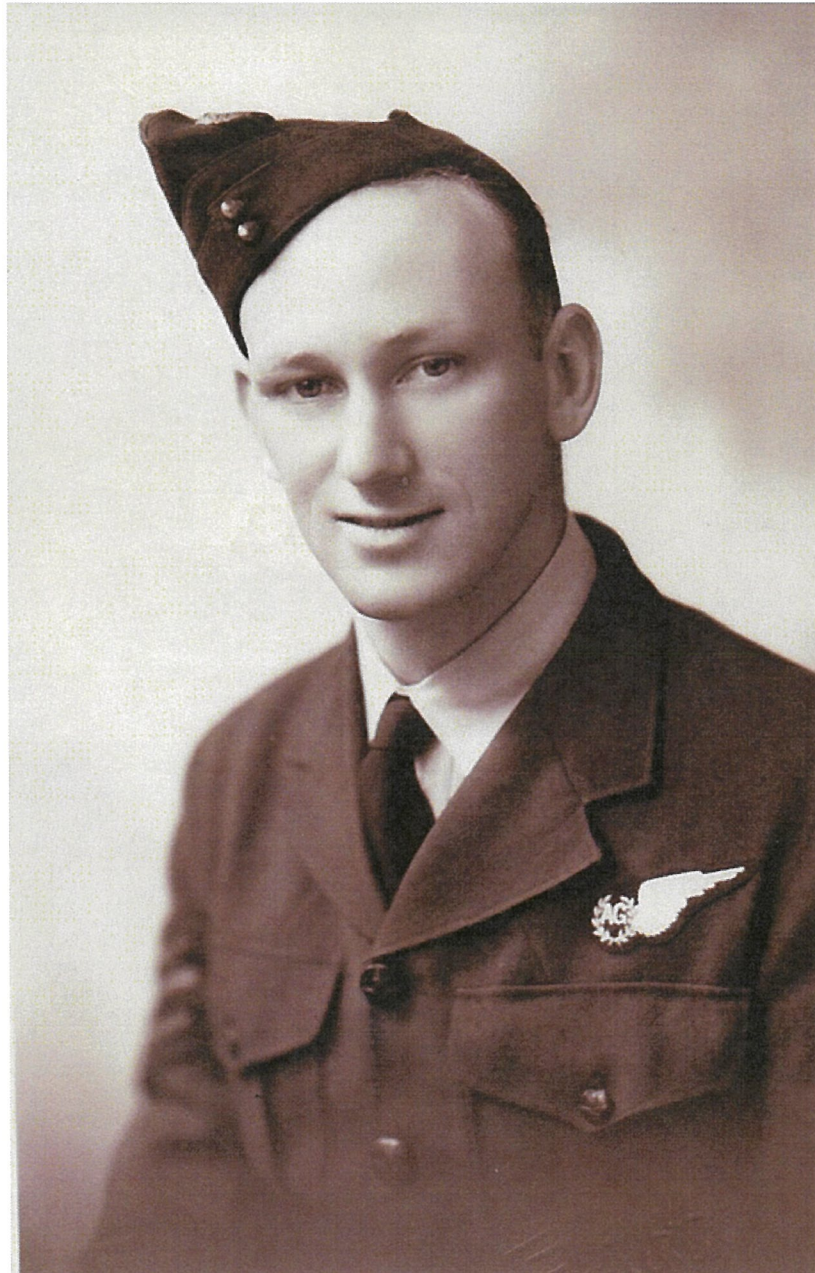


# **Warrant Officer - Joseph Colwyn Kelly**

Referred to and known as Colwyn  
January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1917 - May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943

Duration of service: 1941 – 1943

No. 10 Squadron



**2022 Premier's ANZAC Spirit School Prize**

**Olivia Brook**

**Kadina Memorial School**





**Figure 1**  
**Kelly Brothers - Christmas Day, 1940**  
Left to Right- Ken, Ron, Colwyn and Ralph

On Christmas Day, 1940, the Kelly brothers gathered together at *Wonnaburee*, Urania (Figure 1). Little did they know this would be the last time all four boys would be together. Two-and-a-half years later, in 1943, Colwyn's Sunderland aircraft would be shot down while flying over the Atlantic Ocean, while Ralph would later be killed in an Army training accident in 1944. Within three years, two of the four Kelly brothers would sacrifice their lives to protect their loved ones, and the small town of Urania would change forever.

