Patrick John McMahon

Patrick John McMahon (John) was born in Port Pirie on the 29th December 1917 to Francis Joseph and Venetia Coralie McMahon (nee Perkins) of Beach Road, Solomontown, Port Pirie, South Australia. He was educated at Port Pirie High School. He was employed as a clerk in the local office of the South Australian Harbours Board and was a playing member for Saint Marks Football Club.

Patrick enlisted into the Royal Australian Air Force (R.A.A.F.) on the 16th January 1939 at Point Cook in Victoria. Patrick made his start in aviation in Port Pirie whereby on the 1st October 1938, he was awarded the Spencer Gulf Aero Club scholarship sponsored by "The Recorder" winning with 92 points of a possible 100 from 39 rivals. He was described as *“having flying ability above the ordinary”* graduating for his A Licence after 11 ½ flying hours. His subsequent career in the air force was brilliant and his promotion rapid.

He served in No. 9 Squadron R.A.A.F. for three years, 18 months of that period with the armed merchant cruiser HMAS Manoora carrying out searches for German surface raiders and other sorties consisting of anti-submarine patrols and searches for friendly shipping. Manoora was commissioned into the Royal Australian Navy (R.A.N.) on 12 December 1939; the conversion consisting of seven 6-inch main guns, two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, and equipment to operate a Supermarine Walrus Amphibious Aircraft, the aircraft that John flew.

Early use was to patrol Australian waters after which she was redeployed to the British China Station for work in Malay waters. In April 1940 after Norway was invaded by the Germans, the Manoora intercepted four Norwegian ships and escorted them to Brisbane. In June after Italy joined the war, she intercepted the Italian passenger ship ‘Romolo’ whose captain scuttled her rather than have her fall into allied hands. She spent the rest of 1940 - early 1943 on escort duties around Australia and to our north.

In early 1943 the Manoora was recommissioned, this time as a landing ship with the capacity to carry 1,250 troops, between 20-22 landing craft Vehicle personnel (LCVP) and two Landing Craft Mechanised (LCM). Used to transport troops to New Guinea and later to carry both Australian and US troops to landings in New Guinea and pacific Islands. Along with Kanimbla she took part in the landings at Morotai, Lingayen Gulf in the Philippines, Tarakan and Brunei. She later performed transport duties around New Guinea, the Philippines and Borneo.

In July 1944, John assumed command of No. 43 Squadron R.A.A.F. serving with it for nine months, mainly in the laying of mines in approaches to strongly defended enemy ports.

His award for skill and devotion to duty, the Distinguished Flying Cross, was cited as follows: *“At all times he led his squadron ably and set an excellent example by his consistency in locating targets, in spite of weather conditions."*

We will remember Wing Commander Patrick John McMahon D.F.C. Service Number 0388.

**Sources:**

Trove Australia

Ancestry.com

BirtwistleWiki

Australian War Memorial