

CANTERBURY HISTORY GROUP



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Newsletter March 2023

Greetings to all members and friends of the Canterbury History Group

The next meeting of the Canterbury History Group will be on **Monday 27th March at 8.00pm** at St Paul's parish Centre, Church Street, Canterbury.

Our speaker, local resident Michael Venn, will speak on **The Career of Francis Rennick, Chief Engineer of the Victorian Railways** who was a very early resident of Canterbury.

Francis Rennick built 'The Grange' on 10 acres in Mont Albert Road just west of Balwyn Road which is shown on William Tibbits lithograph (below) of Canterbury 1882. Grange Avenue is named after this house which later housed St Duthus Girls' School and then Fintona Junior School.

Francis Rennick was on the committee that in 1868 founded the first public school in Balwyn and was also Secretary of the Board of Guardians (Parish Council) of St Barnabas Church for many years

Michael Venn spent his own career working for the Victorian Railways and wrote his MA thesis on railway engineers and politicians. He extended this thesis into a book which he's published online.



Meeting dates for your diaries:

Monday 27th March
 Monday 24th April
 Monday 22nd May
 Monday 26th June
 Winter recess
 Monday 25th September
 October History Month Dinner Monday 23rd
 Monday November Christmas Lunch at 12.00 noon

Flying Officer Lyle Edward Bowes 1923 - 1944

In January 30th 2023 Canterbury History Group received a request for information about Flying Officer Lyle Edward Bowes who was born in Canterbury on 26th January 1923 - a hundred years before the email. His parents were William Edward and Gladys Anna Wilhelmina Bowes. What was unusual is that the enquirer was from Castricum, a seaside town in Northern Holland. He was writing a book about his hometown during World War 2 and wished to honour the nearly sixty airmen who washed up on the shore of Castricum during the 5 years of war. He believed that 'they gave their young lives for our freedom' and 'they must never be forgotten.' Of the men that our correspondent researched, the only photo that he hadn't been able to find was of Flying Officer Lyle Bowes.

On 21st June 1944, at 11.21 pm a Lancaster Bomber LM578 took off from RAF Spilsby in Lincolnshire on a night bombing raid on the synthetic oil plant at Wesseling near Cologne in Germany. Homeward-bound early in the morning, it was shot down by fighter pilot Hauptmann Martin Drewes and crashed into the North Sea off the Dutch coast. All 8 crewmen were killed. One of them, Ronald C. MacArthur, aged 19, washed up on the beach and was buried in Castricum Protestant Cemetery. Flying Officer Lyle Edward Bowes, the Air Bomber, washed up on the shore in England and was buried in Cambridge City Cemetery. The pilot, Trevor Smart DFC, and two other crew were never found. Tragically, four other Lancaster Bombers who set off on the same raid from RAF Spilsby, also crashed on 21 or 22 June 1944.

Our task was to find out what we could about Lyle Bowes, and especially to find a photo. We tried to locate the Bowes family in the 1923 Sands and MacDougall listing for Canterbury streets - with no success. Could they have been living with relatives when Lyle was born? Later family history searches revealed that they must have been living in the house of his maternal grandparents: Otto and Carrie Rohlk and using Sands and MacDougall we located them at 9 Maling Road, Canterbury. I will write more about this musical family later.

Finding Lyle Bowes' war record seemed a good place to start. Fortunately, I was going to Canberra to see an art exhibition so a trip to the National War Memorial became part of the holiday. There I was told his Service Number 419253 and that his file of 43 pages was in the National Archives and accessible online. I downloaded it for free.