This is the story of Joseph Colwyn Kelly (known as Colwyn), from his days as a farmer in Urania, to playing his part in the Battle of the Atlantic during World War Two.

Colwyn was born on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1917, in the Maitland Hospital to parents Arthur William (A.W) and Lavinia Ethel Maude Kelly (Maude). Colwyn grew up on the Kelly farm, *Wonnaburee*, in Urania, South Australia. He attended Urania School during his primary years and Prince Alfred College for his secondary schooling. At the age of 15, he left school and returned to *Wonnaburee* to help A.W. on the farm. Colwyn immersed himself within the Urania community, regularly attending church and local events including pictures and dances at the Urania Hall. He was also a talented cricketer and played for the Port Victoria Cricket Club. Colwyn was an adventurous young man, who loved the outdoors and enjoyed camping and hunting.



**Figure 2**  
**Port Victoria Cricket Club**  
Colwyn front row, far right



**Figure 3**  
Colwyn (far left) on a hunting trip at Willow Spring, Flinders Ranges







Figure 4  
Wonnaburee Homestead



Figure 5  
Urania Hall

The Bombing of Darwin by the Japanese Imperial Army Air Force on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1941, was a major concern for the Kelly family as the threat of war inched closer to home. To ensure that the Kelly family were playing their part in the war efforts, A.W provided an incentive to Colwyn and Ralph: if the boys served their country, they would be given the family farm *Wonnaburee*, over 2000 acres of land, upon their return. As an adventurous young man, Colwyn, now aged 24, would have found this an irresistible offer and enlisted for the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1941, in North Adelaide.<sup>1</sup> Two days later, he was on an aircraft to Pearce RAAF Base, Perth, for four weeks at the Initial Training School (ITS).<sup>2</sup> ITS provided “[s]evere disciplinary training and intensive formal study for new recruits...A panel of trained officers categorised the new recruits into roles such as pilot, navigator, wireless operator, or gunner depending on your academic performance.”<sup>3</sup> Colwyn forwent any ambitions to be a pilot because on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1941, he was redeployed to the Number 1 Wireless Air Gunnery School (1W.A.G.S.) in Ballarat to train as a gunner.<sup>4</sup>

Over the next three months, Colwyn trained in wireless operations, morse code and aircraft machine guns operations.<sup>5</sup> On June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, Colwyn was transferred from Ballarat to the Number 1 Bombing and Gunnery School (1B.A.G.S) at Evans Head RAAF Base to focus on his gunner skills.<sup>6</sup>

While stationed at 1B.A.G.S, Colwyn trained as a gunner on Avro Anson aircraft (the main aircraft used for training purposes).<sup>7</sup> He participated in many training missions on these aircraft to hone his skills. It is at Evans Head “[r]epresentatives of 10 squadron RAAF came to the base looking for people to join their squadron in the UK. They were an elite squadron and were looking to make their own selections.”<sup>8</sup>

Colwyn joined the RAAF Number 10 Squadron and was told that he would soon sail for Scotland. On November 27<sup>th</sup>, he returned to Adelaide for two weeks and attended the No. 4 Embarkation Depot in North Adelaide which processed personnel for overseas postings.<sup>9</sup> He went home to *Wonnaburee* to visit his parents and say goodbyes. The level of respect for the Kelly family was demonstrated by the organisation of a farewell dance for Colwyn at the Urania Hall on Saturday night, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1941.<sup>10</sup> This would be the last time he would ever see his family and friends again. On Monday, December 8<sup>th</sup>, Colwyn flew to Sydney to Bradfield Park and then later on to Richmond RAAF Base to prepare for his service overseas.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>2</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>3</sup> Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022. *Peter Munro – Becoming an air gunner*, Anzac Portal [online] Available at: <<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/resources/peter-munro-becoming-air-gunner-0>> [Accessed 1 April 2022].

