

Horace Andrew Cummins

1916-1944



In the lead-up to World War II, Australia was in a period of political and social transition, with growing concerns about global instability and the rising threat of aggression from Germany, Italy, and Japan. It was therefore not surprising to many when, on the evening of Sunday, 3 September 1939, Prime Minister Robert Menzies addressed the anxious Australian public listening to their wireless, saying “It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.”¹

At the outbreak of World War II, there was none of the fervent enthusiasm for war that Australians had displayed in 1914, when the outbreak of World War I had been met with excitement and patriotic zeal. By 1939, Australians feared the horrors of another global conflict yet had come to accept its inevitability.²

In 1939, Horace Andrew Cummins was working as a shipping clerk at wine merchants Leo Buring Pty Ltd, in George Street Sydney. Horace was the youngest son of Michael Joseph and Florence Cummins of Leonay near Penrith, husband of Beryl Lillian Cummins, and father of John Henry Cummins. He was born on 22 June 1916 at Murringo in regional New South Wales and spent the early part of his working life following farming pursuits.³

Horace and Beryl were married at St Declan’s Church, Penshurst on 6th April 1940.⁴



His Duty Nobly Done.
Loving Remembrance.

¹ Eric Fry & Australia Post, *War & Peace : Australia 1939-49*. Australia Post, Australia, 1995, p 4.

² Fry et al, *War & Peace*, p 4.

³ Application of Air Crew, 11 December 1941, held on Service record of Horace Andrew Cummins, RAAF Personnel files of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and other ranks, 1921-1948, National Archives of Australia, A9301 423661.

⁴ "Cummins-Goldsbro" *Propeller (Hurstville, NSW)*, 23 May 1940, p 7, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article235586147>, accessed 26 January 2025.

As a member of the British Empire, Australia contributed volunteer soldiers to the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF). The 6th and 7th Divisions, later joined by the 9th, were sent to Egypt, just as they had during World War I. There, they helped defend the eastern Mediterranean and the Suez Canal from Italian and German attacks. Most of the Australian navy was also placed under British command in the Mediterranean.

In this war, a new branch of service—the air force—would be crucial. Australia, with the other British Dominions had adopted the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) to provide trained aircrews from the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) to fight with the Royal Air Force (RAF). Australian recruits received elementary training at air bases around Australia and many of them were then sent overseas for advanced training before heading to England, where they would join the air campaign against Germany.⁵ Aircrew positions were highly sought after, with volunteers competing to be selected for this prestigious and elite service.

The government began calling up men for service, focusing on training and preparing the Citizen Military Force (CMF) for potential deployment in Europe and the Pacific. However, as the war intensified, particularly after the fall of



WW2 RAAF Crest

France in 1940 and the threat of Japanese expansion in the Pacific, conscription was introduced to keep the CMF at strength and unmarried men turning 21 were required to report for potential service.

Horace was obviously keen to serve in the air force. On the 11 July 1940 he applied to become an Airman in the Royal Australian Navy at the RAAF Recruiting Centre in Woolloomooloo. He indicated a preference for joining the Wireless Operator trade, however it appears he may have failed the Morse Trade Test during this interview.

On the same day he submitted his first application for Air Crew, again indicating a preference for Wireless Operator. Applying for Air Crew was essentially volunteering to operate an aircraft, such as Pilots, Air Observers, Wireless Operators and Air Gunners. This application was subsequently marked “would prefer pilot”.

He applied for Air Crew again on 11 December 1941, however this application coincided with the Government’s expansion of the conscription system, initially for home service, and later, in response to the expanding Pacific war, for overseas service as well.

Horace was called up for the Citizen Military Force (CMF) and completed his ‘Attestation Form’ on 16 January 1942. A ‘Mobilisation Attestation Form’ was essentially an enlistment form that would record the crucial details about an individual being considered for active service during a mobilization period. He was allotted an Army official number of N241147.

On 28 January 1942, only days after completing his CMF Attestation, Horace enrolled in the Air Force Reserve, commonly referred to as the Citizen Air Force (CAF). He was assigned official number 423661 and the rank of Aircraftman on enlistment. His enlistment papers described him as 26 years of age, 5 feet 8 ½



1940 recruiting poster for

⁵ Department of Veterans' Affairs, Air War Europe 1939-1945, DVA Anzac Portal, 2022, <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/world-war-ii-1939-1945/events/air-war-europe-1939-1945>, accessed 26 January 2025.

inches, 169 pounds of medium complexion, blue eyes and brown hair. It was also noted that he had a scar in the right inguinal region and a birthmark below his right nipple.⁶

He was called up for CMF service on 2 March 1942 and served 132 days as a Private in the 3rd Australian General Transport Company, before being discharged on 11 July 1942 to join the Royal Australian Air Force.⁷

On the 18 July 1942, Horace completed all necessary medicals and associated paperwork for enlistment in the RAAF Permanent Force.⁸

Australian Training

He was immediately assigned to No. 2 Initial Training School (2ITS) at Bradfield Park, New South Wales. RAAF aircrew candidates began their training at ITS, where a detailed screening process was conducted to determine their suitability for various aircrew roles or mustering, such as Pilots, Navigators, Bomb Aimers, Wireless Operators, and Air Gunners. Following this initial training and screening, candidates were transferred to other schools in Australia or other Commonwealth countries to complete their training under the Empire Air Training Scheme.

