

MURRAY GEORGE SMITH

WORLD WAR TWO
5TH of July 1923 – 20th of June 2000

416730



Figure 1: Murray George Smith, date unknown

Submission for the 2025 Premier's ANZAC Spirt School Prize

PART A

Life Before War

Murray George Smith was born on the 5 July 1923 in Koorunga, South Australia (Figure 2) to Maud Bensley Smith and Edmund Smith. The youngest of five children, he grew up with two sisters, Jean and Gweneth (Figure 3), and three brothers, Hartley, Gordon and Maurice. Sadly, Maurice passed away at birth. Murray's Father worked as a Methodist minister, which meant his family moved often (I Smith, 2025). This constant change helped Murray from a young age to learn perseverance and adaptability, which later would support him during his military training.



Figure 2: Manse next to church in Burra Koorunga SA, Murray lived here when he was born



Figure 3: Murray posing for a photo with his two sisters, Jean on the left and Gweneth on the right, date unknown.

Murray Attended Prince Alfred College from 1936 to 1939 (K Pulford, 2025, pers. comm. 2 June). During his first year there, tragedy struck Murray's family when his father died, this followed by his mother's passing in 1939 leaving him as an orphan at only 16. He then moved in with his aunt and uncle, Ethel and George Combe, in St Peter's (C Lane, 2025, pers. comm. 20 June). Being the youngest of the family these sudden losses at such a young age would have tested his maturity and strength.

SCOTT, Joan Gordon, Eg Mh; Segnit, Edgar
 Ralph, Cx; Seidel, Lorraine Sylvia, Eg Gn
 Ecx; Seppelt, Yvonne Granville, L Fo; Shan-
 asy, Mary Bonwill, Eg; Shierlaw, John Gow,
 Ah Mh; E., Stothorpe, Gwenyth Ellenor, Fo
 Pe C. Smith, Murray George, Eg; Smith, Patricia
 Margaret, Eg Ah; Smith, Sheila Isabel
 Wesley-, Eg L Mh; Stevens, Mervyn, Mh;
 Streicher, Joan Patricia, L Ah; Sugg, Gladys
 Margaret, Eg L Ah; Sullivan, Phillip Grose,

Figure 4: Extract from the leaving honours examination results, 1939, published in *The Advertiser*, showing Murray Smith's name on the General Honour List for Prince Alfred College.

Despite the challenges in his personal life, Murray achieved well at school. At the end of 1939 he passed Leaving Honours at Prince Alfred College (Figure 4), excelling in English Mathematics I and II and physical culture (Prince Alfred College Chronicle, 1939, pg.15). After finishing school, he began a traineeship as an electrical engineer with the Adelaide Electric Supply company, specialising in meter testing. Outside of work he enjoyed yachting and playing tennis (Nation Archives of Australia, pg.42-43).

Service/During War

Before Murray could finish his traineeship for the Adelaide Electric Supply Company, he enlisted for the Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF). He enrolled on 16 August 1941 at No.5 Recruiting Centre in Adelaide, only just 18 with no prior experience flying (Figure 5) (NAA, Service record, pg. 7, 2025).

5 RD	Adelaide	16.8.41.
4 IYS	Victor Harbour	17.8.41.
1 RPTS	Parafield	15.11.41.
1 RPTS	Point Cook	7.2.42.
4 RD	Adelaide	6.6.42.
2 RD	Bradfield Park	15.6.42.
Rebarked	Sydney	2.7.42.
Disembarked	UK	18.8.42.
3 FPO	UK	18.8.42.
6 (P) AFU	UK	1.9.42.
60 OTU		13.10.42.
2 (e) OTU		25.11.42.
9 OTU		15.2.44.
132 OTU N/A		11.8.44.
132 OTU		22.9.44.
11 FDRB		10.11.44.
15 (P) AFU		20.11.44.
3 SGT GR		10.4.45.
11 FDRB		4.6.45.
Rebarked		
Disembarked	Sydney	28.7.45.
4 FD	Springbank	30.7.45.
4 FD (DISC)	Springbank	13.9.45.
4 FD (DISC)	Springbank	15.2.46.

