



Flight Lieutenant M. ADAMS

[1919 – 2015]



Flight Lieutenant Adams was elected to Life Membership of the Club in 1990.

Flight Lieutenant Adams was President of the Club in 1983-84.

Murray Adams was born on 15 July 1919 at Hawthorn, Victoria. His father was Frank Adams, a grazier, and his mother Marion Ellen Murray. Murray grew up on the family farm “Rockbank”, near Mansfield, Victoria ¹.

His initial schooling was at Mansfield Higher Elementary School. In 1931, he won a scholarship to Trinity Grammar School in Melbourne, finishing in 1934. He then attended Swinburne Technical College, completing a Diploma of Electrical Engineering course in 1937. He listed his sports as tennis, skiing, swimming and football (captain of school team).

On 10 September, 1946 Murray married Ethne “Margot” Maplesden (née Scott) [4 March 1923 – 13 June 2009] (also a past Associate Member of the Club), fourth daughter of Brigadier W.H. Scott CMG, DSO* [1881 – 1960] - a consulting engineer and Light Horse officer of East Malvern, Victoria and the late Mrs. Scott.

¹ Mansfield is a small town in the foothills of the Victorian Alps. It is approximately 190 kilometres north-east of Melbourne by road.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.

Please do not reproduce them or distribute them outside of the Club membership.

They had three sons:

- Richard Graham Murray Adams born in Mansfield in April 1948 who lives on the Mornington Peninsula.
- Gregory Michael Adams and Scott Murray Adams who died as infants.

and two daughters:

- Rosemary Lorraine Maplesden Adams born in Mansfield in January 1951, who lives on the Gold Coast, and
- Catherine Margot Murray Adams born in Mansfield in July 1953, who lives in the Lockyer Valley.

Murray served as a fighter pilot with the Royal Australian Air Force and the Royal Air Force in the Middle East and Europe during World War II.

His progress in the RAAF was

- 18 September 1940 Enlisted in the RAAF [#400613]
- 9 November 1940 LAC
- 6 May 1941 T/ Sergeant
- 26 June 1941 Embarked for Middle East and attached to RAF
- 29 October 1941 250 Squadron RAF in the Western Desert (Operational flying)
- 6 November 1941 Flight Sergeant
- 11 June 1942 Station Flight, Ismailia (non-operational flying)
- 31 August 1942 Air Defence / Anti-aircraft Co-operation Units (non-operational flying)
- 6 November 1942 T/ Warrant Officer
- 26 January 1943 1563 Meteorological Flight, Benghazi (Flying duties)
- 16 April 1943 Commissioned as Pilot Officer
- 1 July 1943 80 Squadron RAF (Operational Flying)
- 16 October 1943 Flying Officer
- 21 January 1944 80 Squadron RAF to Italy
- May 1944 80 Squadron RAF to United Kingdom
- 6 June 1944 Normandy Landings, then Northern Europe
- February 1945 a series of administrative and personnel depot postings
- 16 April 1945 Flight Lieutenant; embarked for Australia
- 25 August 1945 Transferred to RAAF Reserve
- September 1967 Transferred to RAAF Retired List

His initial flying training was at No. 3 E.F.T.S. at Essendon (November 1940 to January 1941) and at No. 2 S.F.T.S. at Wagga (January to April 1941). His operational training at 71 OTU at Khartoum, Sudan (14 September 1941 to 18 October 1941) concluded after 13 hours instruction, rather than the normal 100 hours, as he and a colleague were selected to join 250 Squadron RAF, which was critically short of pilots.

He joined 250 Squadron RAF on 29 October 1941 at Sidi Haneish, Libya 500 kilometres west of Cairo. On 1 December 1941 he was on operations in Libya flying a *Tomahawk* when he was shot down by a German Messerschmitt 109 near Taieb-el-Esem, Libya - approximately 70 kilometres

south west of Tobruk. He survived the landing and attempted to return to Allied lines on foot. He intercepted an equally "lost" English army vehicle behind enemy lines and with his navigational skills returned everyone safely to Allied lines. As a result, he was nominated for membership of the Late Arrivals Club - awarded to Allied airman who returned to operations after having been shot down behind enemy lines. During this period, 250 Squadron operated from numerous bases in Libya and Egypt prior to, during and subsequent to Operation Crusader to relieve the Siege of Tobruk during November/December 1941. His tour of duty with 250 Squadron ended on 18 March 1942.

On 11 June 1942 he joined Station Flight, Ismailia, Egypt flying senior officers around the region and on 31 August 1942 he was posted to the Air-Defence Co-Operation Unit in El Firdan, Egypt. Subsequently, on 1 December 1942 he joined the No.26 Anti-Aircraft Co-Operation Unit at El Firdan and then at Mariut, near Alexandria. On 26 January 1943 he joined the 1563 Meteorological Flight in Almaza, Egypt and later at Benghazi, Libya. On 28 June 1943 he completed his tour.

On 7 July 1943 he joined 80 Squadron RAF in Benghazi flying Spitfire VCs in convoy patrol work. On 21 January 1944 the squadron moved to Madna, Italy a few miles south of the front line running through Pescara, and subsequently to the UK in May 1944. At the time of the D-Day landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944 Murray was attending the No.6 Fighter Leaders Course at Milfield, Northumberland. Prior to the invasion of Europe, the squadron converted to Spitfire IXs and subsequently to Tempest Vs from August 1944 flying from numerous bases in southern England. In October 1944 the squadron moved to Volkel, Netherlands and conducted operations across the Low Countries. Murray's tour of duty ended on 29 January 1945.

