

### **Clifford Edward Brindley**

During this year (2004) my grandson, Lachlan Pither of Ongerup, was asked by his class teacher at Perth Hale School to submit an assignment on a relative who had served in the Forces during World War II.

I gave him the information enclosed in this copy of his assignment.

I volunteered for R.A.F.V.R. aircrew in October 1942 because I was eager to defend my country against the Nazi tyranny like many others of my age.

I trained at No.11 Air Gunnery School, Isle of Man, and graduated as Sergeant Air Gunner. I flew on operations – German submarine ports at Kiel (sinking battleships Admiral Sheer, Hipper and Emden on 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> of April 1945) and Heligoland. I also flew on food drops to Nazi occupied isolated parts of Holland – “Operation Manna”, which the Allied armies could not reach.

I was surprised to learn that the war had ended upon landing at my base after a daylight flight over the North Sea. We had kept radio silence throughout! There was only a very basic ground crew on duty who informed us that the Nazis had surrendered. Although we knew it was not far off we were still stunned to know that the conflict had finally ended in Europe.

During the following years after my discharge from the R.A.F. in 1947 I became disillusioned with no choice of employment and what seemed to be a grey future in the U.K. I decided I wanted to make a new beginning to my life so I emigrated as an ex-serviceman to W.A. arriving at Fremantle and then to Bicton Immigration Centre on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1949.

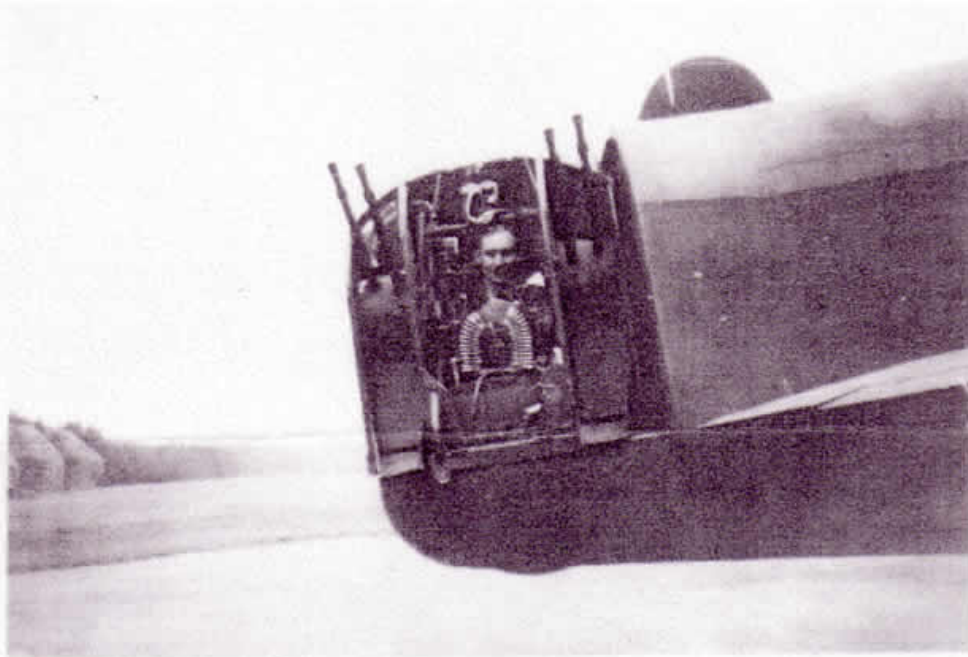
The rest of my story in Australia you can gather from my grandson's assignment.



Here is my Grandad on the far bottom left and his crew members in their gear, in front of their plane ready for action.

11/6/1925

Cliff Brindley, born in Derby, England attended a grammar school on a scholarship and later the Derby school of art. He joined the LMS railway (London, Midland and Scottish, for the benefit of non Poms). On the out break of war he joined the air training corps manning barrage balloons. On one memorable night in 1941 he watched Coventry burning on one side and Birmingham on the other side of his post. Joining the RAF at age 17 he served with 138 special duties squadron of Bomber Command and was an air gunner in Lancasters. Returning to the LMS, soon to become British Rail (a sad mistake Ed). After the war he became disenchanted and emigrated to Australia in 1949. He joined the police No. 2489, married in 1951 and left WA to Fiji in the customs service where they experienced the great hurricane with winds up to 165 m.p.h. Returned to WA and failing to find any other employment he joined the RAAF. HE enrolled for two courses both of which were cancelled finally becoming a clerk in Melbourne and was transferred to East Perth ATC H.Q. He became a trainee teacher first in primary and then with slow learners. He went to Fremantle prison as a teacher finishing as the last principal of the school there. He then joined Perth zoo and worked for five years as a teacher there and at King's park. Retired in 1985, he joined Probus in Armadale and came to Albany in 1991. He has maintained his interest in nature, wild flowers, birds and trees. They have four children and seven grandchildren and are very happy to be in Albany and to have joined the best Probus club - Albany!



This is a nice picture of my Grandad in the rear gunner's turret, with his machine gun. As you can see in the background there is a line of hay bails going into the distance to give them some protection from invasion.

Here is a memorable story from C.E.Brindley, ex-Warrant Officer, Air Gunner, Nos. 138 and 35 Squadrons. "I will always remember an incident which occurred on the night of Friday 13/14<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and the sequel the following day. We were in Lancaster 'U – Uncle', piloted by F. Sgt. Doug. Mathers, over the North Sea returning from Kiel, when at approximately 02.00 hours, our aircraft suddenly dived and I discerned a black shape above and behind us. Thinking that Doug was taking evasive action I instinctively fired a burst of tracer in its direction as it disappeared from view. Upon return to Tuddenham, at debriefing, I reported an incident. Behind us, awaiting their turn, was Fg. Off.