<sup>4</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>5</sup> Schoutens, P and Bates, J., 2019. *WWII Ballarat 'No 1 Wags' Memorial - Ballarat Times*. [online] Ballarat Times. Available at: <<https://timesnewsgroup.com.au/ballarat/news/wwii-ballarat-no-1-wags-memorial/>> [Accessed 2 April 2022].

<sup>6</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>7</sup> Hattam, Rick, President of the Air Force Association Sunderland Branch in Victoria, Email to O.Brook, *407986 FLT SGT JOSEPH COLWYN KELLY EMAIL 1 of 3*, 29 April 2022

<sup>8</sup> Australian Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2020, *Andy Anderson – Joining 10 Squadron*, Youtube.com. [online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-rVYfUPc1c>> [Accessed 2 April 2022].

<sup>9</sup> Constantine, Emily, Royal Australian Air Force Museum Curator, Email to O.Brook, *Information on Joseph Colwyn Kelly- Abbreviations*, 7 April 2022

<sup>10</sup> Heinrich, R, 1976, *Wide Sails and Wheat Stacks*, Port Victoria Centenary Committee, Adelaide (Accessed on 15 March 2022)





Figure 6

**RMS Queen Mary in Sydney Harbour.**

The Maritime Executive. 2022. *Cunard Releases Historic Queen Mary Picture*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.maritime-executive.com/features/cunard-releases-historic-queen-mary-picture>> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

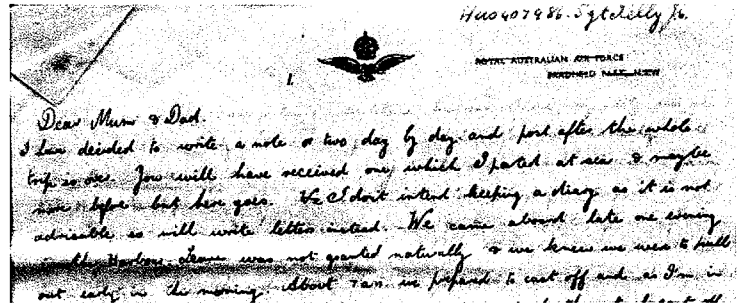


Figure 7

An extract from Colwyn's first letter to Mum and Dad discussing his departure from Sydney Harbour

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, 1942, after a year of training, Colwyn embarked for Scotland aboard the RMS *Queen Mary*.<sup>11</sup> The *Queen Mary* was originally a grand ocean liner which was modified into the largest and fastest troopship in the world.<sup>12</sup> Colwyn wrote a series of letters to his mother and father on his 44-day journey, detailing the route via Auckland and the Panama Canal. Colwyn got quite seasick at the beginning, however, he eventually found his "sea legs" and spent his time playing tennis, swimming, and manning the 3-inch calibre guns.<sup>13</sup> Colwyn was "bothered" by the constant zig zagging of the ship every 3 minutes as he sailed the Atlantic.<sup>14</sup> The evasive movements were designed to protect the *Queen Mary* from torpedo attacks from German U-boats.<sup>15</sup> Colwyn reported that he was nervous sailing across the Atlantic as the ship was a major target for the Germans. The *Queen Mary* was such a prized target that Hitler offered \$250,000 and the Iron Cross to any U-boat captain who could sink it.<sup>16</sup>