He was promoted to Leading Aircraftman on 12 September 1942, then and on 19 September, Horace and 43 others were assigned to No. 2 Wireless Air Gunners School, located at Parkes in New South Wales where they were trained as Wireless Operators and Air Gunners to eventually form aircrews for the RAF. RAAF Station Parkes was formed in 1941 as part of the Empire Air Training Scheme as a training.

The image shows a historical document titled "CITIZEN AIR FORCE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE PERMANENT FORCES". It is a recruitment form for Horace Andrew Cummins, dated 18 JUL 1942. The form includes sections for personal details, medical history, and a declaration of service. It is signed by a recruiting officer and has a "GIVEN TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION" stamp. The document is part of the National Archives of Australia collection, with file number A9301 423661.

After receiving his Wireless badge on 4 March 1943, Horace was assigned to No. 2 Bombing and Air Gunnery School (2 BAGS). 2 BAGS, located at Port Pirie, was established to train pilots, air observers, and air gunners in bombing and gunnery. The location offered plenty of space, excellent year-round flying conditions, and relatively mild terrain, making it ideal for training. Moreover, the nearby coastal land provided suitable areas for bombing and gunnery ranges.⁹ Horace was promoted to Sergeant (Technician), (SGT(T)) on 1 April 1943 and received his Air Gunners badge on 4 April 1943.

Following graduation from the 2 BAGS, Horace joined the No. 2 Embarkation Depot (2ED) at Bradfield Park in Lindfield, New South Wales on 2 April. The principal function of 2ED was to house personnel awaiting embarkation for overseas posts and to ensure that, before departure, they were medically and dentally fit, vaccinated, inoculated and properly equipped.

Like all Australian military, he was sent on 6 days pre-embarkation leave, plus any travel time required to travel by train to the embarkation point, which was Brisbane. All personnel deploying overseas were granted at least 6 days leave to spend time with loved ones and attend to private affairs prior to embarkation. This was to be the last time Horace was to see his beloved wife Beryl and baby son John.

⁶ National Archives of Australia, A9301 423661, RAAF Personnel files of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and other ranks, 1921-1948, Service record of Horace Andrew Cummins.

⁷ National Archives of Australia - B884 N241147, Citizen Military Forces Personnel Dossiers, 1939-1947, Service record of Horace Andrew Cummins.

⁸ National Archives of Australia, A9301 423661, RAAF Personnel files of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and other ranks, 1921-1948, Service record of Horace Andrew Cummins.

⁹ No. 2 Bombing and Air Gunnery School / No. 3 Air Observers School Port Pirie, Virtual War Memorial website, n.d. <https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/1573>, accessed 26 January 2025.

Embarkation

Horace and his companions embarked on the Troop Transport ship *MORMACSEA* in Brisbane on 16 April 1943 and was formally attached to the RAF from that date.¹⁰ The ship sailed with 166 Officers and NCOs (Pilots, Wireless Operators and Gunners) to undertake further training in the UK, before joining the air battle over Europe. Also embarked were 114 aircrew bound for Canada to undertake further training. The *MORMACSEA* sailed via the Panama Canal, calling into New York to drop the Canadian bound trainees before proceeding across the Atlantic to the UK, arriving on 10 June 1943.

The *MORMACSEA* was a C3 type vessel of 7,773 tons and 492 feet in length. She was built in 1941 by Moore Drydock Co., Oakland, California. Initially delivered as a US cargo ship in March 1941, she only operated in that capacity for a few months before being altered to carry troops. She was operated during World War II by Moore McCormack Lines, Inc., and War Shipping Administration. She had berthage to carry 1,664 passengers.¹¹



SS MORMACSEA

Arrival in UK

On arrival in the UK, the Australian Aircrews were assigned to No. 11 Personnel Despatch and Reception Centre (No 11 PDRC) which was the RAAF receiving station for all RAAF non-commissioned air crew arriving in the United Kingdom. The unit was formed at Bournemouth in July 1941, but it moved to Brighton on the Sussex coast in May 1943. The Unit occupied both the Grand Hotel and Metropole Hotel on the beach front in Brighton. RAAF air crews arriving in the UK would wait at Brighton for up to 3 or 4 months before being posted to training or other units.



The Metropole Hotel, Brighton.

Under Article XV of the Empire Air Training Scheme agreement, Australian graduates of the scheme were to serve within distinct national squadrons. Australia's Article XV squadrons were numbered from 450-467 (with no 465 raised), consisting of seven Bomber Command, four Fighter Command and a single Coastal Command unit. In spite of this, the majority of Australian graduates served within the RAF.¹²

Each member of the RAAF Air Crew was skilled in their respective field, and together, they would play a crucial role in ensuring their efficiency, accuracy, and ultimately, their survival.

