

SIGNIFICANT AVIATOR PROFILES

FLGOFF CLIVE HILL

RAAF SERVICE NUMBER 437408



Clive Hill in 1944 (RAAF Official)

This is the story of Clive Hill's Air Force service during WWII.

Clive was born on 30 November 1924 in Keswick SA to parents Jack and May Hill.

After finishing his schooling Clive worked with his father doing odd jobs and using his handyman skills as a carpenter & painter.

In 1939 WWII began. Being attracted to enlist in the RAAF but being too young, he joined the Air Training Corps (ATC) at age sixteen. His intake was the first of the war.

The organization was based in Barton Terrace, North Adelaide and offered courses in pre-entry training for cadets expected to volunteer for the air force. The majority of the lecturers were high school teachers.

Many of the students such as Clive went on to become air-gunners, navigators, engineers, pilots and ground staff. The ATC provided an important role in WWII.

INITIAL TRAINING SCHOOL

After two years in the ATC, Clive enlisted in the RAAF via No. 5 Recruit Centre, Adelaide on 30 January 1943 and was posted as an Aircraftman 2 to No. 4 Initial Training School (ITS) at Mount Breckan in the seaside town of Victor Harbor SA. Recruits were transported there by train. Courses there involved basic training and discipline, so all trainees received the same training and underwent assessments as to where they were to serve.

WIRELESS AND AIR GUNNERS SCHOOL

Clive was selected to undergo gunnery training and, as a result, he reported with the rank of Leading Aircraftman to No. 1 Wireless and Air Gunners School at Ballarat, Vic on 22 May 1943.

The areas of Wireless training were Morse and electrical science, Morse and radio theory, Morse and practical radio, practical operating of aircraft wireless equipment on the ground and radio sending and receiving from Wackett aircraft trainers. Trainees must then be capable of sending at least 18 words a minute in Morse, either in plain language or code. It was expected that trainees after graduation would be competent enough to take on operational flights immediately. The latter part of the training involved transfer to a Bombing and Gunnery School.

BOMBING AND GUNNERY SCHOOL

For the next part of his training Clive was posted to No. 2 Bombing and Gunnery School at Port Pirie SA for both ground and aerial training. He was posted there from 20 September 1943 and travelled from Ballarat by train.

The principal aircraft type operated was the Fairey Battle Mark 1. This could train men in bombing or gunnery (a few were also equipped for Wireless instruction). The fuselage was large enough to accommodate up to three trainees who could each take turns in either the rear gun or bomb-aimer positions, making it an efficient training platform. The Mark 1 Battles were ex-RAF machines, some of which had seen service during the Battle of France in 1940. They were used for the bombing and gunnery training missions. The latter were flown against targets on the water (air-ground gunnery) or against towed aerial targets (air-air gunnery).

After completing the gunnery course Clive graduated on 14 October 1943 and then had some leave before his next posting which was to be overseas to Europe. He said he demonstrated good gunnery skills which ensured he was chosen in that role. At this time his local Grange Baptist Church gave him a gift of a bible which he always carried whilst in the air force. He still has the book today.



Fairey Battles near Port Pirie during WWII (Pt Pirie RAAF Association via SAAM)

EMBARKATION DEPOT

On 15 October 1943 Clive was posted to No. 1 Embarkation Depot, Melbourne Showgrounds, Ascot Vale Vic having been promoted to Sergeant (T). Personnel were posted there in preparation for transporting overseas. Shipping departed Melbourne Pier and then across the Pacific to San Francisco, USA. This was followed by train travel across the country to New York, where it was snowing and provided an opportunity to ice skate in Santorini. Clive related: 'It did not seem like a war was on'.

Finally, it was time to cross the Atlantic Ocean on what was a 'terrible' ship but no submarines were encountered. On reaching Liverpool in the UK, the bombed buildings were evidence of the war.

PERSONNEL DESPATCH AND RECEIVING CENTRE

Effective from 9 January 1944, Clive was posted to No. 11 P.D.R.C. at Brighton, Sussex for assimilation into the RAF and to determine where airmen were to be posted.

OPERATIONAL TRAINING UNIT

Clive was posted to No. 18 O.T.U on 1 February 1944 at Bircotes and introduced to RAF service. This was an introduction to the crew team which would do further training on Vickers Wellingtons. The crew consisted of Pilot (RAF), navigator/nose gunner (RCAF), bomb aimer (RCAF), rear gunner (RAF) and mid upper gunner (RAAF – Clive). He flew eighty-eight hours in airborne training on various exercises in addition to the ground courses, all to prepare the airmen for bombing missions.

NO. 11 BASE

Effective from 30 April 1944, Clive was posted to No. 11 Base for No. 1667 Heavy Conversion Unit for a further thirty hours airborne training, having been promoted to Flight Sergeant from 14 April. This was followed by a posting to No. 1 LFS for conversion to the Avro Lancaster, where he undertook ten additional hours training as the mid-upper gunner.

NO. 100 SQUADRON (RAF)

From 25 July 1944 Clive was posted to No, 100 Squadron, which was based at RAF Grimsby and operated Avro Lancaster aircraft.

On 4 August 1944, in Lancaster LM175, the crew conducted a four-hour flight test as a crew and then three days later, the 7th in Lancaster LL898, they flew a four-hour fifteen-minute sortie to the battle front area in France. This was done to introduce the crew to wartime operations.

