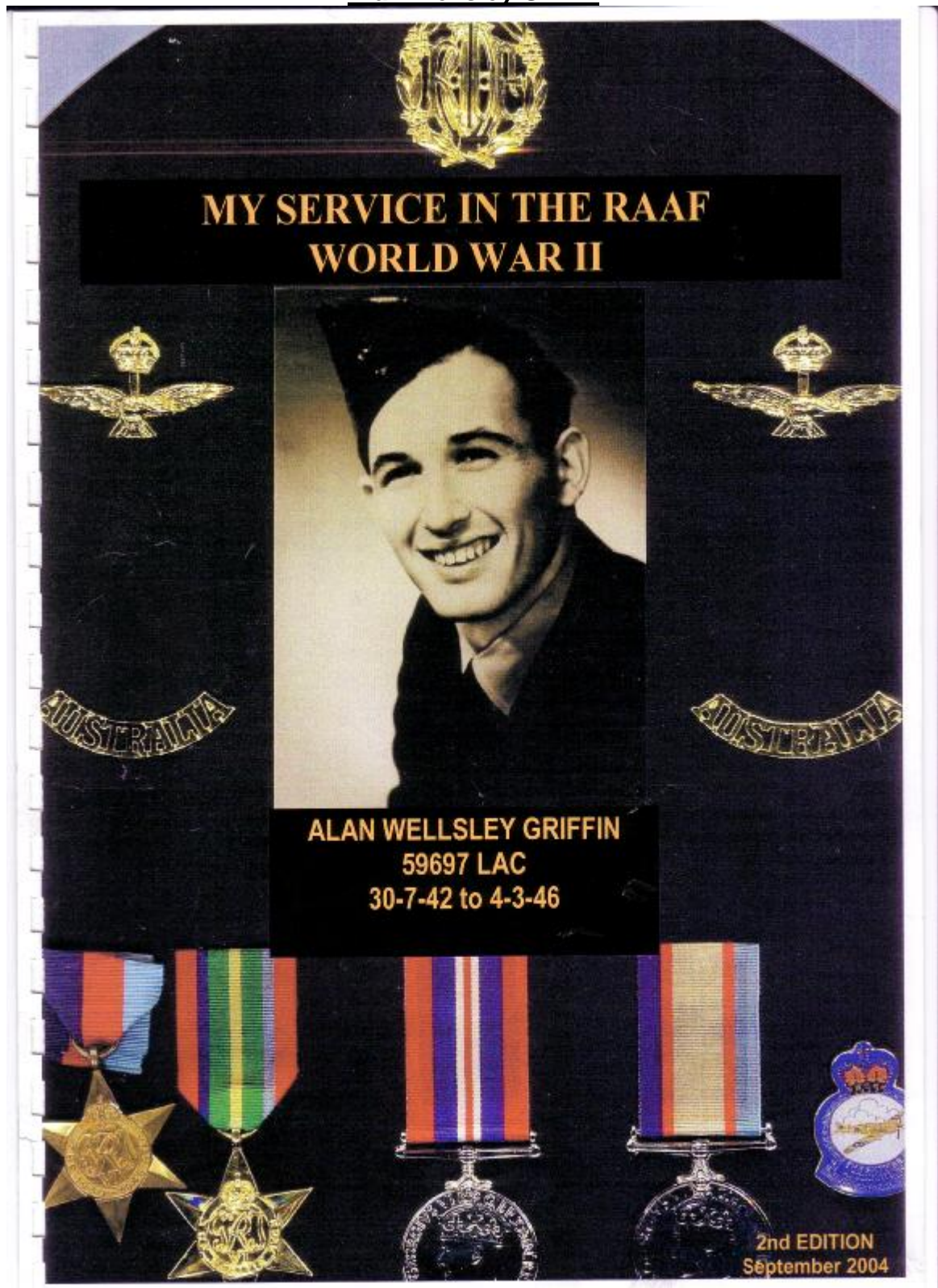


Alan Wellsley Griffin



DESCRIPTION OF MEDALS

AS DISPLAYED ON FRONT COVER

(From Left To Right)

