

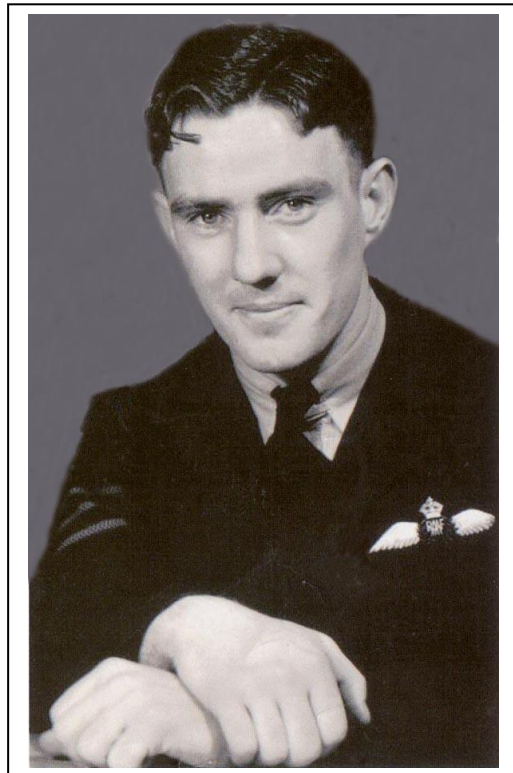


St George's College

PERTH · WESTERN AUSTRALIA

IGNATIUS JOSEPH FLYNN

22 FEBRUARY 1923 TO 14 JULY 1944



Joe Flynn was born in Bunbury, the sixth son of local doctor Ignatius Joseph Flynn and Mary Josephine Flynn, and the 10th of 12 children. He attended Aquinas College in Perth, before enrolling in medicine at The University of Western Australia, as his older brother John had done. He came to St George's College in 1941, but within a year had decided to transfer his studies to Melbourne. The Warden, "Josh" Reynolds, wrote in January 1942 to his opposite number at Newman College, warmly recommending young Joseph.

“While at St. George’s he made himself popular with students and staff by his genial, and friendly disposition,” he wrote to Father Murphy. “He was also the runner-up for our College Tennis championship and is undoubtedly a remarkable player for his age.

“His academic work was quite satisfactory, although his Biology was inclined to be a little weak earlier in the year, but he mastered his difficulties, and secured quite satisfactory passes in the final examinations.

“We are very sorry to lose him, and I have every confidence that he will be a valuable member of Newman should you decide to admit him. I have no hesitation in recommending that you should do so.”

Joe was admitted to Newman and continued his medical studies. On 9 April 1942 he enlisted with the Australian Army in Carlton, Victoria, but this lasted only six months while he was a member of the Melbourne University Rifles unit. He decided to abandon his studies until after the war, reasoning with his father that the government would pay all his fees when he returned. On 29 October 1942 he enlisted with the RAAF in Melbourne. His brother John, already qualified as a doctor, was serving in New Guinea.

Like hundreds of Australians before him, Joe was sent by the RAAF to Canada to train under the Empire Training Scheme. England was too short of aircraft to train most Commonwealth crew, but Canada made a substantial contribution to the war effort by providing the training facilities. Within the year Joe had his wings and was qualified to fly single-engine aircraft, but the RAF needed pilots for its twin-engine bombers.

No. 3 (Pilots) Advanced Flying Unit was based at South Cerney near Cirencester in Gloucestershire. This was one of about 20 units set up to provide advanced flying training to pilots who had been trained overseas, but who had to convert to flying conditions and aircraft operating from the U.K. South Cerney was a busy training centre: as well as 3AFU, which set up in March 1942, it provided training for beam approach, group communication and ground defence. One of the unit’s principal aircraft was the Airspeed AS.10 Oxford, a twin-engine craft largely used to train British Commonwealth air crews. It had the advantage of being able to simultaneously train complete air crews for

Bomber Command – pilots, navigators, bomb aimers, gunners and radio operators working as a team.

Just after lunch on 14 July, 1944, Joe was being trained in Airspeed Oxford No. AB719. Air training was a dangerous business in itself – nearly 10 percent of Bomber Command's airmen were killed in training accidents. While undertaking a circuit of the airfield he was carrying out a left-hand turn with one engine stopped, as part of his conversion course. The aircraft stalled and crashed at Upper Mill Farm, near Somerford Keynes at 1335 hours, killing him instantly. He was 21 years old.

Joe Flynn is buried in Surrey, England, at the Australian War Graves Brookwood Cemetery in Woking. The Warden, J.H. Reynolds, wrote to his parents who were still living in Bunbury, on 11 August 1944. "He had such a happy temperament," he said, "and he will be a loss to many.

"Last night, we held a very simple Memorial Service for him in the Chapel, and he has been much in our thoughts during the last few weeks."

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He had an enviable happiness of personality. His beautiful stroke play in tennis typified the man. He looked at life with eyes which would always be young, and he communicated to others...his own joy in living. He was in fact a naturally lovable character who did good, perhaps without knowing it."

The Dragon, 1944 (attributed to Josh Reynolds)