Colwyn arrived at Port Glasgow, Scotland on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1942. After recreation leave in London, he arrived at Mount Batton Airforce base, Plymouth, on May 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>17</sup> As Colwyn was a qualified machine gunner, he was immediately deployed into active service with 10 Squadron RAAF on the Sunderland aircraft,<sup>18</sup> a 4-propeller flying boat that could land and take off on water.<sup>19</sup>

Colwyn flew reconnaissance missions to target German U-boats in the Bay of Biscay, protecting Britain's supply lines.<sup>20</sup> "After take off, Colwyn would take up his station ... [rotating hourly between] ... each of the three gun turrets, wireless and in the galley providing endless cups of tea and cooking the main meal of the day. Colwyn also had to be ready to rush to the bomb room to lower the bomb doors and release the depth charges."<sup>21</sup>

Between 1939 and 1945, 10 Squadron RAAF sunk six U-Boats and conducted many sea rescues.<sup>22</sup> The missions that Colwyn flew lasted over 20 hours and provided great protection and reassurance to the merchant ships sailing the Atlantic.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>12</sup> Queenmary.com. 2022. *Queen Mary Story – The Queen Mary - Legendary Queen Mary Ship in Long Beach*. [online] Available at: <<https://queenmary.com/history/>> [Accessed 2 April 2022].

<sup>13</sup> Kelly, J.C. to Kelly, A.W. (1943), Personal Correspondence, provided by the Kelly family, 2022.

<sup>14</sup> Kelly, J.C. to Kelly, A.W. (1943), Personal Correspondence, provided by the Kelly family, 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Hill, J., 2000. *The Queen Mary at War*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.sterling.rmpc.co.uk/history/wartime.html>> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

<sup>16</sup> Hill, J., 2000. *The Queen Mary at War*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.sterling.rmpc.co.uk/history/wartime.html>> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

<sup>17</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>18</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>19</sup> Weapons and Warfare. 2020. *Short Sunderland*. [online] Available at: <<https://weaponsandwarfare.com/2020/06/28/short-sunderland/>> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

<sup>20</sup> Virtual War Memorial, 2022. *No. 10 Squadron (RAAF)*. [online] Available at: <<https://vwma.org.au/explore/units/568>> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

<sup>21</sup> Hattam, Rick, President of the Air Force Association Sunderland Branch in Victoria, Email to O.Brook, 407986 FLT SGT JOSEPH COLWYN KELLY EMAIL 1 of 2, 27 April 2022

<sup>22</sup> Australian War Memorial, 2022. *Air gunner brevet | Australian War Memorial*. [online] Awm.gov.au. Available at: <<https://www.awm.gov.au/learn/memorial-boxes/4/object-list/brevet>> [Accessed 3 April 2022].

<sup>23</sup> Widenbar, C., 2020. *First to Fight: No. 10 Squadron*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.shrine.org.au/first-fight-no-10-squadron>> [Accessed 2 April 2022].