- 1939 – 1945 Star
- Pacific Star
- General Service Medal #1
- General Service Medal #2
- Spitfire Association Badge

World War Two Service

LEADING AIRCRAFTMAN
ALAN WELLSLEY GRIFFIN
59697



SERVICE

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR
FORCE

DATE OF BIRTH

20 JULY 1924

PLACE OF BIRTH

FOOTSCRAY, VIC

DATE OF ENLISTMENT

30 JULY 1942

LOCALITY ON ENLISTMENT

FOOTSCRAY

PLACE OF ENLISTMENT

MELBOURNE, VIC

NEXT OF KIN

GRIFFIN, NORMAN

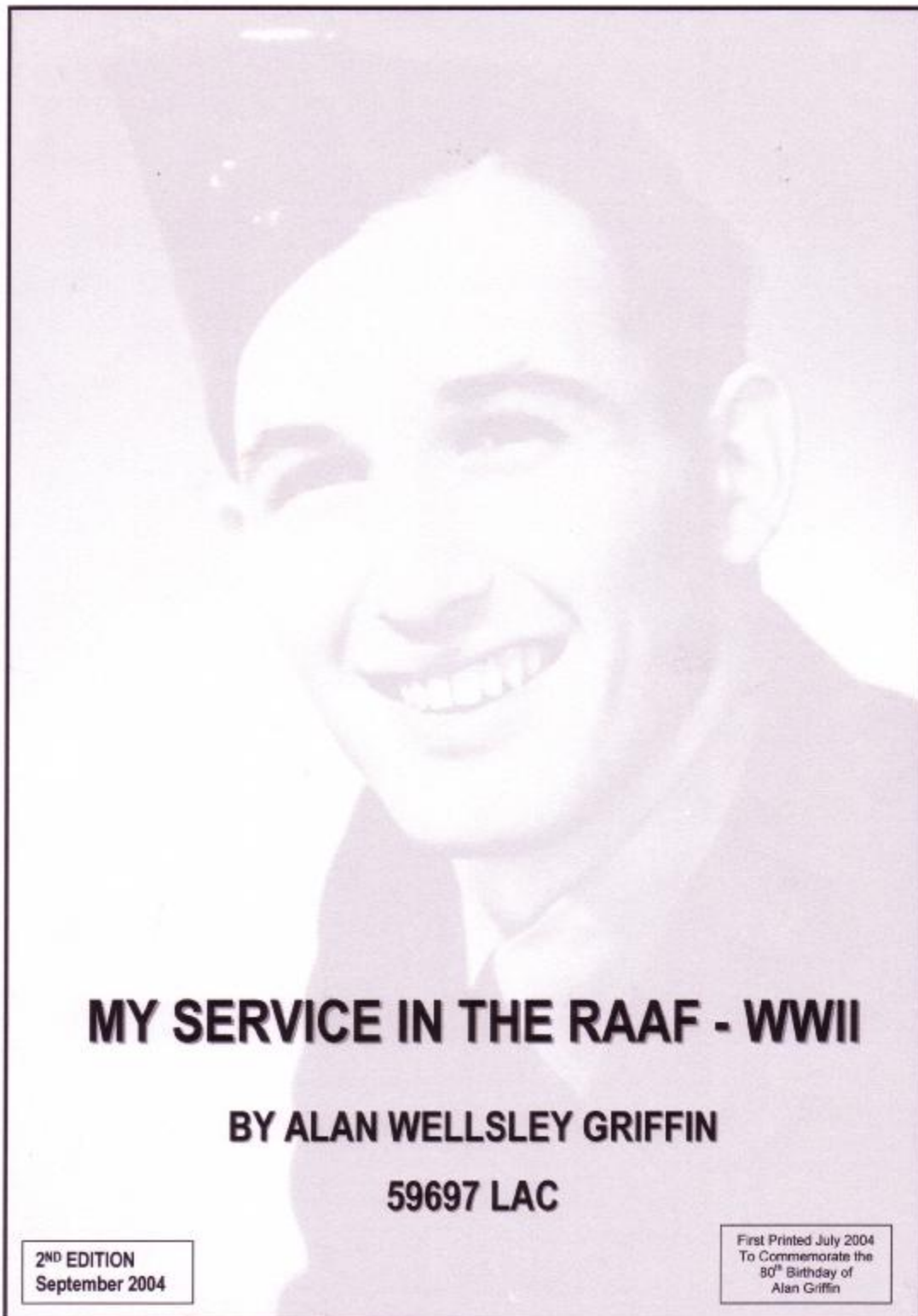
DATE OF DISCHARGE

4 MARCH 1946

POSTING AT DISCHARGE

60 OPERATIONAL BASE UNIT





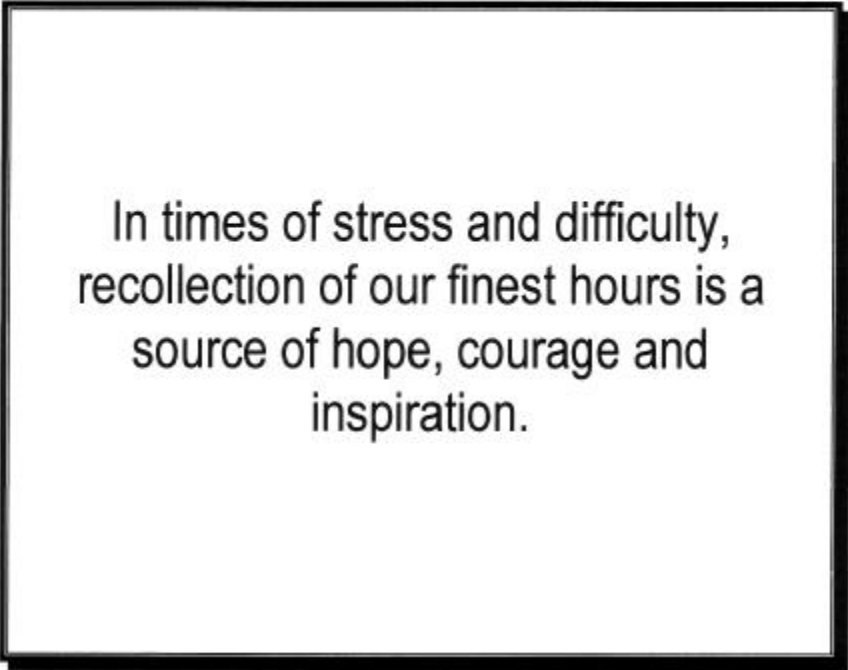
4 of 105

DEDICATION

'I dedicate this story of my 'R.A.A.F Service WWII' to my wife Phyllis and sons Glenn, Adrian and Paul, for without their constant requests and encouragement to record my personal experiences, it would not have been written.

Also special thanks to Phyllis for her loyalty and lifetime support during and after the war, and my son Paul for his editing and valued practical assistance.'

APHORISM



In times of stress and difficulty,
recollection of our finest hours is a
