

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AVIATION MUSEUM

SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

WGCDR Norman Barnett Tindale

Intelligence Officer, WW2

Noted South Australian anthropologist's unheralded role in World War 2 intelligence

Norman Barnett Tindale is one of our lesser-known South Australians who served in World War 2, not in a combat role but in a critical enabling role where he directly contributed to the war effort at both the tactical and strategic levels. And yet, most people would be unaware of his incredible wartime role, his impact and remarkably, but sadly, he did not get much recognition for his service. What makes it even more surprising is that the gentleman was a noted South Australian Anthropologist who had worked before the war at the South Australian Museum.



Above: Norman Tindale as an Acting Wing Commander late in World War 2 (SA Museum)

Norman Barnett Tindale was born 12 October 1900 in Perth. He was the son of a Salvation Army accountant, James Hepburn Tindale and Salvation Army missionary, Mary Jane Barnett. In 1903 the family relocated to Adelaide and then in 1907, to Japan where James Tindale had been selected for an accountant position. In Tokyo, Norman Tindale attended Tsukiji Grammar School, a school for foreign children, and then from 1914, Yotsuya High School, a Japanese government school. After eight years in Japan, the family return to Perth in 1915 and then Adelaide in 1917.

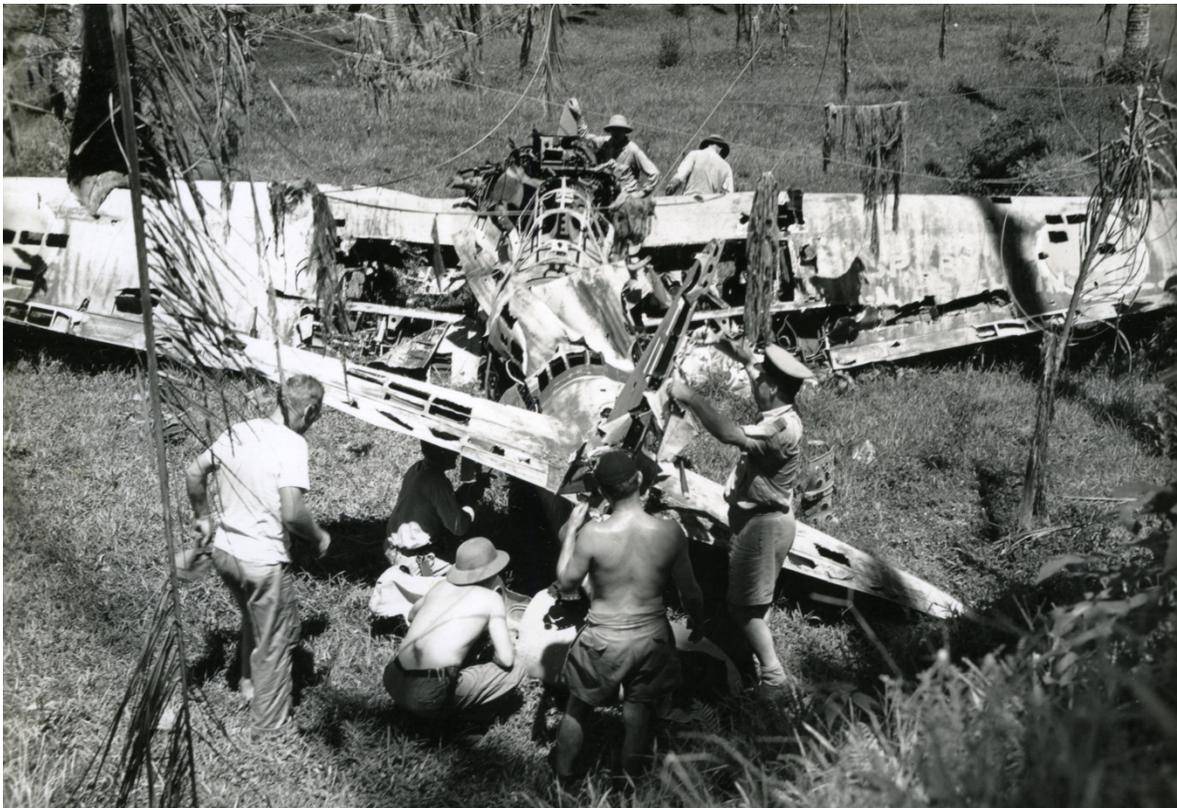
Awaiting an opening at the South Australian Museum in entomology, Tindale initially worked as a Library Cadet with the South Australian Public Library before becoming an Entomological Assistant at the SA Museum in 1919. Between the wars, Tindale became one of Australia's most prolific anthropologists, travelling extensively throughout central Australia. His completion of the first systematic archaeological excavation in Australia, on the River Murray in 1929, led to the first cultural chronology of Aboriginal prehistory. He also produced the first comprehensive regional survey of Australian tribes in 1940 which resulted in the first ever understanding of 250

