

Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe



Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe. On Enlistment into the Royal Australian Air Force 19th July 1942

Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe was born in Plymouth 11th October 1923. His Father was Richard Rollo Sharpe and his mother was Florence Louisa (Pascho). They lived at 29, Cornwall Street Davenport. On 31st January 1924 the family departed from Plymouth for Albany, Western Australia on the Steamship "TSS Sophocles", a ship of the Aberdeen Line. They travelled 3rd Class. An adult 3rd Class ticket then cost £36. The ship travelled via Cape Town to Australia. Then emigrating to Australia were:

- Richard Rollo Sharpe. No occupation given.
- Florence Louisa Sharpe. Wife
- Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe. Son
- Joan Florence Sharpe. Daughter
- Alfred Colin Pascho. Son
- Dorothy Pascho. Daughter

Royal Australian Air Force Service



Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe, known as Roy within his family, enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on 19th July 1942 for training within The Empire Air Training Scheme. His Royal Australian Air Force Service Number was 427558. His occupation on enlistment was given as a Bank Clerk. His address was 8, Addis Street, Kalgoorlie, Perth. His rank on recruitment was Aircraftsman Class 2 (AC2) and his rate of pay was 6s 6d per day,

Initial Training School

At Initial Training School, to which all recruits were sent first, the young men were tested and then streamed into areas of training. Those who showed an aptitude for flying were trained as pilots, others with mathematical skills as navigators, etc. The recruits would then pass through a succession of increasingly more advanced training establishments before graduating from the scheme.

Rollo Sharpe went on No 29 Course at No 5 Initial Training School, Clontarf, on the Canning River near Perth on 19th July 1943. He was mustered as Under Training (Pilot). Clontarf had been a boys' orphanage that the RAAF had taken over for use as an Initial Training School. Training covered all aspects of the theory of flight, navigation, mathematics, but no actual flying, however many hours were spent on the ground based "Link" trainer. Trainees were categorised at the end of two months, the Wireless Air Gunners then went to Ballarat in Victoria while the Pilots and Observers remained at Clontarf for a further four weeks before being sent for flying training. At this stage Rollo was selected for Pilot training and after completion of his ITS training he was promoted Leading Aircraftman and on 12th November 1942 he was posted to No 9 Elementary Flying Training School Cunderin.

Elementary Flying Training

No 9 Elementary Flying Training School was based at Cunderdin in the Western Australian wheat belt east of Perth. After a week's leave Rollo travelled to Cunderdin 12th November 1942. The first week was taken up with ground instruction, followed by the first flight as a passenger for 35 minutes on 20th November 1942. The training aircraft was the De Havilland DH82A Tiger Moth. The maximum allowable instruction hours for going solo were fifteen. If a pupil got this far without his instructor considering him ready for a solo flight, he was checked by the Chief Flying Instructor. If he was found to be close to going solo he authorised further instruction and, if not, the pupil was scrubbed and reclassified as an Observer or Wireless Air Gunner. The average flying time to the first solo was about 10 hours and the full basic training took around 50 hours. Accidents in training were common and recruits got used to this and to losing comrades. However during Rollo's time here and for his entire intake there were no flying accidents and no loss of life among the trainee pilots.

Wireless and Gunnery Training

Rollo undertook pilot training at Cunderdin for approximately five months before he was found to be not making the grade and was on 29th April 1943 re-mustered as an Under Training Air Gunner and sent to No 1 Wireless and Gunnery School at Ballarat in the state of Victoria. From there he went to No 3 Bombing and Gunnery school at Sale in Victoria on 23rd August 1943. Those recruits who had failed pilot training had an advantage over others on their training courses, this meant they invariably passed out at the top of the course. As an incentive scheme the RAF and the RAAF offered the top two recruits on every course a commission. Rollo clearly was one of these top two on his course, as on 17th September 1943 he qualified as an Air Gunner, was granted a commission in the Royal Australian Air Force and was posted to No 5 Embarkation Depot at Subiaco Western Australia to await further orders. Whilst undergoing training as an Air Gunner, Rollo had completed nine hours 50 minutes flying time.

