

## (SYDNEY) DAVID HERAPATH

RAAF SERVICE NUMBER 416334



This is the story of David Herapath's Air Force service during World War Two.

David was born on 13 October 1922 in Northwood, Middlesex, United Kingdom to parents Sydney Francis Harry Herapath and Elsie Palmer Herapath. Sydney (senior) had served in the Royal Naval Air Services/Royal Air Force during World War One and his service details are listed at the end of this story.

In 1924 he emigrated at the age of two with younger brother Ronald Martin Herapath (who also served in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War Two – details at end of this story) and their parents arriving in Adelaide on the sailing ship '*Orama*' on 19 December 1924.

He attended Stansbury and Rose Park Primary Schools followed by Adelaide High School.

After schooling he obtained employment with the South Australian Gas Company undertaking clerical duties.

In early 1941 he applied for enlistment to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and was accepted via the Adelaide recruiting office. Next-of-kin listed as Sydney Herapath.

### INITIAL TRAINING SCHOOL

His actual date of enlistment was 24 May 1941 when he reported for duty at No. 1 Initial Training School (ITS) at Somers, Victoria, from where he graduated on 24 July 1941. In pre-war days Somers was a boys' camp which had been inaugurated by Lord Somers, a former State Governor of Victoria.

The role of the ITS was to introduce the trainees to the RAAF procedures and discipline, and for them to undergo assessments for the areas in which they were to serve.

### ELEMENTARY FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL

David was selected to undergo pilot training and, as a result, he reported to Number 7 Elementary Flying Training School (EFTS) at Western Junction, Launceston on 27 July 1941.

The course consisted of both ground and flying courses as follows.

**Ground instruction** during an eight week course was normally:

- 1) Airmanship (including engines, airframe, principles of flight, aircraft operation and regulations);
- 2) Aircraft recognition;
- 3) Armament;
- 4) Drill;
- 5) Physical training and parachute drill;
- 6) Meteorology;
- 7) Navigation;
- 8) Signals;
- 9) Link Trainer; and
- 10) Discussions and debates.

## **Flying Training**

It was imperative that at this elementary stage trainees learnt to handle the controls of an aircraft correctly in a smooth, leisurely and accurate manner. Forty-five minutes was the maximum period for the initial dual instruction flight. As training progressed, air instruction was given in instrument flying, navigation, night flying and aerobatics, bearing in mind the following:

1) Instrument Flying; 2) Navigation; 3) Night Flying; and 4) Aerobatics.

David flew a variety of serialised Tiger Moths from both RAAF and RAF blocks. He completed his first solo flight on 12 August 1941 in DH82 T5412 and on 13 September 1941 successfully finished with No. 7 EFTS passing out with a total flight time of 52 hours 10 minutes.

## **SERVICE FLYING TRAINING SCHOOL**

After a few days leave David reported to No. 6 SFTS (Service Flying Training School) at Mallala SA on 23 September 1941.



*DH82 Tiger Moth Flying Trainer*

A successful trainee pilot progressed to a SFTS to learn more advanced flying skills. Service Flying Training School training was divided into two distinct training phases, intermediate training and advanced training and was perhaps the most comprehensive course that David undertook. The program consisted of lectures and various navigation exercises in solo cross-country trials, day and night. A Link ground trainer was also utilised.

In the intermediate training phase the pupils learnt all the basic points of flying their aircraft and the aim of the advanced training phase was to show how their basic knowledge was applied to service flying. The course had a duration of about 20 weeks, which was dependant on weather, aircraft availability, demand for pilots and availability of placements on subsequent courses.