discrete aboriginal tribal territories. While also being an anthropologist, he was also a pioneering Australian archaeologist specializing on the Pleistocene geology of Australia.

On 23 February 1942, only four days after the Japanese attacked Darwin for the first time, Tindale enlisted in the RAAF at No 1 Recruit Centre, Melbourne, as a trainee officer.

He proceeded to No 1 School of Administration in Melbourne for basic training. Given his ability to speak fluent Japanese, the RAAF realised his potential for intelligence work and commissioned him as a Pilot Officer on 20 March 1942, as an Intelligence Officer in the Administration and Special Duties Branch. He then completed basic intelligence officer training.

Initially posted to the Directorate of Intelligence, RAAF Headquarters, in Melbourne, as a junior intelligence officer, one of Tyndale's first tasks was to assist in analysing the remains of a Japanese ZEKE fighter aircraft that had crashed on one of Darwin's outer islands. Noting that the allies knew little about the Japanese aircraft, it was quickly established that a detailed analysis of the Japanese aircraft industry was required. The Air Industry Section was consequently established with Tindale placed in charge.



Above: Norman Tindale (Bottom right standing with cap on) inspecting the first Japanese aircraft to crash on Australian soil. (SA Museum)

Using his research and analysis skills developed at the South Australian Museum, Tindale developed the methodology for removing and analysing production plates of Japanese aircraft. He developed a manual with which air intelligence personnel would safely collect and store artefacts removed from crashed Japanese aircraft. These were then analysed and recorded with imagery and data on specific cards for databasing.

In 1943, he went to New Guinea and Solomon Islands conducting field work himself just after being promoted to Flight Lieutenant. By the end of the war, the section had produced 35,000 cards. This critical information then provided the baseline for detailed analysis and reports production on Japanese aircraft industry capabilities and capacities. He developed a flow chart for each aircraft type which showed the flow of aircraft component production to final aircraft assembly across Japan.

This was complemented with his breaking of Japanese coding systems for Japanese aircraft components, a measure implemented by the Japanese in 1930's, to protect the true capability of the aircraft industry.

The work by Tindale directly resulted in the allies developing an informed understanding of not only Japanese aircraft industry but the targeting of its critical facilities by the American strategic bombing campaign during 1945. Reflecting the value of Tindale's work, in mid-1944 the AIRIND Section was, at the request of the United States, integrated into a joint allied intelligence organisation in Washington giving it responsibility to analysis information on the Japanese aircraft industry from all sources. Promoted to Acting Squadron Leader, Tindale travelled to Washington where he worked for the remainder of the war. An instrumental piece of work at this stage was his analysis of Japan's balloon bombing assault on the western coast of the United States. Using similar techniques, he developed in Australia with Japanese aircraft, he analysed balloon debris determining from what part of Japan they were produced enabling the US Air Force to target their production facilities.

With the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Tindale was then integrated into an air industry analysis team in the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, to assess the accuracy of the allied intelligence, targeting and bombing campaign. This was a significant piece of work requiring Tindale to return to Japan, surveying sites and interviewing Japanese from October to December 1945.

Completing his work in May 1946, Tindale's appointment was terminated in August 1946 with him discharging at the Acting rank of Wing Commander and returning to Adelaide to continue his work with the South Australian Museum.

Unfortunately, Tindale's significant contribution to the Allied victory remains largely unknown or unrecognized. Despite being recommended by the Americans for a Legion of Merit and receiving a Letter of Commendation from the Chairman of the US Strategic Bombing Survey, he did not receive any specific recognition for his remarkable service. He was awarded the Pacific Star, Defence Medal, 1939-45 War Medal and the Australian Service Medal 1939-45.

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