



In memory of

**Flight Sergeant  
JOHN NEAL DONALD**

434967, No. 1652 Conversion Unit, R.A.A.F.  
who died age 20  
on 5 April 1945

Son of William Arthur Donald and Vera Augusta Donald;  
of Nambour, Queensland, Australia

Remembered with honour  
RUNNYMEDE MEMORIAL



FLIGHT SERGEANT  
**JOHN NEAL DONALD**

No. 1652 CONVERSION UNIT, R.A.A.F.  
SERVICE NUMBER: 434967



Flight Sergeant John Donald, the son of William Arthur Donald and Vera August Donald (nee Pearson), was born at Townsville in Queensland on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1924. He was educated at the Yeronga and Nambour State Schools. He attended the Toowoomba Grammar School and passed the Junior Public Examination in 1939 and the Queensland University Senior Examination in 1941. He applied for aircrew training in the Royal Australian Air Force on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1942. At the age of 18 years and 6 months he was enlisted in the Citizen Air Force of the R.A.A.F. at No. 3 Recruiting Centre in Brisbane on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1943 after making a commitment that he would serve for the duration of the war and an additional twelve months. At the time of enlistment, he was

employed as a Bank Clerk with the Commonwealth Bank in Toowoomba and was residing at 72 Campbell Street, Toowoomba. He had previously served in High School Cadets. His physical description at the time of his enlistment was that he was 5 feet 7 inches in height and weighed 142 pounds. He had a fair complexion, brown eyes and dark brown hair. He stated that he was of the Presbyterian religion. He gave his next of kin as his father, Mr William Donald, residing at Oxleigh Heights, Nambour, Queensland. He also nominated Miss Ethel A. Donald, residing at 72 Campbell Street, Toowoomba, as a person to be advised in the event of injury or death. He was allotted the service number of 434967.

Flight Sergeant John Donald joined No. 3 Initial Training School at Sandgate in Queensland on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1943. He attended No. 41 Navigator's Course at No. 1 Air Observers School at Cootamundra in New South Wales during the period 19<sup>th</sup> August until 15<sup>th</sup> November 1943 and completed an astro navigation course during the period 9<sup>th</sup> January until 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1944. He was awarded the Navigator Qualification Badge on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1944 and was promoted to the rank of Temporary Sergeant on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1944. He joined No. 1 Bombing & Gunnery School at Evans Head in New South Wales on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1943. He qualified for the Air Observer Qualification Badge on 4<sup>th</sup> January 1944.

Flight Sergeant John Donald joined No. 2 Embarkation Depot at Bradfield Park in Sydney on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1944 to prepare for overseas service on attachment to the Royal Air Force. He embarked on sea transport from Brisbane on 1<sup>st</sup> March 1944 and he disembarked from the ship in England on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1944. On the following day he joined No. 11 Personnel Despatch and Reception Centre at Bournemouth. He trained at No. 3 Elementary Flying Training School, 50 Group at Royal Air Force Station Watchfield in Oxfordshire during the period 26<sup>th</sup> May until 16<sup>th</sup> June 1944.

He joined No. 4 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit at Royal Air Force Station West Freugh on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1944. He was promoted to the rank of Temporary Flight Sergeant on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1944. He was transferred to No. 27 Operational Training Unit at Royal Air Force Station Lichfield on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1944 where night bomber crew training was conducted using Vickers Wellington aircraft. He joined No. 74 Base at Royal Air Force Station Marston Moor on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1944. He joined No. 1652 Heavy Conversion Unit where aircrew were trained on heavy bombers prior to being assigned to an operational training unit.

Flight Sergeant John Donald was a Navigator/Bombardier crew member of a No. 1652 Conversion Unit of Halifax Bomber NA193 that crashed at Scapa Flow, Scotland, on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1945. The aircraft took off from Royal Air Force Station Marston Moor at 2225 hours on 4<sup>th</sup> April on a non-operational training exercise to Scapa Flow. The Air Ministry notified his father who was residing at Currie Street in Nambour that he was missing. Also notified was a Miss E.A. Donald of 72 Campbell Street, Toowoomba. Two of the crew were subsequently recovered dead from the sea. No trace was found of John Neal, therefore his name is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial for the Missing in the United Kingdom. At the time of his death John Donald was 20 years of age. His name is commemorated on Panel No. 121 at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and locally on the Toowoomba Soldiers' Memorial Hall World War 2 Honour Board, the Toowoomba Mothers' Memorial and the Toowoomba Grammar School World War 2 Honour Board.

The following newspaper article was published in the *North Coast Advertiser* on Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> April 1945:

*NAMBOUR AIRMAN REPORTED MISSING. FLIGHT SERGEANT J.N. DONALD. Sympathy of townspeople is extended to Mr and Mrs W.A. Donald, of Oxleigh Heights, Nambour, in their present anxiety, which came to them by official information on Tuesday last, that their only son, Flight Sergeant John Neal Donald, is reported missing. He is a navigation bomb aimer, and his Halifax aircraft crashed while on a non-operational flight to Scapa Flow. The plane did not return to base, and two bodies of the crew of eight have been recovered from the water. Flight Sergeant Donald, who is 20 years of age, enlisted in the R.A.A.F. some two years ago. He was educated at Toowoomba where, at the Grammar School, he successfully passed his University Junior and Senior examinations. He had not visited his home since some little time after enlistment. Quite recently his name was mentioned amongst the list of Queensland airmen on leave in London.*

Toowoomba Grammar School archive records show that he enrolled as a day student on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1938 and he left the School on 5<sup>th</sup> December 1941. His parent was shown as W.A. Donald, Blackall Terrace Nambour. He completed Junior in 1939 and Senior in 1941. He participated in athletics whilst at the School. He passed the Commonwealth Civil Service examination in the top 25. After leaving school he was employed in a bank. He studied evening commerce classes in 1942.

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