

## PAST GRAMMARIANS KILLED IN AIR COMBAT

Twenty-one Past Grammarians were killed in air combat during World War Two and it is heartening to know that their sacrifice will again be recognised.

Two past students enlisted in air forces during World War One. **GEORGE HALL**, our first Rhodes Scholar, enlisted in the RAF in England and **LAWRENCE WACKETT** one of our most famous past students flew for the RAAF. Wackett was awarded the DFC and AFC for his exploits during the war and went on to design planes that were used in combat in World War Two. It is perhaps ironic that a couple of Past Grammarians were shot down in World War Two while flying planes designed by Wackett.

One hundred and thirty-eight past students enlisted in the RAAF during World War Two. This is a high figure considering that the School enrolment in the late 1920s and 1930s was usually less than one hundred per year. Many of our past students were members of the legendary 460 Squadron, a RAAF Squadron based in England. This Squadron had the reputation of flying the most sorties, dropping the greatest tonnage of bombs and, unfortunately, having the most airmen killed of all the World War Two Squadrons. One past student, **CHARLES WILLIAMS**, was a member of Guy Gibson's 617 Squadron and was killed when taking part on the Dambuster's Raid. Williams was awarded a DFC for his bravery in the raid.

What is not widely known is that the School experienced some minor damage to a building from a Japanese air raid in 1942, thus becoming the first School on the east coast of Australia to receive some war damage. The only other school to receive damage was Scots College in Sydney when a rocket fired from a Japanese miniature submarine landed on their main rugby oval. The Grammar campus moved to "Rosslea" in Hermit Park in February 1942 and received the bomb damage on the night of July 28, 1942. The event is vividly described in a letter that the then headmaster, Tommy Whight, wrote to a friend in Brisbane.

In the letter he wrote: *"The first raid took place on Saturday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. The sirens wailed at midnight, and we were soon up and dressed and in the trenches. I had allowed the boys to go to the pictures and most were not back. They arrived within a quarter of an hour, greatly excited. It was a perfect night, almost full moon. There were four planes - we saw two, way over above the jetty. One stick of bombs was dropped, apparently at the wharves, but they landed on the edge of the seas, about 400 yards away. We were back to bed about an hour and a half after the sirens began. The next raid was made by a single plane on Monday night following, again about midnight. This one was held by the searchlights and the A.A. guns were in action, vigorously. We could see the shells bursting around him, and were relieved when he finally turned north for home.*



Rosslea Campus

*The next one gave us a thrill. A single plane flew in from the north, over Magnetic Island, at about 12:40am. It travelled north to south, dropping bombs in the harbour. The last bomb was probably aimed at the bridge near Rooney's Mill but it landed in a coconut grove at the Experimental Farm, close to the School. A light shade in the hallway fell, and Townsville Grammar School suffered its first war damage. The plane seemed above us when the last bomb was released. Fighter planes attacked the enemy, much to the delight of the boys, who behaved excellently."*

The following past students were killed while serving in either the RAAF or RAF. The country of burial or memorial is in brackets:

BAIN, Donald Hunter	59 <sup>th</sup> Squadron	[Runnymede Memorial]
BALLARD, Victor Norman	16 OPU	[France]
BROMLEY, Charles Frederick	24 Squadron	[New Britain]
DONALD, Keith Courtney	466 Squadron	[Denmark]
GLOVER, Edward Andrew	51 Squadron	[Germany]
HALSTEAD, William Keith	460 Squadron	[United Kingdom]
HANSON, Allan Harold	14 OPU	[United Kingdom]
JOHNSTON, William Leo	405 Squadron	[Runnymede Memorial]
JURD, Milton Keith	460 Squadron	[Germany]
KENT, Malcolm Edward	20 OUT	[Scotland]
LITTLE, William John	237 Squadron	[Mediterranean Ocean]
MACLEOD, Eric Ronald	158 Squadron	[Germany]
MCDONALD, Donald James	463 Squadron	[Netherlands]
PARKER, Vincent	RAF	[United Kingdom]
PUGH, Walter McPherson	70 Squadron	[Egypt]
SANDERSON, Linton Patrick	70 Squadron	[Italy]
THOMAS, Cecil Keith	514 Squadron	[Belgium]
THOMAS, Ronald James	7 Squadron	[Papua New Guinea]
TIPPETT, Geoffrey Robert	RAF	[Isle of Man]
WHITE, Walter John	9 Squadron	[France]
WILLIAMS, Charles Rowland	617 Squadron	[Germany]

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