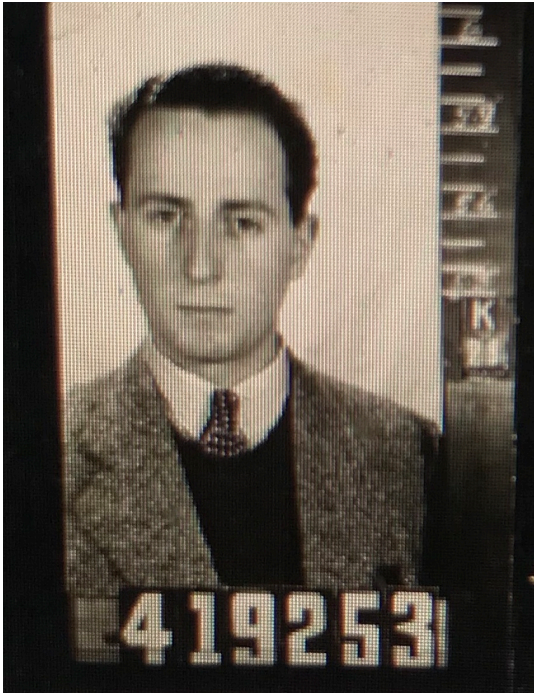
The handwriting in his file is very difficult to decipher and there are many mysterious RAAF acronyms but I was able to find out the following details about Lyle Bowes. He was single and living at 'Warwillah' Long Island, Frankston with his family at the time he enrolled in the Reserve for the RAAF in Melbourne on 10th January 1942. On this day, he was given a medical examination and his sight and hearing seemed



Newly completed Avro Lancaster bombers. The ill-fated Lancaster Bomber LM578 is 2nd from the right.

perfect. He was 18 years and 11 months and working as a bank clerk with the Commonwealth Bank, Collins Street Melbourne. We also know that he'd completed his Intermediate and Leaving Certificates at school, and he'd been studying 'Intermediate Accountancy, Intermediate Banker's First Exams'. He was comparatively well educated and starting out on his career.

It wasn't until 6 months later, on 17th July 1942 that he enlisted with the Royal Australian Air Force at Number 1 Recruiting Centre. There he took an oath: *'I swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Air Force of the Commonwealth of Australia for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed or removed; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will, in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law. So help me God.'*



By then, Lyle Bowes was 19 years 6 months. (His recruitment form warned of severe punishment for a false answer to the question of his age.) He was 5 feet 10 and 1/2 inches and weighed 11 stone 2 pounds and his chest measured 36 1/2 to 39 inches. He was of medium complexion with brown eyes and medium hair. He'd been 'considered fit for service' in the Certificate of Medical Examination when he'd joined the Reserve, 6 months earlier. He was C of E, and his Special Qualification was 'Yachting Experience'. Gould Street, where he lived on Long Island Frankston, runs parallel to the beach and he probably enjoyed sailing on Port Philip Bay.

Lyle Edward Bowes.

After enlistment, Lyle Bowes was vaccinated and inoculated against typhoid and sent to RAAF Station Bradfield Park NSW, the Initial Training School for Aircrew. Then in October he was sent to No 1 Air Observer's School in Cootamundra NSW. Returning to Victoria, he had a week's leave before being assigned to No. 3 Bombing and Gunnery School at West Sale, Victoria on 11th January 1943 where he was also inoculated against Tetanus. Finally, from March till April 1943 he was sent to No 2 Air Navigation School at Nhill where he was trained in astro-navigation. He passed all these courses, was considered well behaved and was commissioned on 1st April as a Pilot Officer, the equivalent of a 2nd Lieutenant in the army.

The next day he was granted 7 days' leave, presumably to spend with his family before embarking for an overseas posting to serve with the RAF in Europe, 'subject to a possible prior attachment to the Royal Canadian Airforce.' On 4th May 1943, he 'entrained' to Sydney, then Brisbane where he embarked on a US troop ship and disembarked in San Francisco on 23rd May. He then 'entrained' for the east coast, reaching Camp Miles Standish at Taunton, Massachusetts five days later. This camp was the staging post for the Boston port of embarkation from which over a million servicemen would sail for Europe.