NO. 11 BASE

From 14 August 1944 further training was undertaken at No. 1481B Gunnery School for four hours, No 1662 Heavy Conversion Unit Blyton on Halifax's for thirty hours followed by No. 1 LFS Hemswell on Lancasters for eleven hours. All this and earlier training was in preparation for operations over Europe.



Avro Lancaster (Canadian Warplane Heritage)

NO. 625 SQUADRON (RAF)

On 12 October 1944 Clive was posted to this 'Heavy Bomber Squadron' at RAF Kelstern, Lincolnshire to start bombing missions over Germany. His crew consisted of Flight Lieutenant Chris Stevens - pilot (RAF), navigator (RCAF), bomb aimer (RCAF), tail gunner (RAF), second pilot (RAF) and Clive – mid-upper gunner (RAAF).

The early bombing operations were over France to give the extra experience before the main raids to Germany. On their first bombing operation to Germany they went to Cologne and return in Avro Lancaster PB158 in a time of five hours and fifty-five minutes. Clive subsequently completed a total of thirty-three bombing operations with the last on 18 April 1945. Operations were a mix of day and night sorties. During this period he was promoted to Pilot Officer on 26 January 1945 and then Flying Officer on 26 July 1945.

BOMBING OPERATIONS

Date	Lancaster S/N	Pilot	Target	Flying Time
5-8-44	LM458	Flt Lt Holland	Pauillac – oil storage	8 hrs 18 min
7-8-44	LL898	"	Caen – battle front area	4 hrs 15 min
10-8-44	LL898	"	Vincly F/B site	4 hrs
11-8-44	LL898	"	Douai – M/Y	4 hrs
30-10-44	PB158	Flt Lt Stevens	Cologne	5 hrs 55 min
31-10-44	PB408	"	Cologne	5 hrs
2-11-44	'K'	"	Dusseldorf	5 hrs 15 min
4-11-44	'H2'	"	Bochum	4 hrs 15 min
6-11-44	"H2"	"	Gelsenkirchen	4 hrs 15 min
9-11-44	"J"	"	Wanne-Fickel	4 hrs 10 min
11-11-44	'B2"	"	Dortmund	5 hrs 15 min
18-11-44	LN679	"	Wanne-Fickel	5 hrs 10 min
29-11-44	LN679	"	Dortmund	5 hrs 40 min
3-12-44	LN679	"	Uft Dam	4 hrs 45 min
4-12-44	LN679	"	Karlsruhe	5 hrs 50 min
6-12-44	"H2"	F/O Baltin	Mersburg	8 hrs 10 min
29-12-44	"S"	F/O Naylor	Gelsenkirchen	5 hrs 45 min
14/15-1-45	'K2"	Flt Lt Stevens	Mersburg	8 hrs
16/17-1-45	LM679	"	Zeitz	8 hrs 15 min
1-2-45	LM679	"	Mannheim	6 hrs 35 min
2/3-2-45	LM679	"	Wiesbaden	6 hrs 20 min
7-2-45	LM679	"	Cleve	5 hrs 20 min
8/9-2-45	NB324?	"	Politz	7 hrs 40 min
13/14-2-45	LM679	"	Dresden	9 hrs 15 min
23-2-45	LM679	"	Pforzheim	7 hrs 35 min
28-2-45	LM679	"	Neuss – cancelled	2 hrs
1-3-45	LM679	"	Mannheim	6 hrs 25 min
7/8-3-45	LM679	"	Dessau	9 hrs 45 min
11-3-45	LM679	"	Essen	5 hrs 15 min
12-3-45	LM679	"	Dortmund	5 hrs 15 min
16/17-3-45	LM679	"	Nuremburg	8 hrs 5 min
9/10-4-45	LM679	"	Kiel	6 hrs 5 min
18-4-45	LM679	"	Heliogoland	4 hrs 50 min

GENERAL

Clive related that the best part of the operation was the landing at base and the relief that the crew had returned. On one flight a propellor from the inner left engine came off. The pilot was then told by the ground staff "You will get a bill for losing a propellor." Otherwise the only damage to the aircraft while on operations was a few bullet holes.

Clive stated that the rear gunner on his Lancaster is alleged to have been the first gunner to shoot down a Luftwaffe jet.

After finishing service in the United Kingdom, return to Australia was via sea on the *Orontes* through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, eventually disembarking in Sydney followed by train to Adelaide. There he was posted to No. 4 Personnel Depot on 3 September 1945 and formally discharged on 1 October 1945 as a Flying Officer.

His rank progression can be summarised as follows:

Date	Rank
30 Jan 1943	Aircraftman 2
22 May 1943	Leading Aircraftman
14 Oct 1943	Sergeant (T)
14 Apr 1944	Flight Sergeant
26 Jan 1945	Pilot Officer
26 July 1945	Flying Officer

It was a difficult time returning to civilian life after two and a half years in the RAAF but the Commonwealth Government offered retraining support and Clive went to work with Battams Builders, near Croydon. After marrying Shirley, Clive built the family home and later went into business for himself building small homes and houses.

He was later awarded 'The Legion of Honour' by the French Government.

During one overseas trip to Europe with his wife they visited Cologne (one of the cities targeted during his flying operations) to see the cathedral. It had suffered only minimal damage.

Clive will be aged ninety-six in November 2020 and was interviewed by the writer in September 2020.

Nigel Daw
History Group Member
November 2020