His exit report from 80 Sqn RAF includes his Commanding Officer's comments "A likeable type of officer and an above average fighter pilot. He was keen and conscientious and was a very useful member of the Squadron."

His total RAAF / RAF Flying hours were 1,045 (almost all as pilot) on 13 different aircraft types (including over 650 hours in combat aircraft).

Murray was Mentioned in Dispatches, April 1945

In 1952, during the Korean War he participated in some training as a Flight Instructor in the RAAF Reserve. He remained a member of the RAAF Reserve until September 1967.



FLTLT Murray Adams in the Netherlands in 1944.

After his war service, Murray returned as a farmer to Mansfield where he and Margot lived firstly at Curia Street and then at their property "Detling" from the mid-1950s. ("Detling" was an RAF base in England where 80 Squadron had been stationed in May/June 1944).

He was active in the community being:

- Mansfield (Victoria) Shire Councilor 1949-51
- President Mansfield Agricultural and Pastoral Society 1958 & 1959
- Captain, Mansfield Rural Fire Brigade 1957-61

Murray and Margot moved to Brisbane in 1963 and lived for many years at Indooroopilly, and latterly at West End. The move to Brisbane was precipitated by recurring bouts of pleurisy during Mansfield's cold winter months, as a result of contracting pneumonia following a night out in the snow during a blizzard on Mt. Buller in 1939. He was in a coma when WWII was declared on 3 September 1939. His recovery from severe pneumonia, without the benefit of antibiotics, was due to 24-hour nursing care by his mother and a fulltime night nurse for nine months. When he enlisted for the RAAF in September 1940 his lungs had not fully recovered and he only passed the mandatory lung function test (which involved blowing up a column of mercury and holding it for one minute) by pinching the air tube against the table.

After a particularly severe bout of pleurisy, his local doctor suggested that Murray move to a warmer climate if he wanted to make "old Bones". A bushfire on his property in January, 1962 ultimately provided the impetus to make the move to Brisbane.

Murray was a "Field Officer" and a beef industry advisor for the Beef Shorthorn Society of Australia from 1961 to 1965 and travelled extensively across Australia in this role. In 1966, he became Manager and Secretary of the National Safety Council of Australia (Queensland Chapter), a position he held until his retirement in 1984.

Murray joined the Naval & Military Club in Melbourne in 1946. On moving to Brisbane in 1963, he joined the United Service Club. He first joined the Committee in 1968-9 to 1973-4; then rejoined in 1981-2 as Vice President, President 1983-4 and Immediate Past President 1985-7.

Murray's second period on the Committee was not all plain sailing. *"But by the mid-1980s, it was also apparent that several factors were combining to threaten the Club's future.*

*Certain difficulties for the Club began to emerge in late 1984. ... In that year's annual report, the president, Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams, reported a 'near parity of income and expenditure'."*² *"The period immediately after the 1984 annual meeting was difficult for the committee and the president. It was clear that trading was below expectations and budgets. ... For several months in early 1985, the Club was virtually run by the President"*³— following the resignation of the then Secretary/Manager.

Under Murray's leadership the Committee adopted a more business-like approach to the Club's management and operations which yielded results.

*"In the 1985 annual report, the president, Flight Lieutenant Adams described the most important achievement of the year as 'the upgrading of club management by redefining objectives and responsibilities and by bringing in new people, with appropriate skills, to fill key staff positions. The financial results for the year clearly reflect the benefits of effective management and adequate controls in operational areas. This more than justifies the higher cost of professional staff. A foundation has been laid for continuing improvements in efficiency and service which should carry on well into the future'."*⁴

Murray was elected a Life Member of the Club in 1990 in recognition of his services as a Committee Member, President, and for a period in 1985 as acting Secretary.

He was the co- author of *"United Service Club Queensland - The First Century 1892 – 1992"*, researching and writing Part One covering the first fifty years.

Murray travelled widely within Australia and overseas and had articles related to his interests published in national and international journals. He was the editor of "Against the Odds" a collection of true accounts by allied airmen about their escapes and evasions during World War II.

² *"United Service Club Queensland - The First Century 1892 – 1992"*, p199

³ *"United Service Club Queensland - The First Century 1892 – 1992"*, p201

⁴ *"United Service Club Queensland - The First Century 1892 – 1992"*, p202

He curated "Adventure, Adversity and Achievement", the story of club member Edward R. Blackmore MBE, OAM. He also wrote a memoir of his war experiences titled "Not All Were Aces, One Man's War 1940 to 1945 (unpublished).

On his 89th birthday, he took a tandem parachute jump in memory of the day he was shot down in Libya 67 years earlier and enjoyed it immensely.

His service during WWII was recognised by the French Government on 7 August 2015 when he was made a Knight of the Legion of Honour, France's highest civic honour for courage. Murray was aware of this honour only a short time before he died



Murray died at Pindara Private Hospital, Benowa, Queensland on 5 October 2015. His wife Margot had died in 2009. His ashes were distributed by his family at his previous farming property at "Detling", Mansfield, Victoria and on the Howqua River, near Mansfield, where he went on his annual fishing retreat during the 1950s and early 1960s. His epitaph on his parent's gravestone at the Mansfield Cemetery, reads "Better to be born lucky than good looking".

Many remember Murray as an unfailingly polite, very neat and debonair gentleman with a twinkle in his eye and a ready wit.

Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports and sundry documents
- National Archives of Australia – service record
- Trove
- <http://www.anzac-biographies.com/2017/05/05/scott-brigadier-william-henry-cmg-dso-and-bar/>
- Contributions from Murray's son Richard Adams, April 2020