As part of the RAF's Bomber Command, the Australian airmen would undergo additional training to make them better suited for front-line duties. The aim of the subsequent stages was to provide them with training on

¹⁰ National Archives of Australia, A9301 423661, RAAF Personnel files of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and other ranks, 1921-1948, Service record of Horace Andrew Cummins, (Personal Record of Service - RAAF Form P/P.25 - attachments).

¹¹ Roland W Charles, "Troopships of World War II, Army Transportation Association, Washington, D. C., 1947, p 231, https://www.history.army.mil/documents/WWII/wwii_Troopships.pdf, accessed 27 January 2025.

¹² Empire Air Training Scheme, Virtual War Memorial website, n.d., <https://vwma.org.au/collections/home-page-stories/empire-air-training-scheme-29-april-1940>, accessed 28 January 2025.

more appropriate types and with an emphasis on operationally-related activities – and the building of the crew co-operation that was vital to a multi-crew bomber.

Bomber Command

The Royal Air Force (RAF) Bomber Command played a key role in the Allied bombing campaign against Germany and occupied Europe during World War II. Bomber Command's primary role in the Allies' fight against Hitler's forces was to attack enemy targets with long-range bombers to weaken Germany's ability to fight. They targeted industrial centres, communications systems, and fuel targets, Military infrastructure and Transportation systems, such as railways, roads, and other transportation systems. Bomber Command is better known today for the 'Dam Busters', due in part to the abundance of literature and films that have focused on that mission, but that is only one of many successful missions conducted by the Bomber Command squadrons.¹³

Bomber Command included aircrews from the United Kingdom, including the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), and Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF), as well as countries from occupied Europe. By late 1944, Bomber Command included more than 80 operational squadrons.



Bomber Command Training

When aircrews arrived in the UK, they were required to undertake specific Bomber Command training before being designated as operationally ready for combat.

In 1943 Bomber Command training essentially consisted of:

- Operational Training Units: eight weeks and included with 55 flying hours.
- Heavy Conversion Unit: four weeks with 20 day and 20-night flying hours.
- Lancaster Finishing School: two weeks with five day and five-night hours.

Horace began his operational training at No. 4 Observer Advanced Flying Unit (4 (O)AFU) at RAF Station West Freugh in Scotland on the 13 July 1943, where navigator and bomb aimer training was conducted. Located about 8 miles south-east of Stranraer, RAF West Freugh has a long history with aviation. Formerly it was a World War 1 Royal Naval airship base, in 1837 it operated as an armament training camp. During the war it expanded to include training facilities for observers, navigators, and bomb aimers; and served as a base for the Bombing Trials Unit, and the Bomber Command Experimental Unit.

The next stage in becoming a fully functional bomber crew was training at the Operational Training Unit (OTU). On 17 August 1943, they joined No. 27 OTU at RAF Lichfield in Staffordshire. OTU training was specialized, focusing on the specific aircraft type and combat role the crew would be assigned to, covering essential skills such as navigation, formation flying, gunnery, bombing, and night flying. The goal was to prepare them for real combat situations with their full crew.¹⁴

OTU was also where operational crews were formed. During the first few days at OTU, aircrew members gathered in one of the hangars to begin the process of "crewing up." Pilots, Navigators, Wireless Operators, Bomb Aimers, and Gunners introduced themselves and made their roles known, while the crew was put together through a random selection process. A new pilot would scan to find the rest of his crew, with the

¹³ David Price, *The Crew : the story of a Lancaster Bomber crew* (Paperback edition). W.F. Howes Ltd, Rearsby, Leicester, 2020.

¹⁴ Ken Delve, *RAF Bomber Command, 1936-68 – an Operational and Historical Record*, Chapter 4 - Aircrew Training, Pen & Sword Aviation, UK, 2005.

selection process largely left to the individuals, rather than being done mechanically by the system. The system worked remarkably well and gradually the crew would come together during the first two weeks of the ground course, with the exception of the Flight Engineer who joined the crew during HCU phase of training.¹⁵

Regardless of rank, the Pilot would always lead the crew. The pilot was the "captain", and his decisions were final. From this point, crews were referred to by the pilot's name. For Horace's crew, they were known as Tottenham's crew, led by Pilot Officer Anthony Bowen Loftus Tottenham.¹⁶

Once the crew was formed, they would train and fly together, only being separated by death, injury, illness, or reassignment. The strong camaraderie built during this training was crucial to their success, both during missions and in the long term.

