

AWM 65

4793

SPENCER, KEITH FREDERICK

414270

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVE  
ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

## ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

## OFFICERS AND AIRCREW.

The following Biographical details are requested for use at R.A.A.F. Overseas Headquarters, LONDON:-

Surname..... SPENCER ..... 414270.

Christian Names..... KEITH FREDERICK .....

Air Force Rank and Mustering..... PL0 AIRCREW R.T.A. .....

Degrees, Decorations, etc..... NIL .....

Present Appointment and Location..... R.A.A.F. P.R.C BOURNEMOUTH .....

Date of Birth..... 23. 8. 12 ..... Place..... MOREE N.S.W. .....

Educated..... PUBLIC SCHOOL MOREE N.S.W. .....

..... HIGH SCHOOL GOSFORD N.S.W. .....

Date of Entering Service..... 17. 8. 41 .....

Previous Service Experience..... NIL .....

.....

Places of Training..... No 3 I.T.S. SANDGATE O. No 3 F.F.T.S. ARCHERFIELD O. No 3 S.F.T.S. AMBERLEYS. NOISSET POINT COCK .....

Civilian Career and Activities..... BROADCASTING ANNOUNCER .....

.....

Clubs, Recreations, etc..... APEX CLUB .....

..... GOLF .....

Father..... LIEUTENANT A.S. SPENCER .....

Wife..... EDNA MAUD SPENCER .....

Children..... .....

Home Address..... 48 ARMONDALE AVENUE LISMORE N.S.W. .....

Signature Keith SpencerDate 10. 11. 42Date Embarked 24. 6. 42Destination U.K.

## ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

R.T.A.

PRO. FORM.  
P/R. 5.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 F/O. M. Morton.

NAME (in full)..... SPENCER, Keith, Frederick...... NUMBER..... 414270

RANK AND MUSTERING..... F/Lt. Pilot...... DECORATIONS.....

NUMBER I.T.S. COURSE..... 18...... O.T.U. 56 A.F.U. etc.....

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA ) 24.8.42......  
CANADA )..... DATE OF ARRIVAL UNITED KINGDOM..... 14.11.42......  
Sth. Africa ).....

SQUADRONS..... 295, 296, 297......

AIRCRAFT FLOWN..... Wellington, Whitley, Halifax, Dakota, Ventura, Albemarle......

COMMAND & TYPE OF ACTIVITY..... A.D.G.B. - Airborne Operations, S.C.E. & S.A.S......

OPERATIONS OR TRAINING WITH AMERICAN PERSONNEL OR SQUADRONS.....

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

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| (a) Number Operational Hours.                              | (f) Combats with enemy aircraft.   |
| (b) Number Operational Sorties -<br>day and night.         | (g) Outstanding sorties or incidents -<br>please give dates.   |
| (c) Names and details of targets<br>attacked or bombed.    | (h) Names of other Australians in crew.  |
| (d) Attacks on enemy surface vessels -<br>type, size, etc. | (i) Personnel in Photographic<br>Reconnaissance Units, Transport<br>Command, etc., give a brief report<br>of their work. |
| (e) Attacks on enemy submarines.                           |  |

(a) 80. (b) 23 Night. (c) Supplying Maquis - France. (d) Nil (e) Nil.

(f) Nil. (g) Nil. (h) F/O. Moore (Nav) F/O. Tattan (R/A) F/Sgt. Swann (AG.)

(i) Was engaged in glider towing paratroop operations, also dropping arms and  
special troops to French Resistance Movement.

DATE..... 27.7.44...... SIGNATURE.....

RJA

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

PRO. FORM.  
P/R. 5.

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). SPENCER, KEITH FREDERICK NUMBER 414270

RANK AND MUSTERING... FLY. PILOT DECORATIONS.....

NUMBER I.T. & COURSE... 18 O.T.U. 56 P.U. etc.....

DATE LEFT AUSTRALIA. ) 24.8.42  
C.M.D.A. )  
S.W. AFRICA. ) DATE OF ARRIVAL U.K. 14.11.42

SQUADRONS... 295 296 297

AIRCRAFT FLOWN. WELLINGTON WHITLEY HALIFAX DAKOTA VENTURA ALBERMARLE

COMBAND & TYPED OF ACTIVITY. AD.G.B. - AIRBORNE OPERATIONS. SOE & S.A.S.

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

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

~~(A) 80 (B) SOE AND S.A.S. FRANCE (C) NIL~~

(A) 80 (B) 23 - NIGHT (C) SUPPLYING MARVIS - FRANCE

(D) NIL (E) NIL (F) NIL (G) NIL (H) FLOMPDRE (NAV)

FLOTTAM (B/A) FIRST SWANN (AG)

(I) Max. engaged in glider towing, parachute operations, also dropping arms and special troops to French Resistance Movement.

