

AN AIRMAN'S STORY



Service No.: SA417427
Name: Robert Bruce STIRLING
Nick Name: Bob



Medals and Decorations

1939 - 45 Star
Aircrew Europe Star (with clasps)
Defence Medal
War Medal 1939 - 45
Australian Service Medal 1939 - 45
Normandy Campaign Medal 1944 (unofficial)
Bomber Command Medal 1939 - 45 (unofficial)

Rank: Flying Officer
Service: RAAF
Enlisted: 25 Apr 1942
Discharged: 1 May 1945

Bob was born on 26 Sep 1914 at Cummins to Leslie Robert Stirling and Esther Elizabeth Stirling (nee Evans). He was one of 2 children, a boy and a girl. His father was a packer in the railways in the Port Lincoln and Cummins regions. His dad went to WW1 in 1916 and was killed in action in Oct 1917. His mother then moved to Cleve and the family lived on her brother's farm until she remarried to a Cleve farmer, Rueben Deer; the family then relocated to his farm, also in the Cleve area.

Bob started his schooling in 1920 at Yadnarie (near Cleve). In 1928 he moved to Adelaide and continued his schooling at Adelaide High School before moving to Roseworthy College in 1931 for his final year.

At the completion of his schooling he returned to Cleve and worked on his step father's farm until he enlisted in the RAAF in 1942. During this time he met and married Lorna Spriggs, literally the girl next door. They had 5 children, 2 boys and 3 girls. The boys, Graeme and Barry, still live in the Tumby area.

After enlistment he was sent to Victor Harbour (SA) for basic training before being dispatched to Ballarat (Vic) for wireless training and then to Sale (Vic) for gunnery training.

In early 1943 he embarked on the "*New Amsterdam*" bound for San Francisco. He then entrained for Taunton (USA); after a very short stay it was on to Halifax (Canada) where he embarked on the "*Louis Pasteur*" bound for Liverpool (UK). After periods of training at Stranrear (near Glasgow, UK) for crewing up and night flying, Oxford

for operational training on heavier aircraft and Marsden Moor for four engined aircraft, he was posted to 10 Squadron, Bomber Command at Melbourne (UK). On 9 Apr 44 he was posted to 158 Squadron, Bomber Command at Lissett (UK). In this posting he was aircrew on Halifax Bombers, his aircraft being named “*Minnie the Moocher*”; he completed 39 operational missions in this aircraft including the preparations for the landings at Normandy on 6 Jun 44. Bob was the only Australian aboard this aircraft; he was also the only member of the crew who was not awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC).

On 30 Aug 44 he was posted to the operational training Unit (OTU) at Litchfield as an instructor. In Jan 1945 Bob embarked on the “*Dominion Monarch*” bound for Sydney (NSW) via the Panama Canal; he then traveled on to Adelaide for discharge, before returning to Cleve to his family and to work on the farm.

In 1949 he applied for and was granted a soldier settler block, Sections 297/298 Hundred of Hutchison. These blocks were among the first 10 released on the flats just before the foothills west of Tumby, being part of Mortlock’s “*Yalluna*” station. This block is still in the family today; it is farmed by Graeme Stirling.

In addition to cropping, Bob established a dairy farm on this block that expanded from the original 2 stands to 6 stands; this required the building of a new and larger elevated dairy, known as a “tandem parlour”.

In 1953 Bob began showing his stud dairy cattle at the Royal Adelaide Show. He won a number of ribbons in this forum, including Grand Champion Bull.

In Oct 2005 Bob retired at the age of 91 and he and his wife moved from the farm to the Tumby Bay Retirement Homes. Bob and Lorna were married for 73 years before her death on 28 Apr 2010 at 95 years of age. She is buried in the Tumby Bay Cemetery.

Bob was also an active member of the Tumby Bay Sub Branch of the RSL, having been a founding member and Vice President.



Halifax Bomber



Left:
Bob and his crew