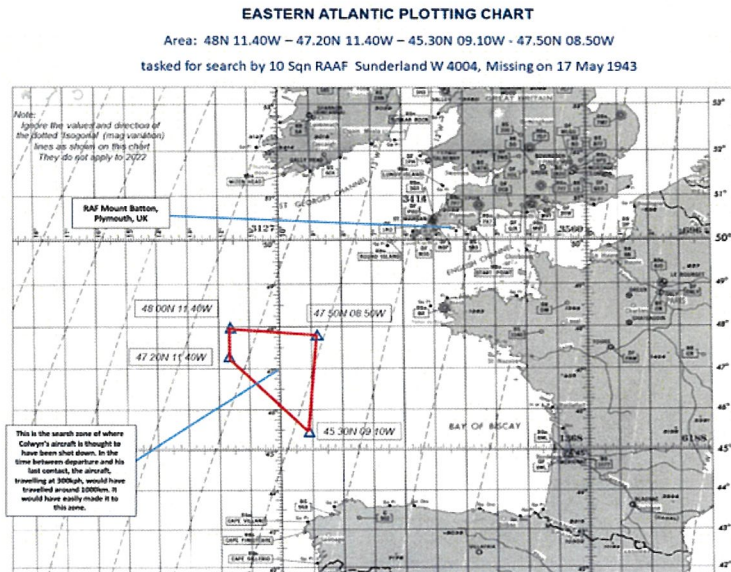


Figure 8

The red polygon outlines the zone that DW4004 was supposed to search on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943. Based on coordinates provided by the RAF, Richard King calculated the search zone. A Sunderland travels at 300 km/h and he knew that DW4004 left at 5:17 am and failed to check in at 8:30am which makes me believe it travelled around 1000 km in that time. King, Richard, 10 Squadron Association, Email to O.Brook, *Long overdue email- Atlantic search area*, 27 April 2022

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943, the Luftwaffe shot Colwyn's aircraft down and he and the crew all lost their lives in the Bay of Biscay.<sup>24</sup> Flight records state that Colwyn's Sunderland W4004 took off at Mount Batton at 5:17 am.<sup>25</sup> Wing Commander of 10 Squadron, Jeff Hartnell noted in his diary "*Mackenzie (pilot of W4004) was shot down by Ju88 in the bay; we think about 8:30 am, we didn't know about it, until he was overdue, because he didn't send out any messages. Reg Marks (flight commander) went out looking for them at night but didn't find any trace. The 88's have been a bit active, and Mac was about the 4<sup>th</sup> of 5<sup>th</sup> in a couple of days*".<sup>26</sup> It is able to be confirmed from German Luftwaffe records that W4004 was officially shot down by HPTM Hans Morr in a JU88 at 8.20am.<sup>28</sup>

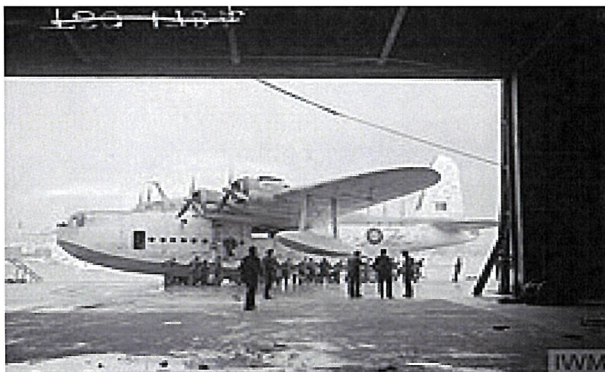


Figure 9

Sunderland W4004 winched out of water for preparation for Mount Batton 1943. 2022. [online] Available at: <<http://aircrewremembered.com/paul-mcguinness-raft-archive-ww2-10-sqd-sunderlands.html>> [Accessed 2 May 2022].

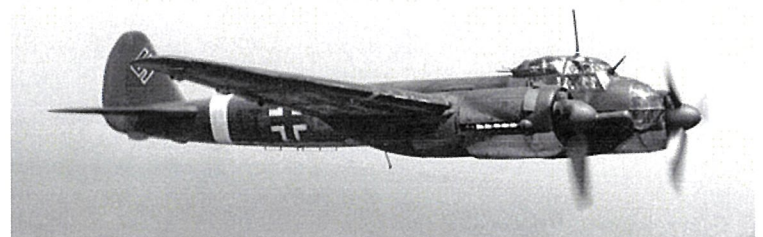


Figure 10

German JU88 (the type of aircraft which shot down Colwyn's Sunderland Junkers Ju88-a4 bomber of the German Luftwaffe. [online] Available at: <<https://www.agefotostock.com/age/en/details-photo/junkers-ju88-a4-bomber-of-the-german-luftwaffe-the-ju88-was-one-of-the-most-versatile-aircraft-of-the-war-serving-as-bomber-fighter/MEV-11937926>> [Accessed 19 April 2022].

