**Ralph Henry POPE was born 15th October 1917 at Mount Gambier to Albert Henry and Mary Annie Pope, of Waikerie. Ralph had a brother, Vivian (who also joined the RAAF) and a sister Doreen (who was in the WAAAF).**

**Ralphs father, Albert, was a member of the 16th Battalion 1st AIF. One of the Original ANZACs, he was wounded on Gallipoli, shot in the leg which shattered his femur, and returning to Australia served for some time as STAFF SGT. MAJOR. Later he took up land at Holder, where he established himself as a successful orchardist.**

**Ralph was a keen band member of the Waikerie Brass Band, the Riding Club and was secretary of the Waikerie Gliding Club. Ralph enlisted and a photograph of Ralph in flight training appeared in a local paper. The last time they would see Ralph was 26th January 1941 when he left after returning on leave as a Pilot Officer. He was stationed at Cootamundra. Ralph had recently completed training at Pt. Cook and was spending 10 days' leave with his parents at Holder.**

**Ralph was posted to the 13th Squadron RAAF flying Lockheed Hudson bombers from Darwin and the Dutch East Indies. 13 Squadron took on a general reconnaissance role which including shipping patrols, searches for missing aircraft and general security patrols across the top end of Australia. In November 1941 Lockheed Hudsons from 13 Squadron including Ralph assisted with the unsuccessful search for the Cruiser HMAS Sydney which had been sunk by the German shipping raider Kormoran. 13 Squadron RAAF was split into two groups, one was based at Laha on Ambon, with another at Namlea.**

**On the 10th December 1941, Ralph was aboard Hudson Bomber A16-69 which took off from Darwin on another mission to Ambon. At 5.45am, 15 minutes after takeoff, the aircraft was seen to lose control at 400 feet above sea level, spin into the sea and burst into flames. Later the accident was attributed to the Pilot reducing speed to 95knots with flaps down so that two other aircraft could form with it.**

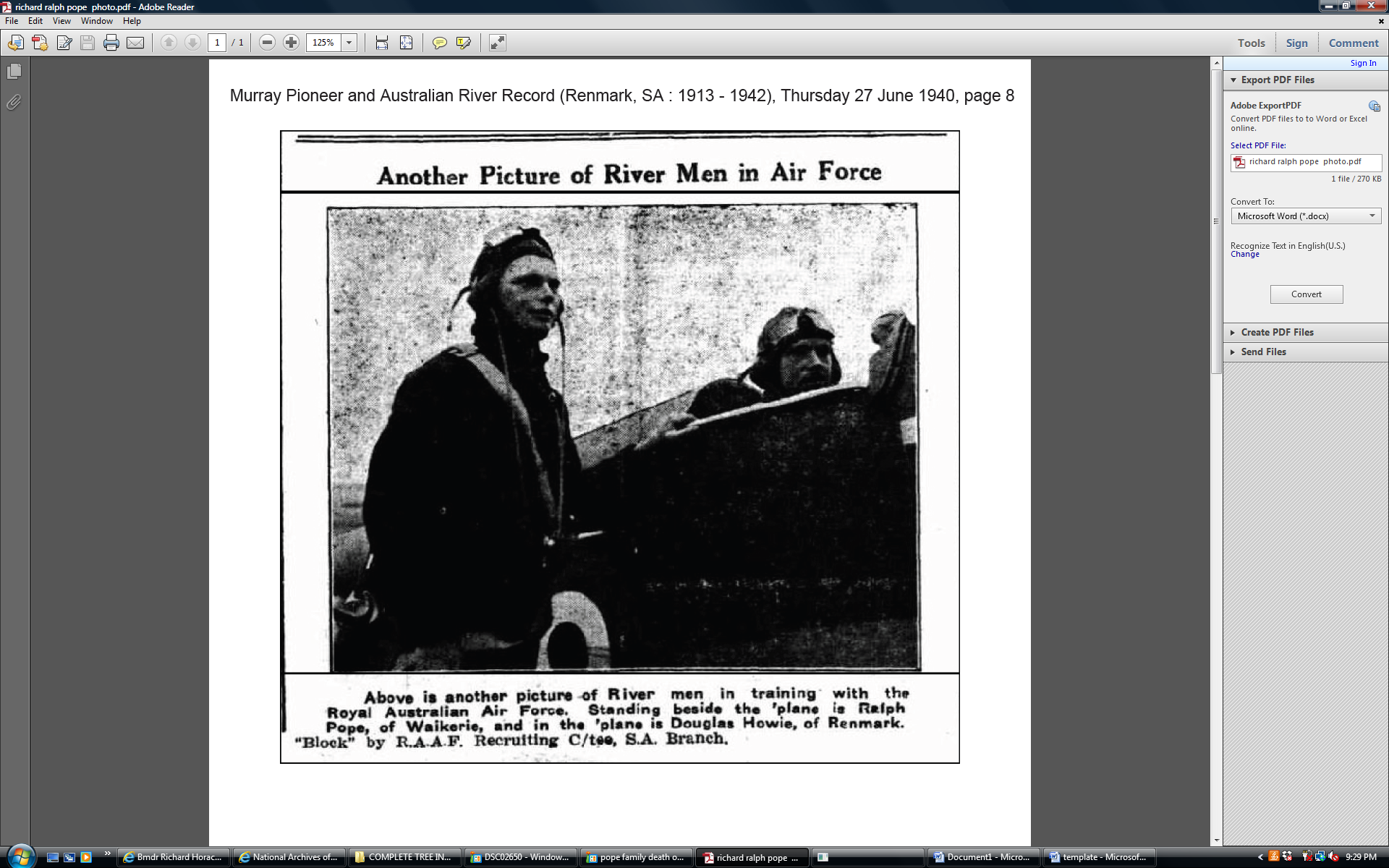
**Crew members:- Wing Cdr Joshua Roger Gray McDONALD (C.O. of 13 Sqn) (Pilot), F/O Ralph Henry POPE, Sgt Wallace Roy FOREMAN and Sgt Walter John NAGEL were killed instantly. The location of the crash became their grave when their bodies were not recovered.**

**Ralph POPE and his crew mates are commemorated on the Ambon War Memorial and on the Australian War Memorial on the Roll of Honour, where sadly, a few years later his brother Vivian’s name was also added.**

**Ralph is also commemorated with a tree and plaque here in the WAIKERIE War Memorial Gardens.**

**Pilot Officer Ralph Henry POPE**

**15-10-1917 – 10-12-1941**



***Ralph POPE (standing) and Douglas HOWIE during Pilot Officer training, 1940.***

**LEST WE FORGET**



**Waikerie RSL Sub branch**

****