His initial training began at No.4 Training School, Mount Breckan, Victor Harbour (Oz at War, P Dunn, 2015). Days of learning were long, starting at 6:15am and ending at 10:30pm. Murray's studies included engineering, warfare knowledge, critical thinking, and physical drills. Vital skills for aspiring aircraft operators. After eight weeks he met with the category selection board, where he was chosen for pilot training, graduating three months later (Trove, The Making of an Airman: First Training Days at Victor Harbour, 1941, pg.11).

Figure 5: Extract from Murray's Service record highlighting is whole service history

TRAINING, NON-OPERATIONAL, AND OPERATIONAL DETAILS TO BE COMPLETED BY PILOTS ONLY			
No. 416730	Rank	W/O	Base
		CHITHI H.G. Decorations	
Post.	PILOT	Date of Birth	5.7.23, Martial State
		S Left Inst. 27.4.42.	
Medical Category	A.1.B.		
TRAINING DETAILS			
Elementary Flying training	Unit	Location (Date or Yr)	Aircraft Type
Service Flying training	1 SFS	AGST. Tiscop	75
		AGST. Wirraway, Oxford	135
Advanced Flying Unit	5 FAFU	W.L. Oxford	50
Operational training unit	60 OCU	W.L. Blenheim	30
Reserve training school	2 OCU	W.L. Beaufighter	50
National exercise unit	or other training details (Not included above)		

From November 1941 he attended No.1 Elementary Flying School, Parafield for a twelve-week introductory flying course (Air force Association, Parafield Units, 2025). He logged 75 hours practicing in a Flying Tiger, demonstrating strong ability. In February 1942 he was posted to the Service Flying Training Centre at Point Cook, Victoria during which time Murray totalled 135 hours of flight in a Wirraway and



Figure 7: Murray in uniform, wearing his pilot wings, date taken unknown.

Oxford aircraft (Figure 6) (NAA, Service record, pg. 44, 2025). By March 1942 Murray was awarded his pilot wings (Figure 7 & 8) symbolising his completion of training and marking his success and hard work (NAA, Service record, pg. 4, 2025).

DECORATIONS, MEDALS, MENTIONS.	
Decorations, &c.	Authority.

Figure 6: Extract from Murray's service record page 44, highlight his flying hours in his training

He embarked for the United Kingdom in June 1942, arriving in August. At Bournemouth's No.3 Personnel Reception Centre (3 P.R.C.) he waited for posting (The National Achieves, catalogue, 1941-1946) before being directed to the No.6 Advanced Flying Unit. After excelling, he was sent for training to be a part of the night fighter crews at the No. 60 Operational Training Unit, based at RAF East Fortune . He spent many hours practicing in Britain's harsh night-time conditions, advancing his aircraft skills in a Beaufighter (VWMA, Operational Training Units (RAF), 2024). These skills were vital in 1942 to protect Britain against Germany, by conducting successful strategic bombing raids (U.S Naval Institute, C William, C. Odell, 1989) .

Figure 8: page 4 of Murray's service record declaring the date when he received his Flying Badge.

Training continued at No.2 (coastal) Operation Training Unit (2 (c) OTU) at Catfoss where he learned tactics for twin-engine strike aircraft in coastal command (VWMA, Operational Training Units (RAF), 2024). (NAA, Service record, pg. 7, 2025). While actively serving in Unit 2 Murray was involved in a night training exercise at



Figure 10: Replica of the Beaufighter T4758 That was flew by Murray in the crash

Figure 9: Murrays Beaufighter Crash scene at Catfoss on the 4th of February 1943, date taken unknown.



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Catfoss Airfield on 4 February 1943 in a Beaufighter T4758 (Figure 10). After one successful circuit and landing, Murray tried another take-off, but his Beaufighter swung out of control and skidded off the runway, crashing into an ammunition building at nearly 90 miles per hour (Figure 9). The wreck was engulfed in flames and Murray was rushed to Beverley Base Hospital, East Yorks with a concussion, fractured femur right leg, fractured tibia and fibula left leg (NAA, Repatriation Record, pg. 6-7, pg. 26, 2025).