Toward the end of OTU training, Horace was promoted to Flight Sergeant (1 October 1943). On successful completion of OTU on 26 October 1943, the crew was posted to No 51 Base for administration purposes and on 27 October 1943 Horace was sent on 25 days annual leave. Horace spent the time off taking in the sights of Bournemouth in Dorset, Oxford, Thaxted Essex and Windermere Lake in Cumbria's Lake District National Park.¹⁷



Tottenham's crew was reassembled on 20 November 1943 to commence their next step at 1661 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) at RAF Winthorpe, Nottinghamshire. 1661 HCU trained crews to fly the new heavy bombers, the four-engine Short Stirling, Avro Lancaster, and Handley Page Halifax. The HCU familiarised and qualified crews with the aircraft they would fly in operations, using aircraft that were often retired from front line service. For the Tottenham's crew, it was to be the Avro Lancaster. Crews were trained in all weather conditions and over various types of terrain, ensuring crews were well trained before moving on to operational squadrons.

This was followed by a two-month attachment to No 52 Base at Scampton, which included stints at Battle School Scampton and 1654 HCU.

On the 12 February 1944 the crew began its final phase of Bomber Command training at No.5 Lancaster Finishing School (5LFS), located at RAF Syerston in Thetford, Norfolk. Over a two-week period, that included five hours of day and five hours of night flying, LFS covered ground instruction, aircraft evacuation exercises, familiarisation with aircraft systems and aircraft recognition tests.

Successfully completing LFS on 8 March 1944, Tottenham's crew were now deemed capable and ready to become part of the air battle against Germany and its allies. On the same day they were posted to No. 467 Squadron, a Royal Australian Air Force bomber squadron attached to Bomber Command.

¹⁵ Delve, RAF Bomber Command, 1936-68.

¹⁶ David Price, *The Crew : the story of a Lancaster Bomber crew* (Paperback edition). W.F. Howes Ltd, Rearsby, Leicester, 2020.

¹⁷ Horace Andrew Cummins biography, EM to author [email] 21 January 2025, original held by EM.

467 Squadron

No. 467 Squadron was a Royal Australian Air Force bomber squadron, active over North West Europe during World War II. Equipped with Avro Lancaster heavy bombers and forming part of 5 Group, RAF Bomber Command, the squadron's operational focus for much of the war was the strategic bombing offensive against Germany.¹⁸

Formed in November 1942. Under the articles of the Empire Air Training Scheme, the squadron was notionally an Australian squadron under the command of the Royal Air Force, however in reality it consisted of a mixture of personnel from various Commonwealth nations. The squadron formed part of No. 5 Group, RAF Bomber Command and went by the call sign 'Mozart'.¹⁹

The squadron relocated to RAF Bottesford on 23 November 1942 and commenced operations on 2 January 1943. On 12 November 1943, it moved to RAF Waddington, where it remained until the end of the war.²⁰



The Crew

The initial crew consisted of:

- Pilot Officer TOTTENHAM, Anthony Bowen Loftus, RAFVR
- Sgt TAYLOR, Ronald James, RAFVR
- Sgt ADAMS, Stephen, RAAF
- Sgt WALSH, James Graham, RAAF
- F/Sgt CUMMINS, Horace Andrew, RAAF
- Sgt STEVENS, Thomas Albert, RAFVR, and
- Sgt PODOSKY, Gilbert Graham, RAAF.

From time to time a crew member would miss a mission, likely due to illness or injury, and was replaced by a member of a standby crew, however the crew remain largely the same for most of their missions.

They lost their captain, Pilot Officer Tottenham in May 1944, when he was reassigned to 463 Squadron. As a headless crew, all of their missions during June 1944 were led by senior pilots of Bomber Command who were filling in while they awaited a permanent replacement, including the base Operations Officer Wing Commander James Brian 'Willie' Tait DSO (& 2 bars) DFC who flew three missions.²¹ The Officer Commanding RAF Waddington, Group Captain David (D.W.F.) Bonham-Carter DFC led one mission. Bonham-Carter often flew as second pilot to newly arrived captains, particularly those worried about the high casualty rate and usually on the most demanding operations.²²

Their new captain, Flight Lieutenant Robert Winter REYNOLDS of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR), arrived in early June 1944.

¹⁸ Ken Delve, *The Source Book of the RAF*, Airline Publishing, Shrewsbury England, 1994, pp 62, 69, 77.

¹⁹ Max Williams, *An Ordinary Crew*, RAF Waddington, March 1945: 467 Squadron RAAF website, 31 August 2023, <https://www.ordinarycrew.co.uk/raf-waddington>, accessed 30 January 2025.

²⁰ Martin Middlebrook & Chris Everitt, *The Bomber Command War Diaries : an operational reference book, 1939-1945*. Pen and Sword Military, South Yorkshire, England, 2014, p 774.

²¹ Dan Conway, *The Trenches in the Sky : what it was like flying in RAF Bomber and Transport Commands in World War II*. Hesperian Press, Victoria Park, W.A, 1995, p 124.

²² Air Commodore D W F Bonham-Carter (16027), *Air of Authority - A History of RAF Organisation* website, 3 December 2023, https://www.rafweb.org/Biographies/Bonham_Carter_DWF.htm, accessed 1 February 2025.