Embarkation to UK



These sailing orders took some time as Rollo moved to No 2 ED Bradfield Park on 14th October 1943 and embarked in Sydney for the UK on 12th December 1943, with Draft Number 34, sailing on the Troopship "William A Holbrook". He arrived in the UK on 26th January 1944 and on 27th January 1944 he transferred to No 11 Personnel Reception Depot in Brighton. The large numbers of UK and Empire aircrew arriving in the UK for Advanced Training and subsequent deployment to an Operational Squadron caused considerable logistics problems for the RAF. Consequently a number of Personnel Reception Centres were set up to accommodate them whilst they waited for deployment to advanced training. These were almost always pre-war hotels in seaside resorts. The crews at these centres had little to do, in the main after a morning role call, the rest of the day was theirs. The RAAF had requisitioned two of the major hotels that lined the Brighton sea front. They had been stripped of all comforts such as lounges, bars, etc. They had kitchens, mess halls and the administration section on the two lower floors, and the rest converted to dormitories. However the Officers billeted here did sleep in a bed with a proper mattress and sheets and had quite reasonable food.

Advanced Flying Training in the UK

No 27 OTU RAF Lichfield

Rollo was posted to No 27 OTU RAF Lichfield on 29th February 1944. The first action on arriving here was for each of the disparate airmen to form up into a crew. In this case the following crew of six was formed:

Pilot:	Noel Edward Marchant.	418859 RAAF
Bomb Aimer:	Edgar George Tattersall.	437020 RAAF
Navigator:	John Neil O'Donoghue.	427255 RAAF
WOP:	Raymond Blundell.	432001 RAAF
Rear Gunner:	Leslie Gordon Marshall Mannell.	429052 RAAF.
	He was KIA in an aircraft Captained by P/O MW Rohrlach on the night of 6/7 Jan 1945 and replaced by:	
	D Whitehead.	1322318 RAF
Mid Upper:	Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe.	427558 RAAF

Here they trained on Wellingtons and worked up as a crew before going on to their Squadrons or to a Heavy Conversion Unit for those destined to fly in the four engined bombers, of which 460 and 462 Squadrons were the most dominant in the RAAF at that time. The airfield at Lichfield became so busy with 114,000 aircraft movements from December 1942 to June 1945, that it was often necessary to use the satellite airfields of Tatenhill and Church Broughton to satisfy the training commitment. Whilst at 27 OTU Rollo had ninety five hours flying time in Wellington Bombers, which should have included at least one operational sortie.

1652 HCU Marston Moor

Rollo and crew were posted to 1652 Heavy Conversion Unit (HCU) Marston Moor on 24th June 1944. At this point they were joined by a Flight Engineer. He was Flt/ Sgt Len G Brocklesby. Royal Air Force. Number 1594323

The purpose of the HCUs was to train newly formed crews in the handling of four engined aircraft such as the Lancaster, Halifax and Stirling. Training would include cross country navigation by day and night. Training on dummy and live bomb ranges. Circuits and bumps. The aircraft used at Marston Moor, Halifax's often tended to be regarded as second rate, recovered from crashes etc and thought to be unreliable for main air operations. However when the four engined bomber force was being worked up crews at an HCU were often called upon to make up the numbers in maximum effort operation situations. Whilst at Marston Moor Rollo and crew flew thirty seven hours fifteen minutes in the Halifax Bomber.

462 Squadron

On 6th September 1944 Rollo and crew were posted to 462 Squadron, then based at Driffield in Yorkshire for Operational Duties flying the Halifax Bomber. No. 462 Squadron was reformed at RAF Driffield on 12th August 1944 as an Australian heavy bomber squadron, now equipped with Halifax Mk.III bombers. In its new incarnation the squadron had an Australian commanding officer and a high proportion of its personnel were Australians. No. 462 Squadron flew its first operational mission on 25th August 1944 and subsequently took part in attacks against 39 different targets over the next four months in support of Allied ground forces in Western Europe and as part of Bomber Command's campaign against Germany.