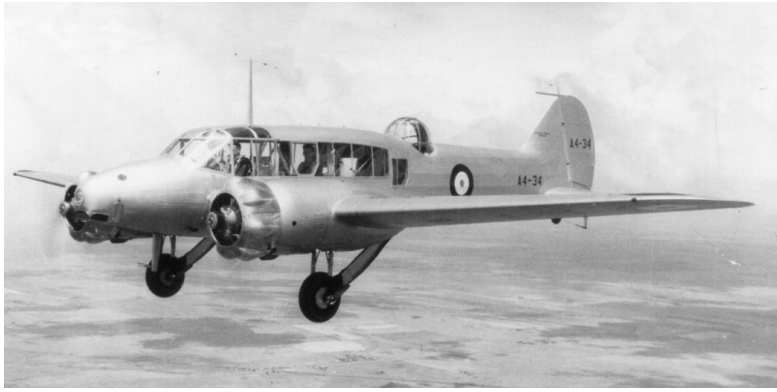
Subjects taught were:

1) Airmanship; 2) Airframes; 3) Engines; 4) Maintenance; 5) Link Trainer Exercises; 6) Armament; 7) Bombing; 8) Gunnery; 9) Air Navigation; 10) Signals; 11) Reconnaissance and photography; 12) Instrument Flying; 13) Formation Flying; 14) Night Flying

On 12 December 1941 David was part of a group of airmen who paraded before Wing-Commander Norman Brearley to have their pilot's wings pinned on their tunics. It was the first "wings" parade in South Australia.

Aircraft flown were Avro Ansons.

As may be seen the course was very comprehensive. David successfully finished the course on 4 February 1942.



*Avro Anson Twin-Engined Trainer*

From 6 February 1942 until 16 February 1942 David was posted to No. 1 Communications Flight at Laverton, Victoria. Leave followed and this was followed by a posting to the Central Flying School (CFS) at Camden NSW just to the south-east of Sydney.

### **CENTRAL FLYING SCHOOL**

The school was responsible for training flight instructors, setting flying standards, and auditing flying practices. David was based at Camden from 2 March 1942 until 17 April 1942 undertaking the instructor course. He successfully passed and finished at Camden on 17 April 1942

On 21 April 1942 he commenced duties at No 1 EFTS Parafield SA as a flying instructor and operated from there until 9 June 1942. Aircraft flown were the DH82 Tiger Moth.



*Avro Cadet Single-Engined Trainer*

### **BOMBING AND GUNNERY SCHOOL**

After completion of duties at Parafield David moved to No. 1 Bombing and Gunnery School (BAGS) at Evans Head, NSW. This school had been established in

1941 and included extensive bombing and gunnery ranges which were established to the north and south of the Station as well as a sea leg to the south. The entire Station covered 600 square miles (1,500 km<sup>2</sup>). In addition to bombing and gunnery practice, the school also trained personnel for roles including Air Observers/Bomb Aimers, Wireless Operators/Air Gunners and Navigators. The main aircraft used for training were the Avro Anson and the Fairey Battle light bomber, of which some 70 operated from Evans Head.



*Fairey Battle*

David was a staff pilot flying the Fairey Battles with either trainee air gunners stationed in the gunnery position or flying the Battle aircraft towing a target drogue. Trainee gunners in another aircraft flying in formation used the drogue as a target as part of their training.

### **OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT**

After being based at RAAF Evans head until 3 August 1943 David transferred to No. 4 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Williamstown NSW from 7 August 1943. This involved some training on the CAC Wirraway. The course finished on 2 September 1943. Aircraft flown was the CAC Wirraway.



*CAC Wirraway*

### **RESERVE PERSONNEL POOL**

On 18 September 1943 David was transferred to No. 1 Reserve Personnel Pool (RPP) in Townsville where he remained until 22 September 1943. On that day he was transferred to No. 6 Rescue and Communications Squadron which was based in Milne Bay, Papua until 3 November 1943.

### **COMMUNICATIONS UNIT**

On 3 November 1943 David transferred to No 9 Communications Unit, Papua and remained with that body until 29 November 1943. Minimum flying was done during this time.