Missions

The crew's first mission was an overnight bombing raid on Frankfurt in Germany. They flew a Lancaster I (DV 373), taking off from RAF Waddington at 1941 on 22 March and returning at 0043 23 March 1944.

Over the next two months they flew a further 17-night missions and one day mission. Various crew members changed out from time to time as their tour ended and they were relieved. The table below summarises their missions between 22 March and 7/8 July 1944.

No	Date	Type and Number	Duty	Up	Down	Notes	Ref
The National Archives (UK) reference AIR 27/1931/6. ↓							
1	22/23 Mar	Lancaster I DV.373	Bombing - Frankfurt	1941	0043	P/O A.B.L Tottenham Sgt Taylor R.J. Sgt Adams S Sgt Walsh J.G. F/Sgt Cummins H.A. Sgt Stevens T.A. Sgt Podosky G.G.	p 19
2	24/25 Mar	Lancaster III JA.901	Bombing Berlin	1922	0221		p 24
3	25/26 Mar	Lancaster III DM.440	Bombing Aulnoye	1921	0030		p 25
4	26/27 Mar	Lancaster III EE.143	Bombing Essen	1944	0110		p 28
The National Archives (UK) reference AIR 27/1931/8. ↓							
5	11/12 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing Aachen	2025	0036		p 10
6	18/19 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing Juvisy	2011	0126		p 12
7	22/23 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing Brunswick	2328	0455		p 25
8	24/25 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing Munich	2051	0627		p 27
9	26/27 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing Schweinfurt	2129	0627		p 32
10	26/27 Apr	Lancaster I R.5868	Bombing St. Medard- En-Jalles	2326	0655		p 34
The National Archives (UK) reference AIR 27/1931/10. ↓							
11	6/7 May	Lancaster III ED.953	Bombing Sables-Sur- Sarthe/Lohai lles	0044	0544	W/Cdr Tait for Tottenham F/Sgt Smith L.S. for Taylor P/O Morris - Photographer F/Sgt Kimberley - Photographer	p 7
12	6/7 May	Lancaster III ED.953	Bombing Tours A/F.	0046	0535	W/Cdr Tait pilot F/Sgt Smith L.S. for Taylor P/O Herbert - Photographer F/Sgt McNaughton - Photographer	p 8

No	Date	Type and Number	Duty	Up	Down	Notes	Ref
13	10/11 May	Lancaster III ED.953	Bombing Lille	2223	0139	W/Cdr Tait pilot Sgt Taylor returned F/Sgt Holt W. - Photographer P/O Herbert - Photographer F/Sgt McNaughton - Photographer	p 12
14	27/28 May	Lancaster I LL.789	Bombing Nantes	2313	0432	G/Capt. Bonham-Carter Tait - Pilot F/Lt S.W. Archer for Taylor P/O J.B. Aitken for Stevens	p 30
The National Archives (UK) reference AIR 27/1931/12. ↓							
15	24/25 Jun	Lancaster I LM.101	Bombing Prouville	2240	0205	F/Lt R.W. Reynolds - new Pilot/Captain Sgt Taylor R.J. returned F/Sgt Bean B.C. for Stevens	p 36
16	27/28 Jun	Lancaster I ME.851	Bombing Vitry	2142	0538	Sgt Shafto A. for Stevens	p 40
17	9-Jun	Lancaster I ME.851	Bombing Beauvoir	1201	1510	Sgt Shafto A. for Stevens	p 42
The National Archives (UK) reference AIR 27/1931/14. ↓							
18	4/5 Jul	Lancaster I LM.219	Bombing St. Leu d'Esserent	2314	0047	Sgt Tipping G.T. for Sgt Stevens	p 4
19	7/8 Jul	Lancaster I LM.219	Bombing St. Leu d'Esserent	2221		F/Lt R.W. Reynolds Sgt Taylor R.J. Sgt Adams S Sgt Walsh J.G. F/Sgt Cummins H.A. Sgt Tipping G.T. Sgt Podosky G.G. P/O J.D. O'Driscoll (2nd Pilot)	p 8

Bomber Command missions on which Horace Cummins participated.

Final Mission

The crews started their preparations for the raid with a detailed briefing in the afternoon, followed by testing all their equipment in preparation for an evening take-off. For the next six to eight hours, they would be confined in their cramped bombers, relying on each other as a tight-knit team. Under constant stress and facing danger, they knew they had to push through every challenge and stay focused on reaching their target.

On the night of July 7–8, 1944, 208 Lancasters and 13 Mosquitoes from 5 Group, supported by some Pathfinders, launched a raid on storage facilities near St Leu d'Esserent, about 50 kilometres north of Paris.²³

²³ Middlebrook & Everitt, *The Bomber Command War Diaries*, p 540.

