



St George's College

PERTH · WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## FRANK EDWARD PARSONS

26 OCTOBER 1917 TO 27 AUGUST 1942



Ted was the only son of Joseph Parsons, an Inspector of Schools in Perth and also Headmaster of Perth Modern School, and his wife Mary Gellie Tenant Parsons. Ted completed his primary education at the Thomas Street State School in 1929, and attended Aberdeen Grammar School in Scotland until September 1930, when he entered Perth Modern School. He was a prefect, and a joint editor of the school's magazine, *The Sphinx*. He was also a member of the school tennis team that defeated Hale School in the final of the Slazenger Cup, and completed his Leaving in 1934.

In 1935 he enrolled in law at The University of Western Australia, where he gained first-class honours in 1938, having spent 1937 and 1938 in

residence at St. George's. His distinguished academic record shows 14 distinctions from the 17 subjects examined over four years, and in his final year he was also President of the Blackstone Society, a member of the Guild Council and Vice-President of the Societies Council. He was Secretary of the Junior Common Room Club, a member of the College tennis team, and played on the UWA A2 hockey and B-pennant tennis teams.

After graduating, Ted was appointed Associate to the Hon. Mr Justice Dwyer, and then began his articles with Messrs. Parker & Parker. At the same time, on 26 March 1939, he joined the Militia Forces of the AMF, perhaps inspired by his uncle Private Charles Edward Parsons, who was killed in France in 1917. In November 1939 Ted was promoted to Corporal in a reserve unit, but by February 1940 he had been discharged to the RAAF. He was admitted to the Bar only a week before he left for England in November, 1941.

John B. Scott (1936) recalled (*The Georgian*, 1988) a period in 1938 when he, Ted and Ron Schlam (1936) lodged at a boarding house called *Mia Mia* in Mount Street, Perth.

"At the time we lived at *Mia Mia*, it was the home of some delightful young people," he wrote. "Among the most delightful of these was the girl in the room next to ours, Fiona Barrett-Lennard, to whom Ted became engaged.

"In 1941 Ted's parents held a dinner party at the Esplanade Hotel to celebrate a double achievement by Ted. He was admitted to the Bar, and gained his 'Wings' in the Air Force in the same week. It was a terrific party and ended in Ron Schlam's flat in Mount Street where all of us younger ones kicked on.

"I still have very vivid memories of Ted and believe he had a great influence for good on the people with whom he came in contact."

By the end of 1941 Ted was in England and a member of 460 Squadron RAAF, which had been formed on 15 November and was attached to Bomber Command. Six decades later Air Marshall Angus Houston AM would say to veterans: *In terms of individual units there has never been a more outstanding unit in the Royal Australian Air Force than 460 Squadron. You flew more sorties, you dropped more bombs, you got more decorations and, regrettably, you sustained the highest casualty*

*rate of any RAAF unit in our history. One thousand and eighteen of your number did not return.*

Bomber Command regarded Kassel as an important strategic target, situated as it was in central Germany at the intersection of north-south traffic between Hanover and Frankfurt, and east-west traffic between the Ruhr and Saxony. It was the home of the Henschel plants for locomotive, engine and vehicle production, and the Fieseler aircraft complex that produced Messerschmitt and Focke-Wulfe fighters. The Henschel railway works were considered the biggest in continental Europe.

Both the RAF and the USAAF flew several light raids on Kassel's industrial areas during 1942 and early 1943, but Flying Officer Ted Parsons took part in the first heavy raid. On the night of 27 August, 1942, a total of 306 aircraft took off from a number of airfields in Britain and formed up for the flight to Germany. Ted Parsons was 2<sup>nd</sup> Pilot in the crew of six in Wellington Z 1259, which took off at 8.06pm from RAF Brighton in East Riding with 810 4lb incendiary bombs, along with nine other aircraft from 460 Squadron. There was only a little cloud over Kassel, and the Pathfinders had been able to illuminate the area well. The bombers inflicted widespread damage, destroying 144 buildings and seriously damaging 317 more, including all three of the Henschel aircraft factories.

Bomber Command sustained just over 10 percent losses in this raid, with 31 of its aircraft shot down – mostly by Luftwaffe night fighters – or failing to return. Ted Parsons was in one of 21 Wellingtons that were lost. The Air Gunner, Sgt. W.H. Tubman, was the only crew member to escape from the stricken plane and became a POW. The aircraft crashed at Gladbeck-Rentford, about 14km north of Essen. Ted is buried in Reichswald Forest War Cemetery along with Flying Officer John F. Summers (Pilot, born Randwick NSW), Sgt R.J. Munro (Observer), Sgt. N.G. Bass (Bomb-aimer), and Flying Officer F.C. Pinfeld (Wireless operator / Air gunner).

A memorial plaque in the library of Perth Modern School records: “The Frank Edward Parsons memorial bequest: This bequest is made to the school library by his father and mother to cherish the memory of their only son.”

To a man who had such a deep contempt for the arts of war and such an abiding faith in the fundamental sanity of man, his death was a grim and tragic irony. He was not the man to complain.

He is but one among the many darkened in this mortal fight, but the world can ill-afford to lose men of the quality that he was.

Revealed to him was the satisfaction of virtue, the inner rewards of loyalty to ideals, happiness and self-control. He shared the divine content that thrills all high souls. He was saved from pettiness, egotism, self-pity, envy and all the corrosives that mar life. We sorrow for his loved ones.

Speech cannot contain the love of those who knew him. There was, there is, no gentler, stronger, manlier man. May we be worthy of his sacrifice.

**The Dragon, 1943 (attributed to Ron Schlam)**