### **RESERVE PERSONNEL POOL**

David was placed with the RPP on 29 November 1943 for the one day!

He then had some leave and on 8 December 1943 he was posted to No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School (BAGS) at Port Pirie for the one day and the following day he was transferred to No. 3 Air Observers School (AOS) but for only that day. Were these last two postings cancelled? David remained on leave until 13 December 1943

### **OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT**

On 13 December 1943 David took up duties at No 1 OTU East Sale where he mainly flew Airspeed Oxfords and DAP Beauforts. He remained there until 7 July 1944. The OTU provided advanced operational flying and instruction for pilots.

The 'Oxford Training Notes for Flying Instructors' handbook was very extensive and included the following topics that were to be passed:

- 1) Familiarity with cockpit layout; 1A) Pilot's preliminary check before starting engines; 1B) Starting up procedure; 1C) Systematic check of instruments and controls whilst warming up; 1D) Testing engines; 1E) Stopping engines; 1F) Emergency operations; 1G) Control locking device; 2) Effect of controls; 3) Taxying; 4) Straight and level flying; 4A) Single Engine Flight; 5) Climbing; 5A) Gliding; 5B) Stalling; 6) Medium turns; 7) Take Off;
- 8) Powered approach and landing; 8A) Baulked approach procedure; 9) Gliding approach and landing; 10) Spinning; 11) Sideslipping; 12) Precautionary landing; 13) Low flying; 14) Steep turns; 15) Climbing turns; 16) Single engine forced landing; 16A) Forced landing –no power; 17) Action in the event of a fire; 17A) Abandoning aircraft; 18) Taking off and landing out of wind; 18A) Night flying; 18B) Formation flying; Appendix A-Petrol system; and Appendix B-Oil system.

The Cheetah X engine handbook was also required to be studied.

### **GENERAL RECONNAISSANCE SCHOOL**

On 8 July 1944 David was posted to the General Reconnaissance (GR) School at Bairnsdale until 13 September 1944 for a training course as he remained only until 13 September 1944. The unit also supported maritime patrols of sea lanes around the New South Wales, Victorian and Tasmanian coasts.

### **OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT**

David transferred back to No 1 OTU at East Sale on 11 October 1944 until 1 November 1944 where he flew the DAP Beaufort.

### **CENTRAL FLYING SCHOOL**

On 27 November 1944 David was posted to the Central Flying School (CFS), Point Cook where he remained until 12 March 1945. It appears he undertook ground instructors lecturing to trainees.



*DAP Beaufort Twin-Engined Trainer*



*David's War Medals*

### **No. 1 PERSONNEL DEPOT**

On 12 March 1945 David was posted to No. 1 Personnel Depot, Ransford which was located in the Melbourne Cricket Ground. He remained there until 15 June 1945 when he was transferred to his home city of Adelaide.

### **No. 4 PERSONNEL DEPOT**

On 16 June 1945 he was transferred to No. 4 Personnel Depot, Springbank where he remained until discharged on 6 July 1945 and returning to civilian life after just four years.



*David in 2000*

## **POST WAR LIFE**

On his return to civilian life he was reinstated with the South Australian Gas Company. He later worked with the Royal Insurance Company from where he retired. David died on 18 July 2005.

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## **GENERAL**

### **AIRCRAFT TYPES FLOWN OR FLOWN IN**

Airspeed Oxford, Avro Anson, Avro Cadet, CAC Wirraway, DAP Beaufort, De Havilland DH82 Tiger Moth, De Havilland DH84 Dragon, De Havilland DH94 Moth Minor, Douglas DC-2, Douglas DC3, Fairey Battle, Lockheed Hudson, and Ryan STM.

### **CREDITS**

Pilot log Book S D Herapath, Rosemary Herapath for allowing access to photographs and the log book, K Gogler for allowing production of RAAF Training Notes, various RAAF training notes held at the South Australian Aviation Museum, Chas Schaedel for additional information.

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