Included amongst the bombers was Lancaster I LM-219 (Code PO-G), from No. 467 Squadron. LM-219 took off from RAF Waddington at 2221 hours on the night of 7 July 1944 under the command of Flight Lieutenant R.W. Reynolds, RAF. Her bomb load was 11 x 1000lb, 4 x 500lb bombs, and the crew for this mission was:²⁴

- RAF Flight Lieutenant REYNOLDS, RAFVR, Captain (Pilot),
- RAF Sergeant TAYLOR, Ronald James, RAFVR, (Flight Engineer),
- RAAF Flight Sergeant ADAMS, Stephen, RAAF, (Bomb Aimer),
- RAAF Flight Sergeant WALSH, James Graham, RAAF, (Navigator),
- RAAF Flight Sergeant CUMMINS, Horace Andrew, RAAF, (Wireless Operator Air Gunner),
- RAF Sergeant TIPPING, G T, RAFVR, (Air Gunner),
- RAAF Flight Sergeant PODOSKY, Gilbert Graham, RAAF, (Air Gunner), and
- RNZAF Pilot Officer O'DRISCOLL, John Daniel (2nd Pilot).



RAAF 467 Squadron Lancaster I LM219, PO-G, the aircraft flown by the crew on their final mission.

This operation was part of the Allied strategic bombing campaign during World War II, targeting a critical site in the German V-1 and V-2 weapons program. In 1943, St Leu d'Esserent had become a key location for the development and testing of these advanced rocket and missile systems, which Nazi Germany used in attempts to strike Allied targets with long-range weapons. Allied intelligence had pinpointed a 3,000-square-meter network of mushroom quarries beneath the Thiverny plateau, which served as one of several underground V-1 flying bomb storage depots in France.²⁵ The complex also housed blockhouses, bunkers, flak positions, and railway connections.

Intelligence reports confirmed that the previous attack on St Leu d'Esserent on 4-5 July successfully blocked access points to the caves, where V1 rockets were stored. The caves had largely collapsed. It was also reported

²⁴ Storr, Alan & Australian War Memorial, *Second World War fatalities : 467 Squadron RAAF : RAF Bomber Command*. Alan Storr, Canberra, 2005, p 79.

²⁵ Basil Collier, *The Battle of the V Weapons 1944-1945*. Morrow, New York, 1965, pp 82-84.

that the Germans were making significant efforts to repair the damage. The attack on 7-8 July was in response to the Germans effort to free their V1 stock.

In 3 waves coming from the southwest the Allies off-loaded 1,121 tons of explosive bombs and 4 tons of incendiary bombs.²⁶ Due to heavy cloud cover at 18,000 feet, the Australian crews from Nos. 463 and 467 Squadrons descended below this altitude to carry out their attack, again reporting good results.

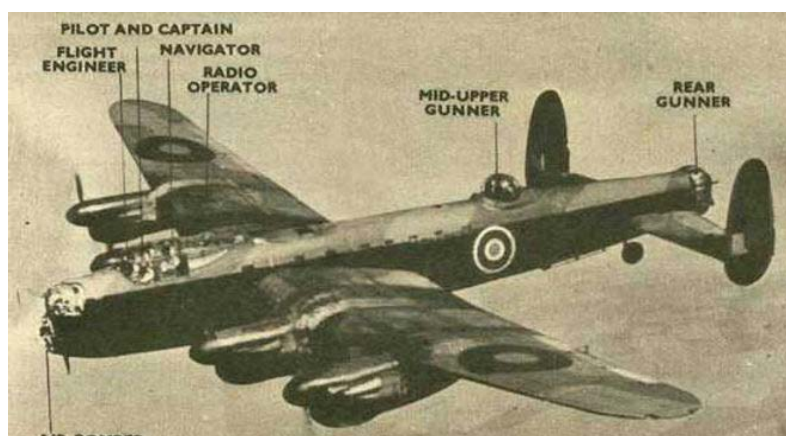
However, enemy ground gunfire was much more intense. Despite the deployment of a 'Mandrel' screen to disrupt German night fighters, the Germans had reinforced their defences with units from the Low Countries.²⁷ As a result, 31 Lancasters were shot down, [sic] which was a notably high loss rate for an attack in northern France, highlighting the strategic importance the Germans placed on defending St Leu d'Esserent.²⁸

Later daylight reconnaissance revealed significant damage, including large craters over the entrances to the three main tunnels, as well as blocked roads and railways that appeared beyond immediate repair. Additionally, the riverbanks were heavily cratered, leading to flooding. Following the second attack on St Leu d'Esserent, the daily average of flying-bomb attacks dropped from around 100 to fewer than 70 over the next 10 days.²⁹

The specifics of individual crew actions are sparse. After take-off, there was no communication from No. 467 Squadron LM-219 aircraft. Post-mission reports revealed that German night fighters intercepted the bombing force, resulting in the loss of 32 Allied aircraft. A total of 142 men were killed in action, and 30 were taken prisoner, though 47 airmen were either rescued by the French Resistance, or evaded capture and returned to England.³⁰

Eighteen aircraft from No. 467 Squadron participated in the raid, but two, including LM-219, failed to return.³¹ The combat was so intense that no definite claim was made by German pilots regarding LM-219. During battle it was normal practice for aircraft to operate in radio silence, and therefore the Wireless Operator doubled as one of the mid-upper gunners. During the melee that ascended upon them as they left the target, Horace would have most certainly been operating one of the .303-caliber machine guns.