The RAAF air crew arriving in the UK from the US were sent to No 11 Personnel Despatch and Receiving Centre (PDRC) at Brighton, not far from where Lyle Bowes disembarked on the 6th July 1943. Here a huge contingent of Aussies were housed in the Metropole Hotel before being assigned for training in other RAF units. During this time, Lyle Bowes was issued with 7 days' leave. A month later on 2nd August 1943, he was sent to No 9 Observer's School (Bombing and Gunnery) at the Advanced Flying Unit (AFU) at Penrhos Wales. At the end of this course he was again issued with seven days' leave.

Then on the 21st September he was sent to No 17 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Silverstone for the last stage of training for night bombing crews. There they trained on Vickers Wellington bombers before

they were assigned to an operational unit. At Silverstone, they would be 'crewed up' with other men until they sorted out the right mix of skills and experience. From then on, they would remain with that crew.

Finally, on 5th January 1944, Lyle Bowes and his crew were assigned to 51 Base at Swinderby in Lincolnshire to a Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) which gave them training in larger, heavier, 4 Engine bombers so they could fly Lancaster Bombers on night raids.

From 51 Base, on 5th May they were assigned to 207 Squadron based at RAF Spilsby to put all their training into practice in night raids over northern Europe. As the Air Bomber, Bowes would use his extensive navigational training to map, calculate and hit the target. The flying was intense and he was given a week off from 3rd June but recalled after 4 days. It was only 13 days later that he and his crew were shot down.

Flying Officer Trevor Tressler Smart (RAFVR)	age 20	Pilot	R
Flying Officer Lyle Edward Bowes (RAAF)	age 21	Air Bomber	CCC
Flying Officer Douglas John Faires (RAFVR)	age 20	Navigator	R
Pilot Officer Charles David Boyce (RCAF)	age 20	Rear Gunner	CPC
Flight Sergeant Leslie Frederick Jackson (RAFVR)	age 22	Second Air Bomber	R
Flight Sergeant Henry Archibald Shaw (RAFVR)	age 21	Wireless Air Gunner	BGC
Sergeant Ronald Charles McArthur (RAFVR)	age 19	Flight Engineer	CPC
Sergeant Kenneth Walter Sansom (RAFVR)	age 21	Mid Upper Gunner	WGC

R Runnymede Air Forces Memorial, Surrey
 CCC Cambridge City Cemetery: Grave 14106
 CPC Castricum Protestant Cemetery
 BGC Bergen General Cemetery, North Holland
 WGC Westduin General Cemetery, The Hague, Holland

Almost one in five Australian airmen serving in Britain did not survive the war. Of those members of the RAAF serving in RAF Bomber Command, more than one in three were killed, which represents 20 per cent of all Australians lost in combat in WW2. Flying Officer Lyle Bowes probably had very little idea of what he was getting himself into when he enlisted, but he trained hard and like the rest of the crew was very young and immensely brave. When he died on 22nd June, 1944 he was only 21 years old.

R: Frankston War memorial (original) Civic Centre, Davey Street. Replaced by a new monument in 2016 in Beauty Park.

Lyle Bowes' family knew that his plane hadn't returned from the mission but they had to wait until July for his death to be confirmed.

Trove showed his death notice in The Argus, Sat 8th July 1944, p. 2.



Bowes 419253 Flying Officer Lyle Edward Bowes killed as a result of an air operation over Germany June 22, buried Cambridge, England, dearly loved younger son of Mr and Mrs W.E Bowes and loving brother of Glenn, Warwillah, Gould Street, Long Island, Frankston, aged 21 years.

Sadly, the Bowes family were to suffer another tragedy not long after. Trove shows another death notice on 20th March, 1947 in Standard (Frankston) p.6.

Mr Glenn William Bowes passed away on March 11th at the residence of his parents, Mr and Mrs Bowes of Gould Street, Frankston...Glen Bowes was Lyle Bowes' older brother and was aged 29. He'd enlisted in the Army in March 1939 as a Private and had been discharged 19.11.1941.

Sources:

Australian National Archives (online) Trove: newspapers and gazettes (online)

Ancestry records. Sands and McDougall 1922 and 1923 : from CHG archive.

RAF sites (online) giving details of the battles, aircraft, bases and training units.

