

## **Alfred Peter (Peter) Burns (1926–2003)**

### **Early Life and Background**

Alfred Peter Burns, who frequently went by Peter, was born on 2 April 1926 in North Sydney, New South Wales, to William Joseph and Mary Burns. He grew up in the nearby suburb of Northbridge, residing with his family at 3 Narooma Road. He completed his education up to the second year at North Sydney Junior High School.

Before entering the military, Peter worked for the Postmaster-General's (PMG) Department as a Telegraph Messenger. Character references from his local postmaster and bank manager in April 1944 described him as a willing, conscientious, courteous, and strictly honest young man.

### **Military Service**

Peter enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 28 April 1944, shortly after turning 18.

- **Service Details:** He was assigned Service Number 163237.
- **Roles:** He began his service as a Trainee Technical, before being remustered as a Flight Rigger, and eventually achieving the rank and trade of Fitter IIA.
- **Deployments:** He served for the duration of World War II entirely within the mainland of Australia, meaning he did not see overseas operational service.
- **Interim Service:** Following the end of the war, he volunteered to continue his service in the Interim Air Force for a period of two years, beginning in January 1946.
- **Discharge:** He was officially discharged on demobilisation on 19 February 1948 with the rank of Leading Aircraftman (LAC).

### **The Wagga Wagga Incident**

An interesting footnote in his military record occurred in May 1947 while he was stationed in Wagga Wagga for a conversion course. After drinking at a local hotel on Anzac Day, he returned just after closing time and kicked a locked door to attract the licensee's attention, accidentally breaking a plate glass window. He pleaded guilty to malicious damage in civil court, was placed on a 12-month good behavior bond, and was ordered to pay £14.10 to replace the window.

### **Post-War Life and Family**

After his discharge, Peter missed the military and applied to re-enlist in the Permanent Air Force in late 1948 and early 1949, though these applications were ultimately

unsuccessful. He returned to civilian work with the PMG Department, working as an Exempt Technician's Assistant and a Telephone Technician.

On 29 September 1951, he married Shirley R. Willcox in Manly, New South Wales. Together, they raised four children over the next 13 years.

### **Later Years and Recognition**

For decades, Peter never received his military medals. In January 1997, at the age of 70 and living at 13 Urunga Street in Balgowlah, he wrote to the Department of Defence after speaking with other ex-servicemen to inquire about his entitlements. As a result, his records were reviewed, and he was finally awarded the War Medal 1939-45, the Australia Service Medal 1939-45, and the General Service Badge.

Alfred Peter Burns passed away on 17 March 2003 in Balgowlah, New South Wales, at the age of 76.

## **RAAF Postings and Training Timeline (1944–1948)**

- **28 April 1944:** Enlisted at No. 2 Recruit Centre in Sydney.
- **29 April 1944:** Posted to No. 2 Recruit Depot (2 RD) in Cootamundra, New South Wales.
- **6 June 1944:** Posted to No. 3 Stores Depot (3 SD).
- **30 June 1944:** Posted to No. 1 Engineering School (1 E.S.).
- **24 September 1944:** Stationed at No. 3 School of Technical Training (3 S.T.T.) in Ultimo.
- **9 October 1944 – 20 December 1944:** Completed Course No. 415 (Flight Rigger) at No. 1 Engineering School in Ascot Vale, Victoria. He passed with a final mark of 73.33%.
- **3 March 1945:** Posted to Canberra and No. 2 Operational Training Unit (2 O.T.U.).
- **21 September 1945:** Passed a trade test to obtain an Emergency Driver's Licence at No. 2 O.T.U. to temporarily replace a driver who was in the hospital.
- **28 January 1946:** Volunteered to serve in the Interim Air Force for an additional two years. Around this time, he was attached to the Care and Maintenance Unit (C.M.U.) in Mildura.
- **10 March 1947 – 30 May 1947:** Undertook the No. 233 IIA Conversion Course at the Ground Training School (G.T.S.) in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales. He successfully trained to remuster from Flight Rigger to Fitter IIA, passing with 75.2%.
- **Mid-to-Late 1947:** Posted to the Survey Squadron at RAAF Canberra, ACT.
- **19 February 1948:** Officially discharged on demobilisation from the Headquarters Eastern Area, T.D. & R. Section.

## **Alfred Peter (Peter) Burns (1926–2003)**

### **Early Life and Background**

Alfred Peter Burns, who frequently went by Peter, was born on 2 April 1926 in North Sydney, New South Wales, to William Joseph and Mary Burns. He grew up in the nearby suburb of Northbridge, residing with his family at 3 Narooma Road. He completed his education up to the second year at North Sydney Junior High School.

Before entering the military, Peter worked for the Postmaster-General's (PMG) Department as a Telegraph Messenger. Character references from his local postmaster and bank manager in April 1944 described him as a willing, conscientious, courteous, and strictly honest young man.

### **Military Service**

Peter enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 28 April 1944, shortly after turning 18.

- **Service Details:** He was assigned Service Number 163237.
- **Roles:** He began his service as a Trainee Technical, before being remustered as a Flight Rigger, and eventually achieving the rank and trade of Fitter IIA.
- **Deployments:** He served for the duration of World War II entirely within the mainland of Australia, meaning he did not see overseas operational service.
- **Interim Service:** Following the end of the war, he volunteered to continue his service in the Interim Air Force for a period of two years, beginning in January 1946.
- **Discharge:** He was officially discharged on demobilisation on 19 February 1948 with the rank of Leading Aircraftman (LAC).

### **The Wagga Wagga Incident**

An interesting footnote in his military record occurred in May 1947 while he was stationed in Wagga Wagga for a conversion course. After drinking at a local hotel on Anzac Day, he returned just after closing time and kicked a locked door to attract the licensee's attention, accidentally breaking a plate glass window. He pleaded guilty to malicious damage in civil court, was placed on a 12-month good behavior bond, and was ordered to pay £14.10 to replace the window.

### **Post-War Life and Family**

After his discharge, Peter applied to re-enlist in the Permanent Air Force in late 1948 and early 1949, though these applications were ultimately unsuccessful. He returned to

civilian work with the PMG Department, working as an Exempt Technician's Assistant and a Telephone Technician.

On 29 September 1951, he married Shirley R. Willcox in Manly, New South Wales. They had four children in 13 years.

### **Later Years and Recognition**

For decades, Peter never received his military medals. In January 1997, at the age of 70 and living at 13 Urunga Street in Balgowlah, he wrote to the Department of Defence after speaking with other ex-servicemen to inquire about his entitlements. As a result, his records were reviewed, and he was finally awarded the War Medal 1939-45, the Australia Service Medal 1939-45, and the General Service Badge.

Alfred Peter Burns passed away on 17 March 2003 in Balgowlah, New South Wales, at the age of 76.

## Bibliography

### **1. National Archives Record (Formatted as a Web Page/Database Entry)**

National Archives of Australia. "BURNS ALFRED PETER: Service Number - 163237."

National Archives of Australia. [www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au) (Accessed March 15, 2026).