[536]

BYRNE, A.K.J. 404003

AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES
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## OTAL AUSBRALIAN AIR PORCE

The following biographical details are required for use at  $R,A,K,F,\ \mbox{Overseas}\ \mbox{Headquarters,London.}$ 

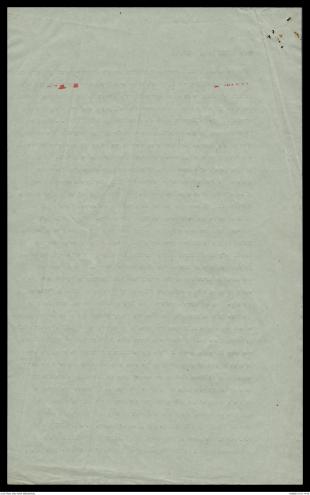
BYRNE

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Personal pile - F/xi. A K. J. Byrne

FROM MIDDLE EAST: 22/9/44

Italy September 17th. Carrying highly inflamable cargo - possibly petrol in drums and ammunition - a 2,000 ton motor vessel which was creeping down the Italian Adriatic coast bound apparently for a port in the vicinity of Rimini was sunk by an aircraft of an Australian Wellington squadron early Thursday morning. The Wellington which was captained by 416363 W/O M.R. Priest of Stirling West, South. Australia, was on anti-shipping patrol of the upper part of the Western Adriatic Coast when at one point it made contact with a scattered south bound convoy consisting of three motor vessels and a similar number of escort craft. Singling out one cargo ship the Wimpy shadowed it for an hour and a quarter by which time it was between 5 and 6 miles off the coast opposite Ravenna. At that point Priest decided to make the attack. Flares were dropped illuminating the vessel clearly and a stick of bombs was sent down straddling the target. For a while nothing happened then the rear gumer saw a red glow near one of the guns which was firing at the Wellington from the ship. When the glow appeared the gun immediately ceased fire. After circling the ship for a while without seeing further evidence of damage, the Wimpy resumed patrol. It had reached the northern extremity of its patrol area when looking back, the crew saw a wivid flash of a huge explosion followed by a tongue of flame lighting up the sky. As the sircraft furned and flew southward approaching the ship the fire grew in intensity and when the Wimpy reached the scene of attack, the vessel was a mass of flames from stem to stern with thick pall of smoke rising 5,000 ft above it. At intervals there were fresh explosions which belched out more flame and smoke s When the Wellington returned to base, the crew learned that another aircraft to the same squadron which was over the motor vessel when it first blew up was tossed into the air with an involuntary gain of height at a rate of 3,000 ft per minute. Further confirmation of the sinking of the ship came from the Navy later that morning. In addition to Priest, those who took part in this most successful attack were 428782 F/S P.W.Pettitt Second pilot of Mosman, N.S.W., 413705 F/O F.P.Wright, navigator of Marrabeen, N.S.W., 412696 W/O L.M.Richards, Wop/Ag of Lismore, N.S.W., 420113 W/O E.J.Baker, Wop/Ag of Wentworthville, N.S.W.



Sgt. W.H. Murkland A.G. of Preston Lenoschire, England. Markland was not normally in Priest's crow; he was standing in for 101003 F/Lt.

1653

A.K.J. Byrne of Brisbane who was recovering from an attack of Halaria.
The crow has been flying together a fortnight short of twelve months and has only 37 hours operational flying left to complete its present tour.

Per Bis. File

bumplied by Yells Roberton (Strily) under 63 492

After flying 100,000 miss in eir operations as a games in a space of slacet four years, 1/14 A.K.J. Byrns. Aus 404003, of Brisbane, is on his way back to buston lie.

Byrne calimbed in the MANF on April 16,1940 and after training in Amstraking arrived in the Makida Sant March 1944. After completing his GRU in Marry, Byrne man posted to a MAN Marryland Squadron Elying photo, repose over the Mentern Described and herocure as a member of Sgt (later N/Ar) Biok Valsiment's draw, Welsham was billed in overations.

The squadron them moved beck to Wall Matroh to receip with Secutorts. The Q.O. at that time was a Tampenian, Wolf A. Roman. Then the squadron moved to Markut scrotrems and empsyed on accetal recommend recommon frets and Grocos.

Next move was to inderly, where the aguiden dowerted to torpe, losing five of six kites in the first strike against a German occupy which was strongly defended by Mellos and JUSSs., then housed started his panh, the squadron was cont to Gianaclis to stand by. It then went to Shandar for training.

Normal left the equation in Sept. 1942 and became wing gummary leader and then group gummary leader, while at Shelm'ur on this job, he did three sortion in Idderators, attacking two conveys,

In June 1965, byrne was posted to an American Multimare squadron employed on GR work from a Western Dosert base. After three months there he was posted to a training school where he drewed up with B/O M. Priest as pilot and went to another BAAF squadron - one flying Wellingtons on armed sea redoe, anti-sub and anti-nhipping mork. From their Rome base, the squadron moved to Corates and Serdinia, making sweeps slong the Ligarian Ses counts. Later, they moved to Italy.

While he was in hospital with a bout of maleria, Tyrne's orew attacked and sank a 2000-ton tember in the Adriatic. "It was the only bit of excitement we had, had, and I had to miss it" he said unhappily.

During the South of France "So" Symm's over flow on newal co-operation for the US Nevy, but returned to headquarters in Italy ofter 14 days, Syrms because TS in January this year,

(2.K.S.Summers) SPA