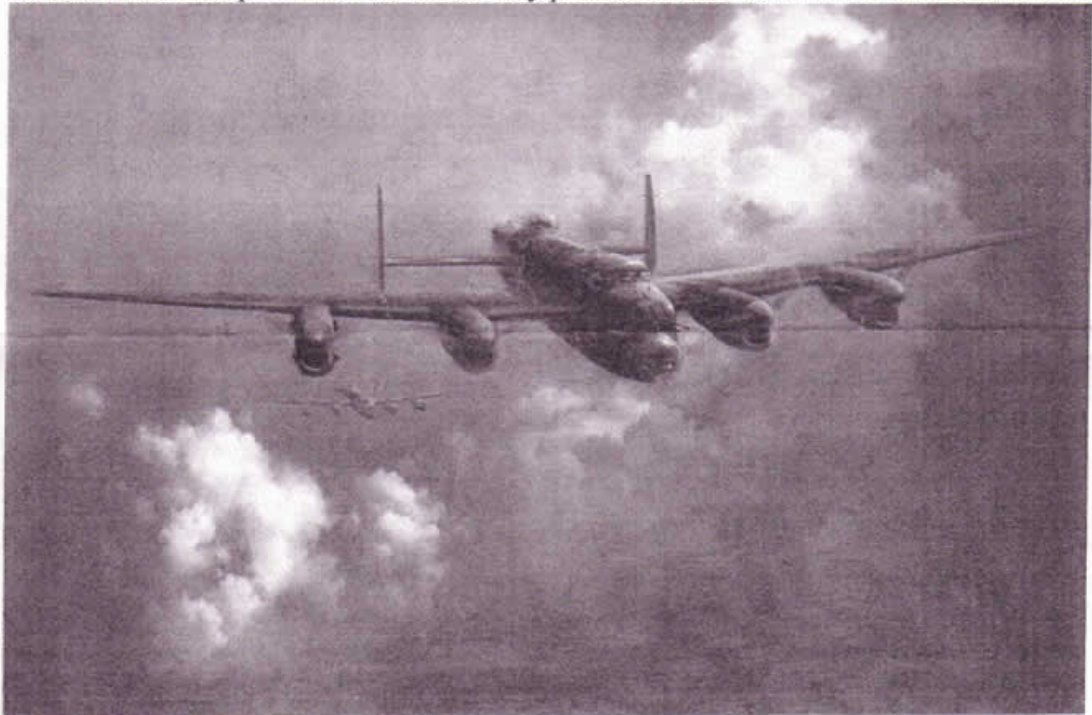
Horsaman's crew who shared our billet – Hut No. 12a! – was my face red when their Mid- Upper, Sgt. 'Paddy' Graeme Cotter burst out, 'SO! You're the Bastard who almost shot us down!' After I had apologized, feeling very embarrassed, the incident was eventually forgotten until the events of the next day.

On the evening of the Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> April, the two crews were rostered for a raid on Potsdam as standbys, a coin was tossed to see who would take precedence and Horsamen's was elected. When one aircraft dropped out, unserviceable at the last minute, the standby duly took their place. Paddy's parting words to me were, 'Well, Cliff, you won't be with us to shoot us down this time!'

The next morning I was awakened by a flight Lieutenant and two service policemen who enquired after Fg. Off. Horsamen's crewman's beds. I pointed them out and was gently told that they had been posted missing. We were all stunned at our narrow escape and at the hand fate had played upon the toss of a coin as the two SPs removed the crewman's



gear and left. Eventually news filtered through that Horsamen's Bomb aimer, Fg. Off. Neave, had survived and had been picked up by Russian soldiers in the ruins of Potsdam. He returned to base some weeks later, being the soul survivor from the only Lancaster shot down on the operation. I would be very pleased to hear from him if he is still around.



This is a Lancaster Mk I, which my Grandad flew in and operated in, during the course of the war.



miles, the Lancaster's seven-man crew could provide a knockout punch with a typical load of 18,000 pounds of high explosive over the target. Along with the Handley Page Halifax, the Lancaster gave the UK the offensive striking power needed to penetrate German air defences during World War II. As Winston Churchill instructed the Air Ministry in 1942, the UK must "...make sure that the maximum weight of the best type of bombs is dropped on [Germany] by the aircraft placed at their disposal."

**Nickname:** "Lanc"

**Specifications (Lancaster Mk I):**

Engines: Four 1,460 hp Rolls-Royce Merlin XX inline piston engines.

Weight: Empty 36,900 lbs, Maximum Takeoff 68,000 lbs.

Wingspan: 102 ft 0 in.

Length 69 ft 6 in.

Height: 20 ft 0 in.

**Performance:**

Maximum Speed at 12,000 ft: 287 mph

Service Ceiling: 24,500 ft

Range with 14,000 pound load: 1,660 miles

**Armament:**

Two 0.303-inch (7.7mm) guns in nose, ventral and dorsal turrets.

Four 0.303-inch (7.7mm) guns in tail turret.

Fourteen 1,000 pound bombs.

Crew: 7

**Number Built:** 7,366

**Number Still Airworthy:** Two



BOMBER COMMAND

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## CHRISTMAS · 1991

This is a picture of a Lancaster flying over the Ely Cathedral in Cambridge. Grandad could see it from the RAF hospital, through the big windows at the end of his ward. When he had to get a needle of yellow fever vaccine to go overseas, but it reacted on him

and he was sent to hospital. The Lancaster in the picture is one of the only ones left and it sometimes fly's with a spitfire in the Battle of Britain flight.



On the far left is a picture of my Grandad as a Warrant Officer in World War 2, with a fake moustache on.