

AWM 65

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SPENCE, ALFRED JOHN

434035

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

268

R.T.A.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE
OFFICERS & AIRCRAFT

The following biographical details are requested for use as R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, London.

Surname.....S.PENCE.....Number.....434.035.....
 Christian Names..ALFRED JOHN.....
 Air Force Rank & Mustering.. Sgt. Air Gunner.....
 Degrees, Decorations, etc.....
 Present Appointment & Location...R.A.A.F. 11 P.D.R.C. Brighton...
 Date of Birth. 28/1/43..... Place. Longreach, Qld......
 Educated.. Church of England Grammar School, Brisbane.....
 Date of Entering Service. 8th Oct. 1942.....
 Previous Service Experience.. NIL.....
 Places of Training in R.A.A.F. 3 I.T.S., 3 W.A.C.S., 1 B.A.G.S......
 Civilian Career & Activities. Printer.....
 Clubs, Recreations, etc.....
 Father's Name. Robert John Spence.....
 Wife's Name.....
 Children.....
 Home Address. Moramba, Mt. Cattai, Qld. Aust......
 Signature. C. J. Spence Sgt......
 Date Embarked Australia. 6/7/43..... Date. 13/8/43.....
 Destination.....United Kingdom.....

RFA

PRO. FORM.
P/R. 5.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

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

SECRET & CONFIDENTIAL.

The following biographical details are required for R.A.A.F. Historical Records, 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) Alfred John SPENCE NUMBER P.O.S. 434085

RANK AND MUSTERING F/Sgt. R.C. DECORATIONS —

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE 33 O.T.U. A.F.U. etc.

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA) 7/7/40
CANADA)
S.W. AFRICA) DATE OF ARRIVAL 12/8/43

SQUADRONS 10 SQDN. R.A.A.F.

AIRCRAFT FLOWN SUNDERLAND

COMMAND & TYPE OF ACTIVITY COASTAL ANTI-SUBMARINE

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
- (f) Outstanding sorties or incidents
- (g) Combs with enemy aircraft
- (h) Personnel in Photographic Reconnaissance Unit, Transport Command, etc., should give a brief report of their work.
- (i) Other Australians in crews

(a) 7.9.7.40 (b) Scarcely three patrols day & night combined
 (c) NIL (d) Enemy submarine attached & sunk 8th January 1944
 (e) NIL (f) — (g) See (d)

DATE 31.10.44 SIGNATURE A.J. Spence
(Use other side, or attach extra sheets, if necessary)

10/2/44 - No. 16

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST IN OVERSEAS BULLETINS OR USE ON CLUB TAPES BEFORE 2330 HOURS, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1944
NOT TO BE BROADCAST IN THE MIDNIGHT NEWS OF FEBRUARY 10/11
OVERSEAS MESSAGES SHOULD BE PREFACED WITH THIS EMBARGO

Air Ministry News ServiceAir Ministry Bulletin No. 12810COASTAL'S FIRST KILL OF THE YEAR

Within six and a half minutes of the first sighting, a R.A.A.F. Sunderland of Coastal Command had attacked and destroyed a U-boat which recently tried to fight it out on the surface in the Bay of Biscay. It was the Command's first U-boat "kill" of 1944.

After the U-boat had sunk, about 40 survivors, who had scrambled out of the conning-tower, were seen in the water, wearing Mae Wests.

The Sunderland, "U" for uncle, which returned to base undamaged by the enemy's brief but heavy burst of fire was captained by Flying Officer J.P. Roberts, of Sydney, N.S.W., the only member of the crew who had previously attacked a U-boat.

It was just six minutes before noon when the Sunderland's second pilot, Flying Officer S.W. Ashdown, also of Sydney, sighted the U-boat's conning-tower breaking water twelve miles away. At noon precisely the enemy's bow rose steeply and it began sinking by the stern. Thirty seconds later the U-boat had disappeared. Two hours afterwards a U.S. Navy Liberator passed over the scene and saw 22 survivors still clinging to wreckage.

Closing at full speed after the first sighting, the Sunderland's crew saw the enemy fully surfaced when still five miles away. At two miles range the U-boat opened heavy fire but the flying-boat captain dived under it, his gunners holding their fire until they were within closer range.

/The nose

The nose-gunner then opened such concentrated and accurate fire that the enemy's flank suddenly stopped and as the Sunderland swept over the U-boat and banked steeply into a favourable attacking position the crew saw six of the enemy gunners crumpled up, dead or wounded, on the gun-platform, with two more across the deck. One of the dead was in his shirt-sleeves. No further enemy fire was encountered.

"After our opening fire we made a steep turn to get into the most effective position and dropped our depth charges from 50 feet", said the captain. "They straddled the U-boat half-way between the conning-tower and the stern. Huge plumes of water shot up, enveloping the U-boat, which slowed down, lost way completely and started sinking by the stern. Pieces of wreckage and un-inflated dinghies floated around it.

"We made another steep turn, firing all guns. As we came round we could see the U-boat listing and the crew scurrying out of the conning-tower. Once again we came around to make a third attack, but we were only half-way round when we saw the bow rise sharply and the submarine sink in a swirl of water."

The Sunderland crew had set out in low spirits. For two weeks the weather had been bad, sorties had been curtailed and they had sighted nothing. Suddenly a patch of oil was seen. The flying-boat investigated but nothing could be observed. Twenty wasted minutes, they thought at first -- but the delay made all the difference in sighting the U-boat they ultimately destroyed.

Captain:	Flying Officer J.P. ROBERTS, GREENWICH, N.S.W.
2nd Pilot:	Flying Officer S.W. ASHDOWN, FIVEDOCK, N.S.W.
3rd Pilot:	Flying Officer W.R. McHARLIN, CLAREMONT, WESTERN AUS.
Navigator:	Flying Officer G.E. ROBE, MOESMAN, N.S.W.
Fl./Eng:	Sgt. L.J. PORTWINE, MARCOUPT, VICTORIA.
Fl./Eng:	Flight Sergeant N.C. DYER, ASPENDALE, VICTORIA.
V/CP/AG:	Flight Sgt. F.K. RANDES, HENSHURST, N.S.W.
W/CP/AG:	Sgt. E.G. ROBINSON, OFFICER, VICT.
Armourer:	Flight Sgt. E.R. COOED, HIANA, TASMANIA.
A/G:	Flight Sgt. A.J. SERVICE, MAROUBRA, MULLADURRA.
A/G:	Sgt. J.S. MORRIS, MOESMAN, N.S.W.

PHOTOGRAPHS AVAILABLE AT P.N.A.