Figure 11: Photo of Murray's that he took while recovery at RAF Rauceby Hospital, England, date taken unknown.

After several days Murray was making good progress and was transferred to RAF Rauceby (Figure 11) for further treatment (NAA, Repatriation Record, pg.21, 2025) and later continuing rehabilitation at

Loughborough (Figure 12). His recovery focused on regaining strength and flexibility which took perseverance and willpower.



Figure 12: At the Loughborough Rehabilitation Centre, several members of the RAAF received treatment for injuries sustained on active service. Murray second from the far right, date taken 26th of November 1943

By February 1944 he returned to training but a refractured leg off duty forced him back into hospital for another month. Three months later he was finally cleared and posted to No.132 OTU at East Fortune. Here he trained in Blenheim's and Beaufighter's, specialising in long-range strike missions (VWMA, Operational Training Units (RAF), 2024) which were vital to Britain's defence against German U-boats (IWM Stories, 2025). The program also extended the units training to complete crew training, torpedo dropping and dive bombing (RAF Air of Authority Organisation, OUT's, 2025).

On the 10 November 1944 Murray was posted to the No.11 Personnel Despatch and Receiving Centre located at Brighton on the Sussex Coast. Murray stayed at the Metropole Hotel between postings (My Brighton and Hove, 2014). Two months later, on the 28 November 1944, he was posted to the No.15 Pilots Advanced Flying Unit at located RAF Leconfield, Yorkshire (The Wartime Memories Project, 2025). Finally, to complete his training he was sent to the No.3 School of General Reconnaissance RAF located at Leuchars in Scotland, the final stage before operational deployment (M. Barrass, 2025, pers. comm. 21st August). Ongoing struggles with his injuries, however, forced his return to No.11 Centre to prepare for posting back to Australia. He arrived in Sydney on the 28 July and a few days later was transferred to the No.4 Personnel Depot, placed on reserve for possible recall (NAA, Service record, pg. 37, 2025). While on reserve he also received treatment at the No.7 RAAF Hospital in Heidelberg, Victoria (NAA, Service record, pg. 7, 2025). On 15

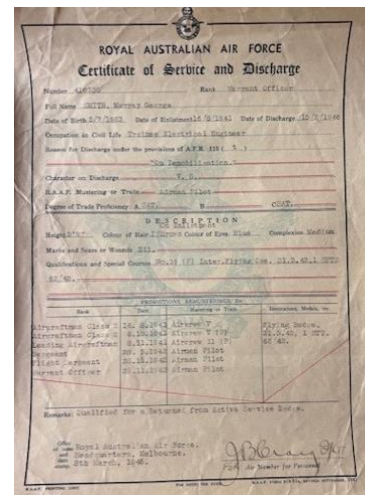


Figure 13: Murray's certificate of service and discharge in the RAAF

February 1946 Murray was officially discharged and returned to civilian life (Figure 13).

Life After War

After war Murray continued his trade studies, but after mastering technical and machinery training in the RAAF he changed to mechanical engineering. He worked for the Electricity Trust of South Australia. In January 1948 he married Lulu Annie Girven, and together they had three children Barbara, Jennifer and Ian (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Family photo, back row left to right: Barbara, Ian and Jennifer, front row: Lulu and Murray

Murray was very creative and during recovery from injuries in active service he took up the hobby of photography, later printing his own photos. He also found joy in ham radio allowed him to connect with people all around the world. After his wartime experience, he especially valued the sense of connection and simple communication offered. Murray worked the rest of his career with the Electricity Trust of South Australia, but his injuries from his Beaufighter crash and post-traumatic stress forced an early retirement. (I Smith, 2025).



Figure 15: Murray's grave located at Smithfield Memorial Park

Murray sadly passed away on 20 June 2000, aged 76, at Ashford Community Hospital, South Australia, due to heart failure. A grave for Murray has been established at the Smithfield Memorial Park (Figure 15) where he can be remembered for his courageous war contributions but also the character he was. He will forever be remembered as a loving husband, father and friend to many.