LM-219 crashed at 'Le Grand Montagny' near Saint Germer de Fly. Six members of the LM-219 crew perished when the aircraft crashed. However, Navigator Flt Sgt Walsh and Bomb Aimer Flt Sgt Adams survived the crash, and managed to return safely to the UK. Walsh and Adams later provided details about the fate of LM-219 and its crew.³²



Operating positions for the crew of the Lancaster

²⁶ J-P Mathieu, *Summer 1944 Saint-Leu-d'Esserent in turmoil*, Association des Sauveteurs d'Aviateurs Alliés website, n.d., <http://asaapicardie3945.fr/index.php/english/airmen/197-summer-1944-saint-leu-d-esserent-in-turmoil>, accessed 3 February 2025.

²⁷ Mandrel was the code-name of a World War II electronic counter-measure used by the RAF.

²⁸ Other reporting suggests 32 Lancasters were lost on this mission.

²⁹ John Herington, *Air War Over Europe 1944-1945*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963 – pp 181-182, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C1417814>, accessed 1 February 2025.

³⁰ Mathieu, *Summer 1944 Saint-Leu-d'Esserent in turmoil*.

³¹ Storr, *Second World War fatalities: 467 Squadron RAAF*, p 79.

³² Laurence Binyon, *Archive Report: Allied Forces, Aircrew Remembered* website, 23 July 2023, <https://aircrewremembered.com/reynolds-robert-winter.html>, accessed 25 January 2025.

On the 8 July 1944, the 467 Squadron Operations Record Book included an entry that read:

"Another two crews lost on the "Buzz-bomb" target, those of F/L R.W. REYNOLDS and AUS418012 P/O P.W. RYAN. Unfortunately F/L REYNOLDS had a second pilot – NZ15710 P/O J.D. O'DRISCOLL. It was remarkable that REYNOLDS and RYAN should be the two crews missing, for captains with similar names arrived here recently.

This target was once again heavily defended by fighters and many aircraft were seen to be shot down. Bombing appears concentrated around markers and some explosions were seen. The target has to be well hit to make up for the loss of good crews.

*77 x 1000lb MC BR., 88 x 1000lb GP BR., 11 x 1000lb GP USA and 64 x 500lb GP BR. were expended by successful aircraft, and 22 x 1000lb MC BR. and 8 x 500lb GP BR. on the missing aircraft."*³³

Survivor Reports

In his report Walsh stated *"After leaving the target an explosion occurred when at 15,000 feet and the aircraft filled with smoke and burst into flames at the rear. I endeavoured to reach Cummins but was forced back by smoke. I baled out at 10,000 feet and did not see any others but assumed the Bomb-Aimer, 2nd Pilot and Engineer had left before me. Aircraft appeared under control when I abandoned but on fire."*³⁴

The Resistance Movement showed him wreckage which he assumed was part of the aircraft fuselage. He was informed by them that 3 bodies were in the wreckage and 3 bodies with chutes found near the wreck. He was also told that Flt Sgt Adams was in the hands of the Resistance Movement at a place now in liberated territory.

From his report, it appears Flt Sgt Adams was accidentally jettisoned from the aircraft while preparing to abandon. His report said *"As a result of fire Captain instructed crew to prepare to abandon. Adams removed escape hatch after putting on parachute and was moving back to normal position when as a result of terrific shudder through the aircraft I was thrown out of hatch at 12,000 feet. Met Navigator four days later."*³⁵

The six crew members killed are buried in the Marissel French National Cemetery. Marissel is an eastern suburb of Beauvais, a cathedral town between Rouen and Compiègne, locality Oise, France.



No 467 Squadron's LM-219 PO-G crash site.

³³ The National Archives (UK), AIR 27/1931/13, 467 Squadron Operations Record Book, p 3.

³⁴ National Archives of Australia, A705, 166/8/547, Encl 21a, Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Lancaster M219; Walsh AL.15 CAS 521, 5 Sept.

³⁵ National Archives of Australia, A705, 166/8/547, Encl 22a, Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Lancaster M219; Adams AL.456, CAS 622, Sept 13.

Honours and Awards

Medals are enduring symbols of service and sacrifice. They represent the courage and commitment of individual Australians who served their country in times of great peril, often at the ultimate cost. Worn with pride by returned servicemen and women, they are displayed on national days of remembrance, such as Anzac Day, as well as on other significant anniversaries.