Colwyn was awarded four medals for his service: the 1939-1945 star, the Atlantic Star, the British War Medal 1939-1945, and the Australian Service Medal.<sup>27</sup>

Colwyn has five memorials to ensure his service will always be remembered. His name is etched into panel 191 at the Air Forces Memorial in Runnymede, England. In Canberra, the Australian War Memorial has his name engraved into panel 99. On the National War Memorial in Adelaide, his name is in the Air Force section. Closer to home, Colwyn is remembered with his name on a memorial board in the Port Victoria Town Hall. In his home town, the Urania Church had a stained-glass window installed in memory of both Colwyn and his brother, Ralph.

<sup>24</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>25</sup> King, Richard, 10 Squadron Association, Email to O.Brook, *Long overdue email- Atlantic search area*, 27 April 2022

<sup>26</sup> Highgate RSL. 2022. *BOWLEY Robert George 416015 - Highgate RSL*. [online] Available at: <<https://highgate-rsl.org.au/afcraft-roll/bowley-robert-george-416015/>> [Accessed 3 April 2022]. (He was the flying officer/navigator on DW4004)

<sup>27</sup> Royal Australian Air Force, 1941-1943, Service Record, Joseph Colwyn Kelly, Service Number 407986 (Accessed 1 April 2022)

<sup>28</sup> Goss, Chris, 2014, *Bloody Biscay The History of V Gruppe/Kampfgeschwader 40*, Crecy Publishing







Figure 11  
 Colwyn's War Medals

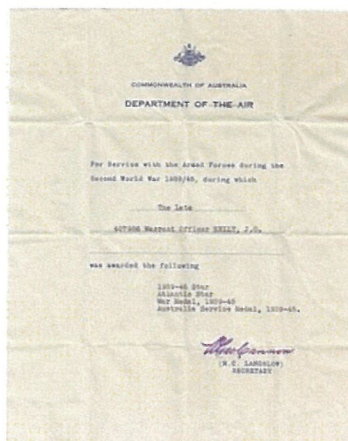


Figure 12  
 Letter sent to A.W accompanying with Colwyn's Medals

Colwyn was a brave and courageous hero, who exemplified the ANZAC spirit. When our country was in need and calling for volunteers, Colwyn was eager to serve. Every time Colwyn boarded his aircraft, it could have been for the last time, yet he persevered and continued to fly because he would not have wanted to let his mates down. Each mission was long, often tedious, and exhausting. Colwyn was cramped in a glass gun turret, exposed to freezing conditions and required to keep lookout for the enemy at all times. Colwyn was a respected, and reliable crew member and he persevered no matter what adversity he faced in order to achieve the objective and protect his crew. Working hard and enduring a high level of stress for many hours at a time together would have forged great mateships that would have lasted a lifetime had Colwyn's war ended differently. I don't know what happened during the final hours of W4004, but I believe Colwyn went down with his finger on the trigger fighting for his crew. Colwyn sacrificed his life, his dreams and ambitions to fight for his country. He loved and preserved the freedoms that all Australians enjoy today, and maintained the spirit of the ANZACs who came before him.

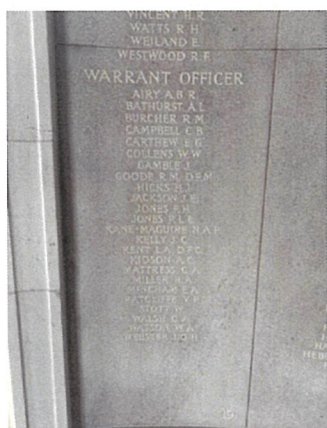


Figure 13  
 Panel 191, J.C Kelly, Runnymede Air Force Memorial  
 King, Richard, 10 Squadron Association, Email to O.Brook, JC Kelly - Photos of Runnymede, 10 April 2022



Figure 14  
 Runnymede Air Forces Memorial, England  
 King, Richard, 10 Squadron Association, Email to O.Brook, JC Kelly - Photos of Runnymede, 10 April 2022

