSTERING F/O PILOT DECORATIONS 31 O.T.U. 102 O.T.U.

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE 24 O.T.U. - A.P.U. 22 O.T.U. 107 O.T.U.

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA } 19.8.42
CANADA } 14.9.43 DATE OF ARRIVAL U.K. 20.9.43
Sth. Africa)

SQUADRONS 271 S.B.21

AIRCRAFT FLOWN ANSON OXFORD P.H.22 HUDSON WELLINGTON DAKOTA
(TROOP CARRYING CASE SUBORD)

COMMAND & TYPES OF ACTIVITY COPT. BA (ANTI-SUB. PAT.) TRANSPORT

OPERATIONS OR TRAINING WITH AMERICAN PERSONNEL, SQUADRONS, OR AIRCRAFT NIL

DETAILS OF OPERATIONS - with dates: to be given as fully as possible under the following applicable headings:-

- (a) Number Operational Hours
- (b) Number Operational Sorties, Day-night
- (c) Targets attacked
- (d) Attacks on enemy surface vessels - type, size, etc.
- (e) Attacks on enemy submarines
- (g) Outstanding sorties or incidents
- (f) Combats with enemy aircraft
- (i) Personnel in Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, Transport Command, etc., should give a brief report of their work.
- (h) Other Australians in crews

(a) OPERATIONAL HRS 750

(b) ~~130~~ 130

(g) ARNHEM & RHINE AIRBORNE OPS

(h) NAV. F/O HOLD SWARTH

(i) Engaged on fat carrying in support of armies from 23.6.44 to 4.6.45. Evacuated 250 casualties carrying 930 Pass. (including ex P.O.W.) Did 4 ferry flights to North Africa.

DATE 4.6.45 SIGNATURE [Signature]
(Use other side, or attach extra sheets, if necessary).

April 16, 1945

U.S.A.F. Release No. 1101

VETERAN ARMY DAKOTAS - THE STORY OF "UNCLE QUEEN"

When the greatest airborne landing of all time was made to cross the Rhine and open the way for the war-winning drive across Germany, Australians played their part just as they had in the D-Day and Arnhem landings.

Australians flew in the RAF Halifaxes, Stirlings and Dakotas which towed the gliders laden with men, tanks, guns, and equipment of all kinds.

Dakota "U-Q - Uncle Queen", with its Australian captain, was in all three landings, and the story of U-Q is almost the story of all the aircraft in which Australians flew on those three historic days.

For the Rhine crossing, Uncle Queen flew to an aerodrome in southern England, and there its captain and crew attended their first briefing. Briefings for airborne landings in which Army and Air Force must work as one service are lengthy meetings.

Army and Air Force officers addressed aircraft crews and glider pilots, telling them of every phase of the attack, exactly what Montgomery was going to do, what troops he had and how many the Germans had and where they were believed to be. It was here that the crew of "U-Q" learned for the first time that gliders were to be landed in different places to take a number of different objectives, and that there would be many landing zones and not one or two main ones.

"Uncle Queen" was allotted a Horsa glider containing jeep and anti-tank gun and a crew of four gunners. This glider was to be landed beside a hedge in a small field near a bridge, and must (repeat MUST) get to that exact spot.

"U-Q's" crew were not given to questioning orders of that kind, but following the practice of giving the men the fullest information, there was an Army general at the briefing to tell them why the gliders were needed at the different points.

Bundstedt had two S.S. divisions near the area. Job of one group of airborne men was to take a vital railway bridge over a canal and to stop the S.S. divisions if they tried to come through to counter-attack the bridgehead. "U-Q's" anti-tank gun was to help hold the bridge.

Taken so completely, as it were, into Field Marshal Montgomery's confidence, "U-Q's" crew realised how vital it was to get the glider to its right L-Z (landing zone). It became more than a question of just obeying orders.

In the operations rooms were photographs of the whole area taken by VIII aircraft. "U-3's" crew was shown their release point and the L-3. Here was the bridge, here the field and there the hedge. There were the broad features of the countryside by which they could pin-point their position, the Rhine itself, the canal and the broad ribbon of the autobahn.

They were told they would not get much flak over the release point itself because for weeks past Allied reconnaissance had been noting the position of every heavy flak gun and these would be put out of action just before and during the operation. And their comrades of Bomber Command would pound Weal just before the landing.

"U-3's" crew were pleased about the flak report. "It isn't funny", as the Air Force says, to go in straight and level at not much over 100 miles an hour with a heavy glider in tow and no chance whatever of taking evasive action when the flak is coming up thick and fast.

When the main briefing was over the aircrew were told to go out and meet their glider captains and get to know each other.

"U-3's" crew found their glider captain was an RAF man, one of the surplus aircrew who transferred to gliders.

