Fuhrmann, Herbert Leonard

A West Australian railway employee killed while on military service for their country



Memorial at Railway Workshops Midland (D.Graham/panoramio)

Rail employment information

Employer: Western Australian Government Railways

Branch: Chief Mechanical Engineer

Designation: Striker

Rail employment notes: Striker, Midland Workshops

Career details have not been located, however information has been researched from Honour Boards, articles in the Railway Institute magazine and other sources. A Striker is a blacksmith's assistant.

The Chief Mechanical Engineer's branch, included the major workshops at Midland (then Midland Junction) employing a wide range of tradesmen to work on locomotives, carriages and freight wagons as they were built or passed through for repairs, and also trained apprentices in many trades.

Military service information:

Conflict: Second World War 1939-1945

Service: Royal Australian Air Force

Military unit: No. 460 Squadron

Service number: 415079

Date of death: 30 July 1943

Place of death: Germany

Age: 25

Rank at time of loss: Pilot Officer

Burial/memorialisation: Runnymede Memorial, Surrey, England, United Kingdom

Herbert Fuhrmann enlisted on 23 June 1941 in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and was allocated service number 415079.

After initial training he was transferred to England and posted in No.460 Squadron. This was nominally an Australian squadron, although including airmen from other commonwealth countries. It was formed to fly the Lancaster heavy 4-engoine bomber made by the Avro Company which was introduced in 1942 and proved a very successful aircraft. The Lancaster was designed with long-range night bombing requirements and that was the major role of No.460 Squadron. Wikipedia states that more than 7000 Lancasters were built.

The Squadron carried out raids under the overall requirements of Britain's Bomber Command, particularly over the industrial production areas of Germany. Such flights were always very dangerous and many planes and crew were lost.

Australian War memorial records show Herbert Fuhrmann as officially presumed dead after the plane in which he was a crew member was shot down over Germany on 30/7/1943, however his body was never found and he is remembered on the Air Force's Runnymede Memorial, Surrey, England.

At the time of his death, the squadron was operating out of RAF Binbrook, a base near Binbrook in Lincolnshire.

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Herbert Fuhrmann was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) for his service.

Additional/personal information:

Herbert Fuhrmann was born at Collie in 1917, a son of Frederick and Margaret Fuhrmann. (BDM 480/1917)

When aircraft were lost over enemy territory it took some time before the family could receive official confirmation. At the time, the Fuhrmann family may have believed they had lost two sons:

> FUHRMANN, Herbert Leonard (Bert) Pilot Officer, DFM. Missing air raid operations over Germany, July 29, 1943, now presumed dead, loving son of Fred Fuhrmann, Collie, brother of Harry (P O W Thailand), Molly (deceased), Peg (Mrs W.Woods, Collie) and loving uncle of little Pat. Inserted by his sorrowing father Fred Fuhrmann. Collie Mail 24/2/1944p2

> FUHRMANN, B. (P/O. DFM).-A tribute to the memory of our shopmate, Bert, missing, in air operations over Hamburg, July 9, 1943, now presumed dead. Inserted by members of Loco Blacksmiths Shop, Midland Junction. *The West Australian* 11/3/1944p1

In fact Herbert's brother survived his captivity. Another notice confirmed that Fred was not the only casualty that night:

> BENT (Flt-Sergeant Thomas Edward). In proud and loving memory of Tommy, beloved only son of Tom and Nita, of 14 Hyde-street, Mt Lawley, reported missing on July 29. 1943, now Presumed killed; also his dear Pals. Bill Gliddon and Bert Fuhrmann, all lost in same plane: aged 21 years and 10 months. Inserted by his heartbroken father and mother. *The West Australian* 26/2/1944p1

**Note: Above name is as per birth and AWM records, however he is recorded as Leonard Herbert Fuhrmann on the memorial at Midland (photo).

Further information and/or photos may be added as available. Information may also be found on the Australian War Memorial website: *https://www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people*

Abbreviations: WAGR= Western Australian Government Railways (& Tramways at some periods); MRWA= Midland Railway of Western Australia; BDM=Western Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages website; AWM=Australian War Memorial (Canberra and website); CWGC= Commonwealth War Graves Commission (including website). DVA=Department of Veterans' Affairs (including website)

Acknowledgements: Rail employment notes from WAGR Honour Roll and WAGR records held by State Records Office, Perth, transcribed by J.Austin 2019. Family information and collation by G.Higham.

----------Lest we forget----------