DATE 27.7.44 SIGNATURE Keith Spencer FLYT  
(Use other side, or attach extra sheets, if necessary)

AUS. 435053 FLYING OFFICER KENNETH BLAINE MOORE, OF KALGOORLIE, WEST AUSTRALIA

NAVIGATOR

He joined the R.A.A.F. on June 21, 1941, and was trained at No. 5 I.T.S. Pearce, (No. 16 course), No. 1 A.O.S., Mt. Gambier, No. 1 B.A.G.S., Ft. Pirie, and No. 1 A.N.S. Hill. As a sergeant observer he was posted to 63 Reserve Squadron, Denilequin, where he flew in Wirraways. Three months later he was posted to No. 2 H.D., and embarked for the United Kingdom on the "Western Land" on August 23, 1942. He spent three weeks at Follis Moor Camp, Capetown, and came on to England on the "Highland Brigade." From Bournemouth he was posted to Fair Oaks pre-A.F.U., and then went to an A.F.U. at Wigton, Scotland. Applying for an overseas posting, he was sent to do an Overseas O.T.U. on Wellingtons at Moreton-in-Marsh. His all-Australian crew consisted of F/O K.F. Spencer (pilot) Lisore, N.S.W., F/O J. Tattam, of Tococomba, bomb aimer, Sgt. J. Swann, Brisbane, gunner. The crew was posted to India, and from Moreton-in-Marsh they went to Harwell to do petrol consumption tests. The T.A.F. was being expanded, and the India posting was cancelled, and the crew, except the gunner, Sgt. Swann, went to 295 Squadron (Whitleys), at Burn. Swann went to India with another crew, and is still there. F/O Scott, a gunner from Dublin, joined the crew. They underwent intensive training in paratroop dropping and glider towing, and after three months were posted to 297 Squadron (Albemarle) at Stony Cross. In September, 1943, the crew ferried an Albemarle to Tunisia. They hitch-hiked to Gibraltar in a Halifax because, they said, the C.O. at Goubrienne No. 2 was unco-operative. They flew from Gibraltar to England in a Dakota. Their training in paratroop dropping and glider towing was continued until D-Day. They took part in "Royal command performance" exercises in glider towing and troop dropping. His captain, Flying Officer Spencer was grounded because of ear trouble, and Flight Lieutenant A.E. Allison, of Rhodesia, became pilot. The crew now is: Flight Lieutenant A.E. Allison, of Rhodesia, pilot; Flying Officer K.B. Moore, navigator; Flight Sergeant G.S. Harris, of London, wireless operator; and Flight Sergeant M.R. Binson, of Plymouth, gunner.

They were briefed continuously for three days before D-Day. They were told army and naval dispositions, and times of attack. They were to drop paratroops north-east of Caen 10 minutes after D-Day Command had attacked a coastal battery over which the Albemarles were to fly. The batteries consisted of 16-inch naval guns with three lines of defence --- machine gun nests, pill boxes and entanglements --- around them.

500 feet instead of 5000, and had to dive again to avoid fire from two flak ships which opened up on them. The only damage suffered by the aircraft was done when the WOP put his foot through the fuselage fabric while trying to pull in the static lines.

They towed gliders on D-Day evening. They left at 8 o'clock and had to fly an extra 100 miles to enable stragglers to form up. Their fighter cover was waiting on the English coast, where they made rendezvous with other squadrons of glider-towing aircraft. There were hundreds of fighters, on both sides of us, and above us all the way, forming a protected corridor. Air Sea Rescue Spitfires circled continuously above them. As far as they could see, before and behind them in a narrow corridor, were masses of glider combinations. The slipstreams of the aircraft ahead of them bumped them about. The English channel was filled with naval craft, and tugs towing "mulberries", or portable docks. They saw a Halifax hit the water and burst into flames. The coast line north of Le Havre looked peaceful in the last rays of the setting sun, but farther down towards Le Havre they could see British battleships bombarding behind the British lines. They could see the smoke puffs and flashes of flame as the naval guns fired their broadsides, and they could see puffs of smoke and clouds of dust and flying concrete and masonry as the shells hit their objectives eight or 10 miles inland. As far as they could see along the Normandy coastline were thousands of landing craft protected by battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and corvettes, heading them were minesweepers, and there were every imaginable type of invasion craft. The beaches were pitted with hundreds of bomb craters caused by Allied bombing.

They were flying at 750 feet, and were subjected to only slight and occasional small arms fire from a burning church steeple in a village at the mouth of the Orne river over which they had to fly. Earlier bombing had made the village a shambles, and many of the buildings were still burning fiercely. The coastal batteries over which they had flown the previous night could be seen to be a mass of shattered concrete. Suicide troops had landed at dawn on D-Day right on top of these batteries to make doubly certain of the destruction and capture.

They could see gliders being released ahead of them over the landing strips cleared and marked by the paratroops dropped the previous night. As the aircraft reached the objective, they could see the glider train ahead of them splitting in two as the gliders, released in their own time, broke off to the

left, did a half circuit, and landed, while the tugs flew straight on, dropped their towing ropes on a pre-selected spot, and did a sharp turn to starboard to avoid flying over Caen, which was still in enemy hands, and where the flak was intense. To avoid flak, they dived to 100 feet, "opened the tape" and went out over the spot over which they had flown coming in, with the incoming glider train still flying above them.

As far as they could see across the channel, there was still an unbroken stream of glider combinations, including tank carrying Hamilcars towed by Halifaxes. Before they left the French coast on the way out they saw a French peasant amid shelling, bombing and the rain of airborne troops, calmly tending his cattle. They saw one of their own crews baling out from an Albatross which had been hit, and they learned, when that crew rejoined the squadron three days later, that they had captured 20 German prisoners. Over the channel on the way back they could see hundreds of aircraft which had forced the glider trains roared out above them, and in the channel they could see another vast naval convoy standing by waiting to reinforce the beachhead. They were 16th to leave the landing ground, but first to return.

The entire operation had gone off with marvellous precision, as if it had been an exercise.