207 Squadron Royal Airforce History (online)

Canterbury History Group News

- The 2nd Edition of 'Canterbury A History' by Don Gibb with Jill Barnard is on sale at The Bendigo Bank, Maling Road as well as the Chemist and the Newsagency. The Bendigo Bank sponsored the book with a grant and sell it without commission at the recommended price of \$49.00. The Chemist very generously offered to do the same and we are very grateful to him.
- Jenny Norvick has written a history of the Canterbury Bowling Club using the resources of CHG archive and we will supply copies of our photos. These will be on display in the new Canterbury Community Precinct which has been built around the old Bowling Club building.
- Our new Heritage Precinct in the old Library will be opening later in the year as it hasn't yet been started. We hope we will be in the building by August or September.
- Development of our new website has started – again paid for by a Boroondara Community Strengthening Grant.
- **A reminder to all those who haven't paid their annual membership fees to do so online OR deliver the money to Neil Curry in an envelope with your name and email.**
Details: \$20 single membership
 \$35 couple membership
 \$15 concessions

BSB 633 000 Acct: 152 694 303 Remember to include your name (s).

Neil Curry: 34 Bryson Street Canterbury 3126.

The Benefits of Membership:

In the new Heritage Centre: access to catalogued items and use of our subscription to Ancestry.

On the new website: access to our collections and newsletters and Members Only sections.

Australian Myths: Fact or Fiction?

Some of these have been perpetuated by the Australian media as recently as 2023, even on ABC programs, without being corrected by management. It's important to sort the facts from the fiction.

1. The successful referendum of 1967 put to the Australian people by the Holt Government gave citizenship to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Is this true?

Answer: No. The referendum had nothing to do with citizenship. All Indigenous peoples and all other Australians were classified as citizens no later than 1948 when Australian citizenship was introduced. Until then, Australians were British citizens.

The 1967 Referendum gave the Commonwealth Parliament power to make laws with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people wherever they lived in Australia. It also made it possible to include them in the national census. The highest vote FOR was in Victoria (95%)and the lowest was in W.A. (81%)

2. The 1967 Referendum gave Indigenous people the right to vote. Is this true?

Answer: No. This right was in place before the referendum. The Menzies Government in the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1962, granted all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the right to enrol and vote in federal elections. Enrolling to vote was not compulsory for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but once they enrolled, voting was compulsory - as it was for all non-Indigenous Australians.

Before that, Indigenous peoples could enrol to vote in some states but not in others. Because of this, it was estimated that 30,000 Indigenous people were denied the vote in both state and federal elections, by discriminatory state practices. Western Australia and the Northern Territory granted Aboriginal People the right to vote in 1962 and Queensland followed in 1965. However, it was not until 1984 that enrolling and voting at federal elections became compulsory for Indigenous Australians too – an equal right.

3. Aboriginal people were covered by a flora and fauna act. Is this true?

Answer: No. Aboriginal people have never been covered by a flora and fauna act, under state or federal law. This myth may reflect the appalling discrimination suffered by Indigenous people but it is not true.

4. Federation in 1901, excluded Aboriginal people from voting. Is this true.

No and Yes. The First Commonwealth Franchise Act 1902 granted men and women of all states the right to vote but only Indigenous people who already had this right were included. Therefore, those included were both male and female Indigenous people in S.A. and Aboriginal men in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

Laws had been specifically enacted to deny the vote to Aboriginal peoples in Queensland (1885) Western Australia (1893) and in the Northern territory (1922). Queensland extended this denial to Torres Strait Islanders in 1930. These states and territory continued to deny Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders the vote until 1962 plus.

There was little popular momentum for change to indigenous voting rights until after the Second World War. The injustice of permitting an Indigenous man to fight and possibly die, for his country, but not to vote, became clear to many. In March 1949, Chifley introduced an amendment to the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918, extending the right to vote in federal elections to any person who had been a member of the defence forces. However, the situation remained unchanged in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory for many years.

Sources:

Australian National Museum

'The Australian' Feb 4-5, 2023.