The glider would weigh 7000 lb. fully loaded, "U-3's" crew learnt. And what sort of a gun were they carrying? Airborne gunners of the British Army showed "U-3's" crew how to work the gun, and in turn they were shown all over the Dakota.

"Not much ammunition there," said "U-3's" captain. The gunners replied: "Weight is limited, but when every shell finds a tank we'll have enough. We just don't allow for mistakes, that's all". And they said it so simply, that the Dakota men knew they meant it.

The navigators and wireless-operators hurried away for their special briefing and the pilots of the Dakota and Horsa went over signals together.

Take-off time was fixed and only bad weather could postpone it, but the weather held and they were up long before dawn for a final briefing. They went over all the main points again to make sure every man knew every point, and then the Dakota and Horsa pilots said "Cheerio" to each other.

"U-3" waited her turn, and then pulled out quickly on to the runway. A tractor simultaneously brought up the Horsa and groundstaff clipped on the tow rope. Slowly, ever so slowly, the Dakota took up the strain on the ropes

/because

because with such a weight the ropes would easily break with any sudden strain.

Then a green light gave them the signal to take-off.

The heavily-laden glider was airborne long before the labouring Dakotas, then "U-3" lifted, and they gained height and formed up. "U-3's" captain was busy. He had to give his glider a good ride, and to do that he had to fly straight and level and keep out of the slipstream of other aircraft. When they settled down, he called up on the inter-communication line threaded through the rope.

"Hello glider, this is tug calling. How do you hear me?"

"Glider to tug. Loud and clear, go ahead".

"Everything O.K.?"

"Sure. Pleased pleased we're not in the slipstream. Keep it up".

They did not speak much over the inter-com. because the sky was full of aircraft and gliders and it gave all of them plenty to do.

"U-3" kept the glider informed of pin-points on the way.

"Hello glider. This is tug calling. That's Brussels on the left, see it?".

"Glider to tug. Yes, vis. is good. Can see for 20 miles".

Then the sky became more crowded than ever as the fighters giving top cover closed in and the streams of aircraft converged. Typhoons reared in below to shoot up flak guns left in their path. American Dakotas carrying parachute troops came in to one side and below the RAF glider-carrying Dakotas.

Visibility suddenly fell away. The artificial smoke fog hung over the shine and over wheel there was smoke and dust from the pounding the Lancasters had given it. Grey puffs of flak were bursting just above the smoke pall, and tracer and light flak were coming from underneath.

"Hello glider, tug calling. We're nearly at your release point. Have you picked up your pin-points".

The glider captain was straining his eyes to see through the smoke haze. Somewhere down there was his bridge, his field and his hedge.

"Glider to tug, I can just make it out".

"It's pretty heavy down below. Make absolutely sure".

"I will".

"Tug calling. You're at release point now".

There was silence for 15 seconds.

"O.K. tug. I'm right now. Cheerio".

Cheerio and best of luck".

The Dakotas surged forward and "U-3" turned sharply to get out of the mass of aircraft and gliders ahead, at both sides and behind. The wireless operator was in the grotesque warning of near collisions, and the co-pilot was preparing to release the tow rope as soon as they were clear.

In those crowded seconds they saw two Dakotas going down in flames, saw glider after glider disappear into the smoke haze, saw the flashes of the guns from below and narrowly missed other aircraft in the mêlée. They were glad that the army's guns and the Typhoons had done their job -- the heavy glk guns had been silenced below, though flak was coming from both sides.

Then they were out of it and on the return course, settled down in a stream of returning aircraft and looking at the imposing air armada bringing more men, more guns, more tanks forward -- a relentless stream that was to help the land armies sweep all before them.

So "U-3" returned from her third airborne landing.

On D-Day she carried paratroopers to a spot near Caen and dropped them at 12.32 a.m. in the very vanguard of the invasion. At Archen "U-3" towed a glider containing troops, a jeep, trailer and ammunition, and then went back two days later to drop supplies to the beleaguered men in the face of all Hell that the Germans threw against them. And at Walcheren Island "U-3" flew over to drop supplies on the beach.

Between D-Day and E-Day, "U-3" made 70 trips to the Continent, carrying all kinds of supplies and mail and newspapers and evacuating wounded and bringing back mail and leave personnel on the return trip.

The Dakotas, whose sole armament consists of the .38 revolver the crew carry in their holsters, have played their part in the conquest of Germany, and Australians have flown them side-by-side with their comrades from England and all over the Empire.

Among the Australians who flew on E-Day were:-

- Flight Lieutenant Bob Iyue, pilot of Riverstone, New South Wales (captain of the "U-3");
- Flight Lieutenant J.L. Knapp, wireless operator, of Nowra, New South Wales; F/O. D. Fotheringham, navigator, of Tarnagulla, Vic; F/O. B. Jungwirth, navigator of Cokleigh, Vic; ^{4/1870} F/O. E.P. O'Donnell, ^{2/159m} pilot of Harriolville, N.S.W.; F/O. E.R. Holdsworth, navigator, of Waternwick, Vic; F/O. C.R. Few, wireless operator, of Bondi, N.S.W.; F/O. A.L. White, pilot, of Aldgate, S.A.; F/O. E.H. Hank, wireless operator, of Melbourne, Vic; F/O. A.G. Bishop, navigator, of Barwood, N.S.W; and Pilot Officer J.B. Sullivan, wireless operator, of Moonee Ponds, Victoria.