source of hope, courage and
inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	9
BROOME.....	14
HOT BATH & JOY RIDE IN HUDSON BOMER	22
WHAT ARE THE PROBABILITIES?	25
RETURNE TO BROOME.....	30
THE SITUATION & THE POKER GAME.....	34
BEAGLE BAY MISSION.....	36
THE FISH TRAP	43
EXTRA SHIFTS & EGGS	45
PROCRASTINATION	46
THE OFFICIAL REPORT OR THE TRUTH	47
THE CYCLONE, OLD FAITHFUL AND LEAVE	49
IN TRANSIT TO MOROTAI	54
2 ND / 5 th A.G.H. MOROTAI.....	59
BOOTS	73
OPERATION AT 2 ND / 5 TH A.G.H.	76
GRAMMATOPHYLLUM PAPUANUM	77
PAW PAWS.....	80

Table of Contents

BOAT TRIP	81
ENTERTAINMENT	82
END OF WAR	85
LUCK'S A FORTUNE	88
HOME AT LAST	90
APPENDIX I: SURRENDER OF JAPANESE FORCES	91
APPENDIX II: CERTIFICATES AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.....	96
APPENDIX III: CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP - SPITFIRE ASSOCIATION.....	100
GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	102
MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR	103

INTRODUCTION

I turned 18 years of age on the 20th July 1942 and by the 30th July 1942 I was officially in the RAAF as 59697 AC1 Griffin AW.