On 27th December 1944 No. 462 Squadron was relocated to RAF Foulsham and became part of 100 Group of Bomber Command. This group specialised in electronic warfare and counter measures. No. 462 Squadron's aircraft were modified to carry radar jamming equipment and other counter measures. Until the end of the war the squadron used its special equipment and also mounted small diversionary attacks to deceive the Germans as to the location of the raids conducted by Bomber Command. While the squadron maintained a high rate of operations at times, its losses were relatively light as the counter measures carried by the aircraft also protected them from attack. No. 462 Squadron continued to operate until almost the end of the war in Europe, and was the only Australian squadron in Bomber Command to either fly a higher number of sorties in April 1945 than March or operate in May. The squadron flew its final operation of the war on the night of 2/3 May 1945. Rollo left the Squadron on 4th June 1945. He embarked for Australia on 5th June, arriving in Perth on 24th July 1945. He was finely discharged from the RAAF on 18th September 1945.



Flight Lieutenant Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe. 462 Sqdn. RAAF

Rollo was awarded the following Campaign Medals for his Service.

1935/45 Star: Air crew qualified for this award after 60 days of service in an operational unit, including at least one operational sortie.

France & Germany Star: Awarded to subjects of the British Commonwealth who served specifically in Europe between 6th June 1944 and 8th May 1945.

British War Medal: Awarded to subjects of the British Commonwealth who had served full-time in the Armed Forces for at least 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945

The Defence Medal: Awarded to subjects of the British Commonwealth for non-operational military service during the Second World War.

Australia Service Medal: Recognises service by Australia's armed forces in the Second World War. The qualifying period was for those members who served overseas for at least 18 months full-time service or three years' part-time service between 3rd September 1939 and 2nd September 1945.

Post War

Rollo was discharged from the RAAF to his parents address from before the war. He was at this address from 1946 until 1954:

8, Addis Street,
Kalgoorlie,
Perth

1951.

Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe married Thelma Lillian Eager in Burwood New South Wales.

1954.

He was registered as living at:

28, Wharf Street

Cowper

Grafton South

New South Wales

Living with his wife, Thelma Lillian Sharpe

His occupation is recorded as Cashier

Her occupation is recorded as Household Duties

1958 until 1983 on the NSW Electoral Rolls

Both are registered as living at:

50, Huon Street

Cabramatta

NSW 2166

His occupation is recorded variously as Cashier or Clerk

Her occupation is recorded as Household Duties

In 1974 Rollo Sharpe made an application to the Department for Veterans Affairs for what is known as "Repatriation Benefits". This is for Pensions, medical treatment and similar for a disability that was caused by his Air Force service. It is not known if this was successful or what the "Disability" was.

In 1983 Rollo Sharpe made an application for replacement War Medals following the loss of his originals in a break in to his house.

The Sydney Morning Herald has printed the following Death Notices:

6th June 1994. Thelma Lillian Sharpe died on 5th June 1994.

3rd June 2011. Rollo Roy Stephen Sharpe died on 31st May 2011 aged 87.

The couple had two daughters:

Christine, also known as Chris and Robbie possibly Robina. Robbie appears to be married to Antonio. The couple had two grandchildren, Mathew and Tara, and a great-grandchild, Darcy.

RAAF Service Basic Chronological Information

Date of enlistment:	19 th July 1942	
No 5 ITS Clontarf:	19 th July 1943.	Mustered at U/T Pilot
Promoted LAC:	10 th October 1942.	Mustered at U/T Pilot
No 9 EFTS Cunderin:	12 th November 1942.	Mustered at U/T Pilot
No 1 WAGS Ballarat:	29 th April 1943.	Re-mustered as Air Gunner
No 3 BAGS Sale:	23 rd August 1943	
No 5 Embark Dpt Subiaco:	17 th September 1943	
Qualified Air Gunner:	17 th September 1943	
Granted Commission:	16 th September 1943	
No2 ED Bradfield Park:	14 th October 1943	
Embarked Sydney for UK:	12 th December 1943	(Draft number 34) on "William A Holbrook"
Arrived UK:	26 th January 1944	
No 11 PD & RC UK:	27 th January 1944	
No 27 OTU:	29 th February 1944	
Promoted Flying Officer:	16 th March 1944	
1652 HCU Marston Moor:	24 th June 1944	
462 Squadron:	6 th September 1944	
Promoted Flight Lieutenant:	16 th September 1944	
No 11 PD & RC UK:	4 th June 1945	
Embarked UK for Australia:	5 th June 1945	
Disembarked Perth:	24 th July 1945	
No 5 PD Perth:	24 th July 1945	
Discharged RAAF:	18 th September 1945	