24.3.45 - No. 77

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 13079

AIRBORNE ARMY ACROSS THE RHINE

At first light today scores of R.A.F. Transport Command aircraft took part in the greatest airborne operation of the war. Two Airborne Divisions British and the 17th U.S., were carried in more than a thousand gliders towed by as many aircraft. The day was perfect for flying as they took off. One aircraft left the runway every sixty seconds, circled for height and then made for the rendezvous. There they joined the converging stream coming from other air-fields and flew on to the target.

411310 F/O K. O'Donnell, R.A.A.F., the pilot of one of the Dakotas, who comes from
271'sq 197a, Livingstone Road, Marrickville, Sydney, Australia, reported excellent weather all the way to the Mass.

"Then" he said, "the stuff began to come up. We could not see where it came from because there was a thick cloud of artificial fog below us and there had been some heavy bombing before we got there. The smoke was still coming up from that, too. The battle, what we could see of it at the time, seemed to be going well on the ground. We could see small arms fire but we could not see the flashes of the flak positions; they were apparently pelting at us from some woods".

"Our dropping zone was flat country with woods", said Flight Lieutenant R.P. Cazmody, of Wenderer Minei Selukwe, Rhodesia. "We could see the parachutes of the Paratroops who had gone in earlier and when we were over the zone a Typhoon stormed in and strafed the gun positions. I saw two of them burning. We were not hit but I saw two Dakotas going down in flames and some of the crew had bled out.

The R.A.F. Transport Command crews taking part in the operations were well representative of the British Commonwealth. In one aircraft were two Australians; one Canadian and one Englishman. Other shoulder flashes were those of Kenya, Rhodesia, and New Zealand. There was also the khaki of the South African officers.

+ + + + +

FOR AUSTRALIAN PAPERS ONLY.

25/3/45.

Air Ministry News Service.

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 18080.

AUSTRALIAN AIRCREWS IN AIRBORNE OPERATION.

"It was awe-inspiring to see that Allied air armada crossing the Rhine", according to Australian aircrews who took part in the great airborne landing.

F/O. R. Jungdich, of Oakleigh, Victoria, 23 year old navigator of a Dakota towing a glider full of troops, said that as far as he could see the sky was crowded with aircraft.

"And they were all ours", he added. "I didn't see one 'Jerry'. The R.A.F. Dakotas towing their gliders came in three gigantic streams. Over to one side to the north we saw the American Dakotas carrying paratroops. Ahead and below were the Typhoons blasting German flak positions, while above us were the Tempests, Spitfires and Thunderbolts.

"Ten miles from the point where we were to release our gliders we could see the puffs of flak rising above the smoke and dust which obscured the ground. Visibility on the ground became worse and worse. The east bank of the Rhine must have taken a heavy 'beating', before we got there.

"We released our glider, pulled up sharp to dodge the pieces of another Dakota which blew up right in front of us, and then turned back."

Squadron Leader G.R. Frew, of Bondi, N.S.W., said the Allied guns and bombers had made such a mess of the east bank of the Rhine that it was hard to see the ground for the smoke haze.

"It must have made the task of the glider pilots, who had pin-point objectives to reach, very difficult", he added.

"When I told our glider pilot we were at release height he said he could not see the ground. But he called out a hearty 'Cheerio' and cast off to disappear into the smoke".

F/Lt. R. Hynes, of Riverstone, N.S. Wales, veteran of the D. Day and Arnhem airborne landings, said he had never seen so many aircraft cut as he did today.

F/O. A.L. White of Aldgate, South Australia, pilot, had his aircraft holed five times by flak just before he released his glider. A piece of flak hit a light just behind the head of his wireless operator, F/O. C.E. Tink, of Melbourne, Victoria.

"For one whole hour on our way back we saw just ^{one} continuous stream of Allied aircraft", said White.

41810 F/O.K.P. O'Donnell, of Marrickville, N.S. Wales, was pilot of the first Dakota to get back to his English base. O'Donnell, whose aircraft was badly shot up in the Arnhem landing, said the German flak today was fairly heavy at times.

His navigator, F/O. T.R. Holdsworth, an ex-traffic policeman, from Elsternwick, Victoria, said he saw 40 gliders released in one batch within 30 secs.

"We saw the gun flashes from the east bank of the Rhine", he added. "The noise of battle was so great that I heard it faintly even above the roar of our own engines".

+ + + +