Basic training was at Shepparton Victoria and I had no trouble there as I had served two years in the Wesley College Cadet Corps. We were camped at the show grounds in tents – no electricity just hurricane lamps and under the floor boards lay about 1/2" of water. I caught a heavy cold and sore throat, the cure for same, which was very effective, was to swallow 1 teaspoon of sugar laced with five or six drops of kerosene from the hurricane lamp, taken 3 times a day after meals – no prescription required!

It didn't take me long to write home to my Mother and Father to share my initial experiences in Shepparton with them, including a full description of the menu on the day of writing the letter. A week had not even passed! At that point, I was not to know that my time in the RAAF would amount to three years and eight months and take me deep into the Islands well North of Darwin.

On the 27th February 1942 I was posted to RAAF signal school Point Cook and after successfully completing my signal course I was posted to WA HQ for about a month. The troop train that carried us was so massive that while crossing the Nullarbor, it was unable to keep moving up many of the small grades and everyone would have to get off and walk until the slope was negotiated.

On this troop train to Perth, I met up with a young RAAF chap who lived in Perth, the information I gained from him was that there was no RAAF accommodation at HQ or nearby – you had to find your own and my best bet was to contact a group of volunteer women who arranged accommodation for service personnel.

This I did and whilst in Perth I slept on the 2nd storey balcony of an old two story mansion in Hay street which had been converted into a boarding house – old world silver service breakfast & dinner!

THE FIRST LETTER I WROTE TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER (ELSIE AND NORMAN) AFTER JOINING THE RAAF



MY MOTHER AND MYSELF
SHORTLY AFTER JOINING
THE RAAF IN 1942



MY FATHER (NORMAN) AND MY
MOTHER (ELSIE) IN 1942



AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND (Victorian Division)
WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED
R.S.L. War Service Fund, The Salvation Army, and Y.M.C.A.

Tuesday.

Nº 59697.

A.C.1 Griffin A.W.

Squad 732.

D Squadron Nº 1 RD.

RAAF Shepparton

5th AUG 1942

Dear Mum & Dad.

I am still doing well & I was very glad to receive your letters, I did not expect them so soon & you look forward to the letters.

You asked about the meals, well they are excellent; here is today's menu - for breakfast. porridge, egg & ham & bread butter cheese & jam. Dinner cold meat (roast) & hot vegetables. pudding & custard (two helpings); bread butter cheese & jam. Tea, soup (vegetable) mince meat similar to that in a pie, vegetables & bread butter cheese & jam. I might add there is a liberal allowance of milk with the morning porridge.

I hardly see the boy at all. He is in a different Squad & we are never together.

Well the time is flying & very soon I will have been away a week.

I have been doing a lot of sewing.



2

AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND (Victorian Division)
WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED
R.S.L. War Service Fund, The Salvation Army, and Y.M.C.A.

Tuesday

if you can call it that, for I now have most of my kit. The legs of the overalls were too long & I had to tack them up on the inside (what a job) & at present one leg of those I'm wearing is about 1" longer than the other, so I will have to alter it when I get time. I also had to sew the eagles on my tunic & a few other things.

The only things to complete my kit are - Great coat, shirt, shoes, & clothes brush & the things I have are - boots, 3pr. socks, 2 overalls, 2 caps, 2 singlets 2 underpants, tunic pants, two towels, foot brush, tooth brush, housewife pullover, & perhaps a few things I have not set down (& a bag to put them in).

So as soon as my kit is complete I will send most of my civilian clothes back by rail.