Horace Andrew Cummins' service was recognised through the award of the following medals and clasps:

- **1939–1945 Star with Bomber Command Clasp.** The 1939–1945 Star is a military campaign medal instituted by the United Kingdom on 8 July 1943 for award to British and Commonwealth forces for service in the Second World War. Two clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon – 'Battle of Britain' and 'Bomber Command'.
- **Air Crew Europe Star with France and Germany Clasp.** The Air Crew Europe Star is a military campaign medal, instituted by the United Kingdom in May 1945 for award to British and Commonwealth air crews who participated in operational flights over Europe from bases in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. Two clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon – 'Atlantic' and 'France and Germany'.
- **Defence Medal.** The Defence Medal is a campaign medal instituted by the United Kingdom in May 1945, to be awarded to citizens of the British Commonwealth for both non-operational military and certain types of civilian war service during the Second World War.
- **War Medal 1939–1945.** The War Medal 1939–1945 is a campaign medal which was instituted by the United Kingdom on 16 August 1945, for award to citizens of the British Commonwealth who had served full-time in the Armed Forces or the Merchant Navy for at least 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.
- **Australia Service Medal 1939-45.** The Australia Service Medal 1939-45 was awarded to members of Australia's armed forces and Volunteer Defence Corps who served during World War II. It was the first Australian medal to be part of the British honours system.





Marissel French
National Cemetery



123661 FLIGHT
SERGEANT
H.A. CUMMINS
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN
AIR FORCE
8TH JULY 1944 AGE 28

HIS DUTY NOBLY
DONE.

LOVING
REMEMBRANCE.

Memorials

Flt Sgt Horace Andrew Cummins is buried in grave 308 in the Marissel French National Cemetery. Marissel is an eastern suburb of Beauvais, a Cathedral town between Rouen and Compiègne. The Cemetery, known locally as the '*Cimetière Militaire National de Beauvais-Marisse*', is not actually in Marissel. It is located approximately 1 kilometre north of Beauvais town centre on the Rue d'Amiens. The Commonwealth war graves are mainly located along the left-hand wall of the cemetery. Others are near the French monument and along the central section.



Marissel French National Cemetery

He is also memorialised:

- Panel 110, Commemorative Area, in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra ACT,
- Roll of Honour at Emu Plains in NSW, and
- Penrith City Memorial Park, Penrith NSW

Flt.-Sgt. H. A. Cummins
The death in action abroad has occurred of Flight-Sergeant Horace A. Cummins, at the age of 28 years. He was a wireless operator, air gunner in a Lancaster bomber, and was killed in operations over France early in July last. He is survived by his widow, Beryl, and 2½ years old son, John, and by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Cummins, of Emu Plains. Prior to enlistment in the RAAF, he was a member of St. Declan's parish, Penshurst.

R.A.A.F. Casualties
Mr and Mrs M. J. Cummins, of Emu Plains, have been advised by the Air Board that their third son, Flight-Sergeant Horace Cummins (R.A.A.F.), who was reported missing in air operations in France in July last, is now presumed dead. He was a member of a Lancaster bomber crew, which was operating in the vicinity of St. Lo at the time.
Flight-Sergeant Cummins, who was 28 years of age, had been residing at Penshurst prior to joining up. He leaves a wife (formerly Beryl Goldson, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs Goldson, of Penshurst) and a son, John (2½). Sisters and brothers of his are: Myra (Mrs W. Dukes), Emu; Laura (Mrs R. Le Breton), Penrith; Edward, Joseph (A.I.F.), Penrith, and Peggy.
Flight-Sergeant Cummins was educated at Emu Public School and Penshurst I.H.S., and, before the war, was well known in local cricket and tennis circles.
Mr and Mrs W. H. Perkins, of The Crescent, Lemongrove, have received word that their son, Alan Perkins (R.A.A.F.), is reported missing as the result of air operations over Europe.

³⁶ "R.A.A.F. Casualties" *Nepean Times*, 5 October 1944: p 1, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article117896530>, accessed 3 February 2025.

³⁷ "May Their Souls Best in Peace" *Catholic Weekly*, 26 October 1944, p 17, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article146488485>, accessed 23 January 2025.

‘The Angry Sky’

by Paul H Scott

The first rays of the dawning sun
Shall touch its pillars,
And as the day advances
And the light grows stronger,
You shall read the names
Engraved on the stone
Of those who sailed on the angry sky
And saw harbour no more.
No gravestone in yew-dark churchyard
Shall mark the resting place;
Their bones lie in the forgotten corners
Of earth and sea

But, that we may not lose their memory
With fading years, their monument stand here,
Here, at the heart of England, half-way between
Royal Windsor and Lordly London; looking down,
Here, where the trees troops down to Runnymede
Meadow of Magna Carta, field of freedom,
Never saw you so fitting a memorial,
Proof that the principles established here
Are still dear to the hearts of men.
Here now they stand, contrasted and alike,
The field of freedom's birth, and the memorial
To freedom's winning.

And, as the evening comes,
And mists, like quiet ghosts, rise from the river bed,
And climb the hill to wander through the cloisters,
We shall not forget them.

Above the mist
We shall see the memorial still, and over it
The crown and single star.

And we shall pray,
As the mists rise up and the air grows dark,
That we may wear
A brave a heart as they.

Let us not Forget



Researcher - Ted Cummins