

OUR HIGHEST DECORATED RAAF SON OF SINGLETON

Allyn Clive Douglass D.F.C, D.S.O.

Yet You Will Not Find His Name On The Singleton War Memorial

Allyn Clive Douglass was born January 19th 1919, the second son of **William Douglass** [1872-1953] and **Ruby Beatrice nee Prior** [1888-1963], of 42 Bourke Street, Singleton. He was a grandson of **Christopher Douglass** and **Eliza Kermode** and of **George Prior** and **Elizabeth Ann Raison**. Allyn received his education at Singleton from Kindergarten to Intermediate High School level and followed onto Maitland Boy's High School to obtain his Leaving Certificate. He was Singleton's first Boy Scout to obtain the honour of Kings Scout; his mother would later present Singleton Boy Scouts with a memento of the 'Jamboree Daily' of the 1934-35 Jamboree held in Frankston Victoria which Allyn attended. Commencing work with the Bank of NSW he was posted to Goondiwindi and later to Taroom/Miles, Queensland.



In 1940 he enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force in Queensland and began training as an Air Observer at Lindfield; his service number being 404374. Allyn paid a flying visit to Singleton in October, 1940 to say farewell to relatives and friends before leaving for Canada to finish his training under the Empire Air Training Scheme established in 1939; flight crews received basic training in Australia before travelling to Canada for advanced training. He went to see his parents, who were living at Sandgate for a time and was due back in camp by October 23rd. One of his parting gifts was the pocket Bible carried by his uncle, the late Gunner Claude F. Prior, during the 1914-18 war through Egypt, France and England. Allyn's other Prior Uncle Parker fought in the Boer War and Uncles' Melville and Walter also served in WW1. Claude F. Prior was killed at Butte De Warlincourt on the Somme battlefield in France.

From Canada Allyn went on to England arriving in June 1941 and gaining rapid promotion. In April 1943 his parents received a telegram – "*Advice received from Air Ministry that your son Flight Lieutenant A. C. DOUGLASS has been awarded the D.F.C. Minister for Air Board extends congratulations on this award in recognition of his gallant service with the R.A.A.F.*" He was then aged 24 years.

NAME	DOUGLASS, Allyn Clive							
Award	D.F.C.	Reg.No.	404374	Rank	F/Lt.	Service	R.A.A.F.	
Recommended by	Governor-General on				O- R			
Promulgated in	London Gazette on				20.4.43	G. H. File	R.A.A.F. 1.	
Promulgated in	Commonwealth of Australia Gazette on				29.4.43.		R.A.A.F. 1A.	
Citation	(G. H. File R.A.A.F. 1.) Operational sorties over ESSEN.							
Insignia received from	RAAF 70A.	N/A	PN LONDON.	N/A	G. H. File	-		
Insignia presented by	His Majesty, The King,							
At	Buckingham Palace, London,		On	9/11/43.	G. H. File	ENGLAND/31.		
Address of recipient on presentation date	A/N/A							
Remarks	See <u>D.S.O.</u> , card.							



Medals: Distinguished Flying Cross

DFC Ribbon: diagonal alternate stripes of white and deep purple

The *Singleton Argus*, Friday February 4th 1944 reported – “*Squadron Leader Allyn Clive Douglass, a former Singleton resident, who already holds the D.F.C., has been awarded the D.S.O. The record of Squadron Leader Douglass is a conspicuous one. He has already taken part in some 71 operations. He recently arrived in Australia from England and is at present on leave. When receiving the D.F.C. he was a navigator with the Pathfinder Force and at all times had shown a high degree of skill and initiative and proved himself to be a very capable navigator. His enthusiasm, keenness and fighting spirit were a source of inspiration to his squadron.*”

Just two months later the *Singleton Argus* on Monday, May 1st 1944 reported with regret the death of Squadron Leader A.C. Douglass that very morning in an aircraft accident. The accident had really occurred at approximately 5.25pm on April 29th at Wallan VIC, exactly six weeks after his return to Australia. Wallan is about 200kms south of Tocumwal NSW where he had been stationed. He had already visited Singleton in the weeks prior; catching up with family and friends and was again expected home on leave the following weekend. Some records show there were four killed in the plane which embarked to collect equipment from Melbourne. Along with Allyn's details the Victoria's Inquest Index confirms two of the other young men killed in the accident were pilot Flight Officer John Gordon Lobban RAAF No.423771, b. June 17th 1911 Horsham VIC and Flight Lieutenant Alexander Philip Stepton Wood RAAF No. 400747, b. July 24th 1916 Melbourne VIC. Tracing the fourth person has proved difficult as there is conflicting information in the records which questions if there were actually four on board. The cause of the accident has never been disclosed; records do show the plane was an Oxford LW999 which was employed mainly for pilot and navigation training. Allyn's death was registered in Victoria BDM 1944/6934.

Perhaps as records become available we may know what happened one day. The sensitivity of War times prevented much information being disclosed to relatives and the wider community. A good example was the lack of knowledge until more recent times about the attack on Darwin. When researching for additional information it was amazing the number of RAAF personal who lost their lives in accidents on friendly soil. Allyn's record of service included operational flights over enemy territory including Essen, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Hamburg, Stetten and all targets in the Ruhr. With his record of service, it was extremely unfortunate to return to his homeland to lose his life. Allyn's body was interned in Springvale War Cemetery Melbourne on May 2nd sadly without his parents present. He is also commemorated at the AWM on panel 112. His sisters were Heather Pearl b.1912 d.1981 (Mrs Colin Maxwell Robinson m.1939), Cynthia Ruby b.1914 d.1915 and his brothers were Ivan Claude [Claude] b.1916 d.1995, Kenneth Roy b.1922 d.2007 and Cedric. At the time of Allyn's death Claude was in the AIF and Kenneth was in the RAAF in England.

The accompanying photo of Allyn above is believed taken on one of his last visit if not his last to Singleton and is held by the late Frank Maguire's family. Frank was given the photo by Mervyn Nichols' family; Mervyn, Frank and Allyn were all great mates. Around Anzac Day 2006 Frank wrote an article about Allyn which appeared in the *Singleton Argus* and he was interviewed for a story which appeared in the *Newcastle Herald*.

Frank advocated that Allyn should be recognised on our Singleton War Memorial and it is unclear as to the actual reason why he is not. One suggested reason expressed was that at the time of his death, Allyn was not on 'active service' [in a war zone].

Surely that cannot be the reason; at the time of his tragic death Allyn was in the service of his country in War time and under orders to carrying out his duties as instructed so with this in mind and with his exceptional record one still wonders why is he not recognised on the Singleton War Memorial.

LEST WE FORGET 

Dot Clayworth and Lyn MacBain

FHSSInc The Patricks Plains Gazette April 2012