I will be up here for about three weeks 19-24 days & we are the first lot of Melbourne lads to be here for a good while, they are mostly S.A.s & chaps from Sydney.

I did not go to the pictures over the week-end, in fact I have not been anywhere late for a night, I thought it better to go to bed & rest.



5
AUSTRALIAN COMFORTS FUND (Victorian Division)
WITH WHICH IS AFFILIATED
R.S.L. War Service Fund, The Salvation Army, and Y.M.C.A.

Thursday

but I did go through the town while I was on leave. He are right in the town so we do not have far to go.

I am glad to hear Jean is getting on well. Next time you write to her that is if you do send her my love & hopes that she has a quick recovery.

I'll write to tell Pat that she will have to wait for that photo until I come home on leave. I'm sorry that I had to leave my camera behind.

Well I think that's the lot for the present so I will close with love.

Your loving
Son Alan

XXXXXX

BROOME

The next posting was to Broome on May 12 1943. The trip to Broome was via the coastal steam ship M.V.Koolinda, which pre-war used to do the run to Singapore.

The passengers were made up of a few army boys & four RAAF – WT (Wireless Telegraph) Operators. Two of the RAAF WT's disembarked as I recall at Port Hedland and Hugh Whitford and I went onto Broome. We travelled 1st class – two to a cabin with a steward who came knocking on the cabin door when it was meal time and we ate at the captain's table.

Hugh and I arrived to a deserted township. All but essential civilians had been evacuated. The reason for the evacuation was under the assumption that after heavy Japanese air raids the 'Japs' usually followed the raid with a landing of ground troops.

The RAAF base, including ourselves, consisted of ten men "armed to the teeth" with the CO's 38 revolver and one .303 rifle between two Met officers. There was also in the town a detachment of thirty army men with their issue .303 rifles and two Lewis guns. With this "formidable" array of armament the 'Japs' would certainly think twice about any landing at Broome!!!

The hanger at the town end of the air strip was a large corrugated iron structure. It bore bullet holes that ran diagonally across the front doors where on the 3rd of March 1942 Fl. LT Gus Winckel who had taken his machine gun from his Lodestar aircraft, stood and firing his gun from the hip, was able to shoot down the Zero flown by warrant officer Osamu Kudo. The Zero crashed into the sea and Kudo was killed.

The house we lived in was on the airfield property and about two hundred yards from the hanger. Our duties at this stage consisted of maintaining a WT watch from sunrise to sunset, the traffic mainly consisting of weather reports and reporting the unopposed flight over Broome of a 'Jap' reconnaissance plane daily about midday.

