

## A SOLDIER'S STORY



Service No.: 417541  
Name: Arthur Osment WAIT  
Nickname: Art



### *Medals and Decorations*

1939 - 45 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939 - 45

Australian Service Medal 1939 - 45

Rank: Flying Officer  
Service: RAAF  
Enlisted: 23 May 1942  
Discharged: 9 Jan 1946

Art was born on 28 Aug 1916 at Riverton (SA) to Frank Osment Wait and Eleanor Agnes Wait (nee Palmer). There were 4 children in the family, 2 boys and 2 girls, of which he was the second eldest; one of his sisters died in infancy. His father was a farmer at Rhynie (SA) near Riverton.

He completed 7 years at Walseys School before transferring to Gawler High School. The family sold the farm in 1930 and moved to Adelaide where he continued his schooling. In 1931 the family purchased another farm at Sect 68, Hundred of Koppio and moved to Port Lincoln where Arthur completed his schooling. He then worked on the family farm for a time before purchasing a portable shearing plant in 1936 and commenced contract shearing in partnership with Max Low. A partnership that continued until his marriage.

In Jul 1940 Arthur married Mary Duffield, a teacher at Koppio. After this momentous event he then went into a partnership with his brother in law, Frank Whitaker, and purchased a property at Yallunda Flat from "Cocky" Roberts which they developed until his enlistment in the RAAF in 1942.

Art enlisted in Adelaide and was initially posted to Victor Harbour, then to Ballarat (Vic) where he trained as a wireless operator and air gunner on Catalina flying boats before being reposted to No. 43 Squadron. The No. 43 Squadron was a Royal Australian Airforce (RAAF) maritime patrol and mine-laying squadron, raised in early 1943. The squadron flew Catalina aircraft from bases in Queensland and the Northern Territory,

flying mine-laying, convoy-protection and bombing sorties against Japanese targets in the Pacific theatre. These tasks saw it operate as far north as the Chinese coast. At the conclusion of hostilities, the squadron was disbanded in mid 1946.

There were several missions that stood out in Art's mind; he recounted some of these to his son "Shorty ". The longest sortie undertaken by Art was 19 1/2 hours from Darwin to the Chinese coast; a long way in a slow and rather basic aircraft . Another was when they were on a mine laying mission and were engaged by a Japanese ship in the Sunda Strait ; they sank the ship and returned safely to base . The third was a rescue mission where they were sent out to rescue the crew from another Catalina that had been " downed " into the ocean ; they flew out to the crashed aircraft , landed in the Pacific and retrieved the other crew , despite a heavy swell , and then destroyed the other aircraft - this event is recorded in the Advertiser of Jan 1945.

Art took his discharge in early 1946 and returned to Yallunda Flat where he bought out his brother in law and became the sole owner of Sect 163 and part Sect 158, Hundred of Koppio. He and Mary then settled on the farm to raise their family (now 6 children - 3 boys and 3 girls ) and to further develop the farm . Sharefarming and shearing were undertaken to supplement the farm income. After the family had grown, Mary also returned to teaching. In 1958 his father transferred a farm at Stokes to Art (Sect 60 Hundred of Stokes).

Unfortunately Mary became ill with cancer and died on 13 Jul 1966.

They had been a very community minded couple and Art continued the tradition . He was the Secretary and then President of the Yallunda Flat Show Society for a total of 12 years; in recognition he was made a life member of the Show Society in 1982. He was also a very active member of the Tumby Bay RSL and was secretary of the Sub Branch for over 22 years; he received a life membership and a Meritorious Service Award from the RSL in 1983.

Art passed away on 14 Sep 1993 and is buried beside his wife in the Tumby Bay Cemetery



Art and his Flying Boat crewmates