

SOURCE 1 LANCE-BOMBARDIER FRED WOMBEY

LANCE BOMBARDIER F.R. WOMBEY AWM NEGATIVE 27800

SOURCE 2 CITATIONS FOR LANCE BOMBARDIER WOMBEY AND GUNNER HUDSON

N270852 L/Bdr Wombey, Frederick Ronald
 Date of action: 19 February 1942
 Place of action: Anti Aircraft Light Machine Gun position
 Naval Oil Tanks, Darwin

This N.C.O. as No. 1 of an A.A.L.M.G. displayed great courage and coolness in holding his fire whilst the position was being attacked by Dive Bombers and Machine Gun fire from the air. On at least two occasions he ordered the gun crew to take cover whilst he waited for the attacking plane to be sufficiently near to be an excellent target. His action was partly responsible for the failure of the enemy to dive bomb the vital area which he was defending. He engaged an enemy plane which was later shot down by other guns of the A.A.L.M.G. Section.

NI08358 Gunner Hudson, Wilbert Thomas
 Date of action: 19 February 1942
 Place of action: Berrima Anti Aircraft station

This soldier, aged 21 years of extremely boyish appearance manned his Lewis Machine Gun throughout an engagement with low-flying enemy aircraft with great skill and tenacity. His gun was roughly sited on the blast wall of the Berrima Command post (the permanent post for this gun was at that time in the course of construction) without any real adequate protection for such gun or operator. Finding the operation of the gun from this position awkward and somewhat ineffective, Gnr. Hudson, regardless of personal safety carried his gun to the open and operated from an empty 44 gall. drum as a rest. From this position and until the expenditure of the then loaded magazine, Gnr. Hudson brought to bear effective fire on the low-flying aircraft whilst at all times under fire of attacking planes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MILITARY MEDAL AWM 88, AMF O/AI

SOURCE 3 17 KILLED IN RAIDS ON DARWIN

6 Enemy Planes Shot Down

CANBERRA, FRIDAY – IN THE 2 AIR RAIDS ON DARWIN YESTERDAY IT IS BELIEVED THAT TOTAL CASUALTIES WERE 17 KILLED AND 24 WOUNDED.

Nine of the civilian fatalities were members of the Darwin post office staff, including the postmaster, his wife, and daughter.

Latest information received at RAAF Headquarters indicates that in yesterday's raids no vital damage was done to RAAF installations, Mr. Drakeford, Air Minister, said tonight. Present indications are, he added, that known casualties for the 3 services did not exceed 8 killed.

Giving details of the raids, Mr. Drakeford, Air Minister, in an earlier communique said:- 'There were 2 separate raids by enemy bombers on Darwin yesterday. The first raid about 10am was made by a force of 72 twin-engine aircraft with an escort of Zero-type single-seater fighters. These forces separated into 2 parts, one of which concentrated on the town, wharfs, and shipping, while the other part flew inland.'

'Several ships were hit and damage was done to wharfs and buildings'.

'During the attack on the town civilian buildings were hit and some Commonwealth employees were killed. So far as is known 9 women and 2 men were killed there.'

'About noon a second raid was made and was directed mainly at RAAF installations by a force of more than 21 bombers unsupported by fighters.'

'Service buildings and aerodromes were bombed and machine-gunned and some damage was caused. There were 4 confirmed casualties among service personnel. Damage to aerodromes was not serious.'

'During the raids several hospitals, both service and civilian, were bombed and machine-gunned.'

'Some of our aircraft were damaged on the ground. At least 6 enemy aircraft were shot down, but it is not clear yet whether this was done by our fighters or by AA guns.'

Mr. Curtin, Prime Minister, said tonight:- 'So far as is known at present casualties have been suffered on ships at Darwin, but particulars are not available. The enemy is anxious that we should specify our losses so that they may know what targets are unimpaired.'

ARGUS 21 FEBRUARY 1942

SOURCE 4 RECOLLECTIONS OF FRED FOXON

... getting back to the first raid again, you see, as soon as the raid is finished, we were, as I said, about four miles outside of Darwin. ... we saw the results of the raid. ... streaming out of Darwin was hundreds of air force personnel and we were giving lifts to merchant seaman and – who still had their clothes burnt to their skin and pieces of the skin off their arms and so forth and full of oil were they had swam through the oil and the burning stuff on the wharf.

The RAAF aerodrome was on fire and all the hangars were on fire and all the planes that were on the ground were all on fire and/or just shot to pieces... as I said, ... all the ack-ack sites in Darwin were really turned into a first class show.

Where the papers say that people evacuated Darwin and so forth, and that was true, the people did get out and so did a lot of the air force. And they got out because their station was burning, they had no directions, so what – what could they do? People do fail to mention that all ack-ack stations in Darwin were all first-class troops and they didn't get out, they stopped there.

SOURCE 5 RECOLLECTIONS OF BASIL HACKETT

(T)hey were mainly male people attempting to try and get out, civilians trying to get out of the town...

Many hours afterwards these trucks and everything were, and cars and push bikes, and you name it, anything that moved on wheels, that was going down the road right next to us.

...army personnel, air force, well they, there must have been a fair bit of confusion went on with them. At the time there were air force personnel going down the road evacuating the area and some of them did have rifles and stuff like that. We tried to talk them out of, to giving us their rifles at least ... but... we couldn't stop them. We let them through, 'cause they said they had orders to evacuate. American personnel were the same. They eventually ended up down at Adelaide River about sixty miles more down the line really. But I think with the air force, ... a lot of them were never ever trained as combat people... a lot of them were cooks, clerks, mechanics and all ... some of them had never even handled a rifle, never saw a rifle. So they were never trained to be used as combat personnel whatsoever. All they were trained to was how to use a typewriter, or how to boil an egg. So consequently, when they really – and they really got hit – they were at a loss. The actual flying personnel, you couldn't fault them, but it was the ground personnel who just evacuated there because lack of training once again. They just weren't trained to do anything.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW BASIL PETER HACKETT 5 SEPTEMBER 1989 p38-40 KEITH MURDOCH SOUND ARCHIVE, AWM

...there was no panic. I never saw any panic at all. The air force were coming out of the station – coming down the road. They were just ambling down, they – obviously none of them knew where they were going or what they were supposed to do so they were just moving out at their own leisure. Of the looting I never ever went into Darwin, I never saw it. But I believe it was so. But I never actually saw the looting myself.

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FRED FOXON, 24 JULY 1989 p17-19 KEITH MURDOCH SOUND ARCHIVE, AWM