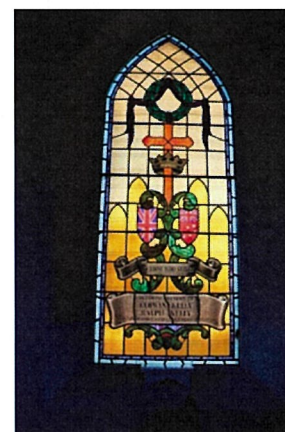


Figure 15  
 Memorial Window in Urania Church



Figure 16  
 Panel 99, J.C Kelly, Australian War Memorial, Canberra  
 Hardley, Taya, Senior Media and communication officer, Email to O.Brook, Photo of Joseph Colwyn Kelly roll of honour, 6 April 2022



Figure 17  
 Adelaide War Memorial



Figure 18  
 Colwyn's War Memorial at Port Victoria



Figure 19  
 Colwyn's Rathmine Memorial in Bunbury  
 Hattam, Rick, President of the Air Force Association underland Branch in Victoria, Email to O.Brook, 'LT SGT JOSEPH COLWYN KELLY EMAIL 2 of April 2022



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## **Part B: Research Methodologies**

Warrant Officer - Joseph Colwyn Kelly  
Olivia Brook, Kadina Memorial School

Colwyn Kelly was my Great, Great Uncle and grew up in the same homestead as my Pop and Mum. The research of Colwyn's life and war history has involved conversations with relatives, countless emails, hours of internet research and many car rides to visit people and places.

My journey began with interviews with my Pop and his two sisters, as they are the closest family members to Colwyn and his brothers. Unfortunately, their father Ken (the oldest of the brothers) and A.W did not pass on much information about the boys; however, they provided me with leads to explore and start my project.

My Pop assisted me with the history of the Kelly family. Pop has a brilliant memory and was able to tell me about the things that Colwyn would have done growing up in the 1930s.

I persuaded my parents to visit distant cousin, Col Kelly, on Hindmarsh Island. He is named Colwyn Ralph Kelly after the Kelly brothers who lost their lives in service. His dad, Ron, passed on Colwyn's war memorabilia to Col when he died. The memorabilia contained Colwyn's handwritten letters, photographs, and war medals. I felt privileged that Col trusted and allowed me to borrow these heirlooms for my research. This enabled me to study Colwyn's letters (which had to be read aloud by my dad as it was in old-style cursive).

The challenging part of the project was researching Colwyn's movements and postings. I accessed a copy of Colwyn's personal RAAF file from the NAA website, which became the most valuable primary source as it provided me with an accurate timeline of Colwyn's service.

Colwyn's letters were extremely valuable, as they provided me with dates of his departure and arrival in England, leading me to find where he was based. I was then able to research 10 Squadron RAAF operations between 1942 and 1943. This led to a website that identified Colwyn's aircraft number, the time he departed on his last day, mission details and a diary entry of the squad commander the day Colwyn's aircraft went missing.

Once I constructed a detailed timeline of Colwyn's service, I could then research all the listed places and events. The AWM and VWM websites were valuable as I was able to access information regarding RMS *Queen Mary*, roles of RAAF 10 Squadron, Sunderland aircraft, gunners and the Battle of the Atlantic.

A highlight were email conversations with Richard "Dick" King, ex-RAF pilot and administrator of 10 Squadron RAF website in England, and Rick Hattam, President of the Air Force Association Sunderland Branch in Victoria. These men, both experts in their field, spent hours, assisting me with my research and provided me with websites, book extracts, maps, photographs and expertise answering my countless questions. Dick also persuaded his daughter to visit Runnymede and take photographs of Colwyn's memorial panel. Emails to the curator of the RAAF museum at Point Cook, Emily Constantine, was also invaluable in helping me to interpret acronyms in Colwyn's personnel file.

**Part B word count: 499 words**