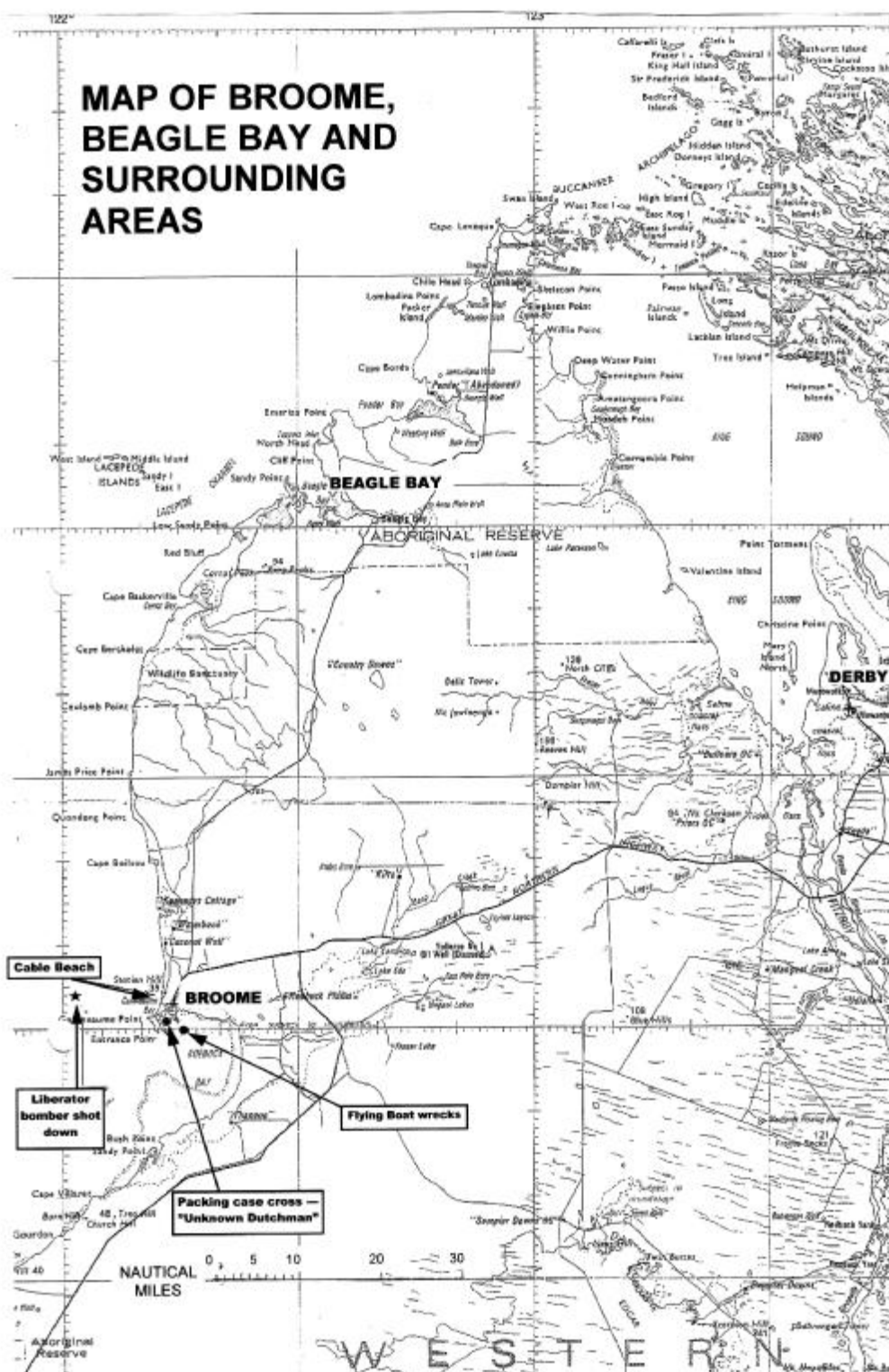
On one occasion I was to start the WT morning watch, and that night I found a note on my bed from Hugh stating that the transmitter had gone on the blink. I also had the "Safe Hand Mail" to pass onto the pilot of the mail plane at 6am just before take off.



View from the M.V. Koolinda Coastal Transport Vessel through a starboard porthole as it leaves Fremantle WA May 12th 1943.



Looking forward to the M.V. Koolinda's bow as it cuts its way to Broome WA.



As was the usual custom the Mac Robinson Miller Mail Plane – a Lockheed 10A, was parked in front of the hanger overnight while the pilot and co pilot slept at the hotel. My alarm clock was not working properly and I kept waking and checking my watch. The house had windows which opened out at an angle and from my bed under one of these windows I could see a reflection of the hanger.

In the early hours of the morning I saw the reflection of a flickering light from the direction of the hanger a couple of hundred yards away – yes to my amazement the rear of the hanger was on fire. I raised the alarm, the pilots of the plane were informed and the plane was shifted to safety just in the nick of time. We had no fire fighting equipment and the fire was controlled with buckets of water. The fire started in a paint storage room at the rear of the hanger and nobody knew how or why as this was not in use at the time. The only loss was a couple of bomb trolleys and a "La Sale" tourer car parked in the hanger. The car had been abandoned in the evacuation and we often used it to drive to Cable Beach to swim. Not any more!