ANZAC Spirt

Murray George Smith reflected many qualities of the ANZACs, but two that stand out the most in his story are discipline and perseverance. These traits shone clearly in his time as young recruit with no flying experience to become a pilot who overcame serious injuries and remained committed to serving his country.

Discipline was evident from the start of Murrays training. When he enlisted in August 1941, he faced strict routines at No.4 Training School. The work he endured was relentless, but Murray stayed focused in order to advance quickly. At Parafield he logged 75 hours in 12 weeks and at Point Cook he completed 135 hours to earn his pilot wings by 1942. This achievement not only showed skill but the discipline to persist through months of pressure, fatigue and expectation in order to succeed.

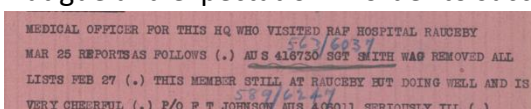


Figure 16: Extract from Murray's Repatriation Record, where he was labelled as "doing well and is very cheerful"

Perseverance became a visible trait after Murray's Beaufighter crash at Catfoss in 1943, an accident which could have easily claimed his life. Instead, he survived with devastating injuries to both legs and

faced months of painful recovery, working through painful rehabilitation. At Rauceby Hospital he was reported as “doing well and very cheerful”, a reflection of his determination to stay positive despite the severity of his injuries (Figure 16). Recovery was slow and gruelling, but Murray never gave up his goal of returning to duty. He constantly pressed to be cleared fit for service, and when he finally re-joined training, he showed the same dedication as before the crash. Surviving against all odds and fighting his way back to service highlights Murrays remarkable perseverance.

Word Count: 1329

PART B

When I first learned about the ANZAC Spirit competition, I decided that the most meaningful way to approach it would be to research a family member. Both sides of my family have a strong history of service, something always spoken about with pride and respect. After talking with my grandparents, Murray’s story stood out immediately as one that reflected the ANZAC spirit, and I began piecing together his life and service.

My first step was to look at what information was already available online. I started with the Virtual War Memorial Australia (VWMA), where I located Murray’s profile. Although it only listed basic details such as service number, enlistment date, and final rank, it gave me an essential starting point. The profile linked directly to the National Archives of Australia (NAA) where I accessed his full-service record. These files contained important documents and although difficult to read I was able to outline his service. Still, I needed more detail to understand his life as a person.

To fill in the gaps, I turned to my family. I interviewed my grandfather, Murray’s son, who provided personal stories and insights official files could never capture. He described Murray’s character, his family life, and the impact of his injuries after the war. I also contacted Prince Alfred College, where Murray studied. They provided me with access to historical chronicles, revealing his academic achievement and interests giving me a clearer picture of his teenage years before enlistment.

Once I had this background information, I needed to make sense of the details in his service record. The files were full of abbreviations and references to units and training schools. To decode them, I used the VWMA glossary and reached out to Kate from the school’s program, who helped me interpret parts of the record. This allowed me to build a timeline of his service, from training in Australia to posting in the United Kingdom. I expanded this with a casualty repatriation record from the NAA, which outlined his aircraft accident and injuries.

To strengthen the timeline, I researched the specific units and training Murray undertook. I used resources from the National Archives of the UK, small reputable websites, and Trove to understand the reality of training conditions. To deepen my knowledge, I got in contact with RAF Historical Society, where I spoke with a former RAF member who shared context about the experiences of airmen like Murray as he himself is an ex-air Britain personal.

Finally, I reached out to community organisations, including the Payneham RSL, Payneham Council and local archives in the UK. These contacts helped me verify Murray's places of residence, his service details, and his time in hospital during recovery.

Overall, my research combined official archives, community organisation, personal interviews and family stories. This multi-source approach provided me with both factual accuracy and personal context, allowing me to accurately tell Murray's story and life in a way that is detailed, respectful and true to his memory.

Word Count: 494

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