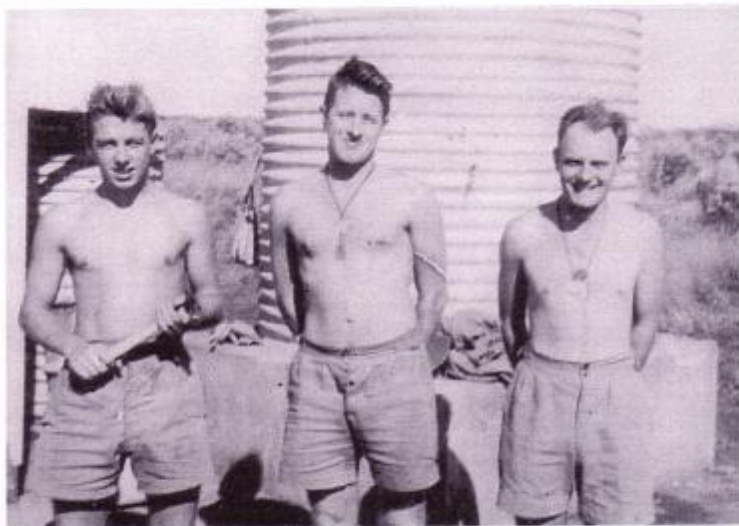
In a deserted town there wasn't much to do particularly at night, it was early 1943 and there was an army detachment of thirty men and ten RAAF personnel. The army detachment set up a canteen in the old Joss house along the road to the airstrip, and my memory of the Joss house was a large hall with the canteen at the rear end.

Our wireless operator mechanic Percy Sinclair often called in there to partake of his favourite drink which he called his "Green Goddess (Crème De Menthe)". On this occasion he had had more than his share and was more than a little tipsy. The routine was an open tray truck would pick up the RAAF personnel at the Joss house at 2200 hours nightly and drive them back to the airstrip – otherwise you had to walk. This particular night an electrical storm was approaching and the truck arrived ten minutes early with a loud call for all RAAF personnel to hurry out to the truck which was leaving immediately to avoid the coming storm. With great haste about half a dozen of us piled onto the open tray truck and off we drove to the airstrip where on arrival a head count revealed we were one man short.

The rain had started to pour down and on return to the Joss house we found Percy lying flat on his back in the open ditch drain in front of the Joss house with the water flowing past him – I don't know what Percy remembers about that night, but he fronted up for work the next day as good as gold.

I mentioned earlier that we swam at Cable Beach and often used the abandoned "La Sale" car for transport until it was burnt in the hanger fire. After that we relied on a RAAF truck to take us along the two wheel track that lead to Cable Beach. Good functional transport, but not quite as stylish!

It is worthy to note that the offal from the local meat works was dumped over the cliff and into the sea near Gantheaume Point late every afternoon. The sharks knew when it was dumping time and they could be seen travelling south parallel to Cable Beach and just outside the breaking waves until they rounded the corner to Roebuck Bay where the dumping point was situated. Therefore when we arrived at Cable Beach to swim, we would first fire a half a dozen rounds of .303 into the surf to frighten the sharks away – some of them were big – big – big! 10 to 12ft long in length and well fed – that well fed that I feel that is one of the reasons why we were not bothered by them.



L to R:
Unknown Serviceman,
Corporal McNab and
Percy Sinclair at the
water supply tank of
the house we occupied
at Broome Airport

The Continental Hotel
in Broome continued to
operate despite the
evacuation of most of
the town's residents



Elevated view of the
deserted township of
Broome in 1943



After the "La Sale" car was razed in the Broome Airport hanger fire, transport of men to cable Beach for a swim and relax was by this RAAF truck



Members of 40 ZFC enjoy time off at Cable Beach Broome

Broome



Sheba Lane in Broome was home to a variety of buildings. It also housed the town's "Red Light" district. All buildings were lost in a fire years later.

Chinatown - Prior to evacuation there was a thriving Chinese community in Broome. Many of the Chinese were involved in pearling



Kuo Min Tang - The Chinese National Party Offices in Sheba Lane. Note the Kuo Min Tang sign is visible in the top photograph on a second storey balcony.