



NOTEWORTHY TASMANIAN AVIATION FAMILIES -  
THE LOVELL BROTHERS

**Noteworthy Tasmanian Aviation Families – The Lovell Brothers**

*Author: W. Dearing, April 2022*

The Lovell brothers Jack, Arthur and William (Bill) were three of thirteen children born to Ernest and Ellen Lovell of Mella, outside of Smithton.



**Left to right: John, Arthur and William Lovell, 1941.**

**Arthur Carrington Lovell** was born in 1913 receiving his initial schooling at Smithton. He then attended the Launceston Junior Technical School to complete his secondary education, gaining five credits and four passes, he was made dux of the school in 1928.

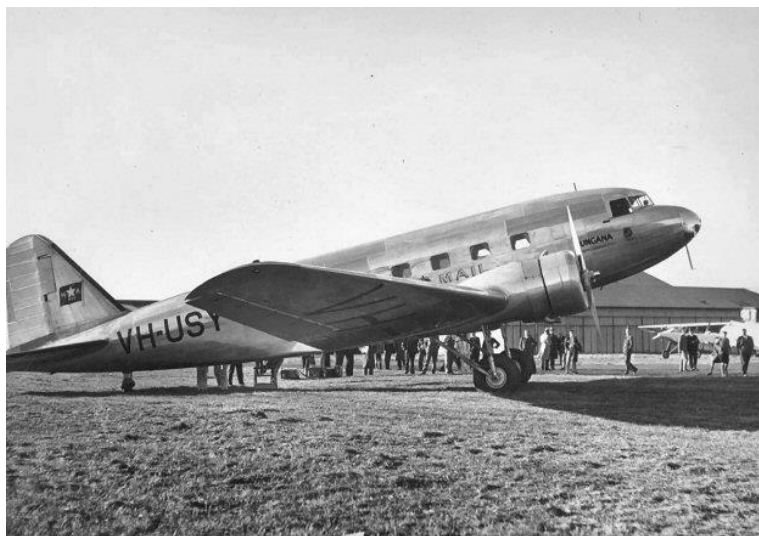
Arthur had a keen interest in flying and gained his pilot's licence in 1935 and flew with the Royal Victorian Aero Club before joining Australian National Airways (ANA). In 1939 Arthur had the distinction of being second pilot on ANA's DC2 "Bungana," when that aircraft broke the record for the fastest flight Melbourne to Perth, and shortly after was also second pilot on the "Pengana" when that aircraft made an emergency landing with one engine on fire. Arthur Lovell quickly became one of ANA's most respected pilots remembered as the "magic man" in the airline.



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Norm Croucher and Arthur Lovell (and shy Policeman) in front of *Pengana* after the emergency landing and loss of an engine



File photo of ANA's DC 2 *Bungana*



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When World War 2 broke out the Australian government requisitioned ANA's four DC 3's, and seconded their pilots to the RAAF, thus commencing Arthur's incredible wartime flying history. From 1941 Arthur flew innumerable flights, usually from Cairns and Townsville, to various ports on New Guinea carrying supplies to the country and returning with civilian evacuees. Following the retreat of the Japanese forces from the Philippines, flights from Brisbane to Manila and return were also conducted. All of these flights were undertaken in unarmed aircraft with no fighter support, leaving the aircraft vulnerable to Japanese fighter attack, particularly in the early stages of the war. In 1942 Arthur received an American citation for his service in New Guinea and the Pacific.

Following the war Arthur continued his career with ANA and as the aviation industry grew found himself travelling overseas to bring new aircraft types from America to join the ANA fleet and in 1953 captained the crew that flew the DC 6 aircraft "Kurana" (VH-INW) back to Australia to join the other DC-6 the "Nairana" on Australia's east coast routes.



**File photo of DC-6 aircraft *Kurana* Captained by Arthur Lovell on her delivery flight from America in 1953.**

It was during this period that Arthur achieved a career highlight when he captained the aircraft that flew Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip during their 1954 Australian tour.

He returned home briefly to Smithton flying the first aircraft to land at the new Smithton airport. When ANA was taken over by Ansett, Arthur continued his flying and became Ansett's Chief Pilot, and in 1965, he became their Manager Operational Safety. He was recognised for his services to aviation in 1974 when he was awarded an MBE. When he retired, he had flown aircraft from a Tiger Moth to a Boeing 727 and had over 23,000 hours in his logbook.

Arthur Lovell died on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1984 aged 80 years.



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**John Henry (Jack) Lovell** was born on the 17<sup>th</sup> May 1917. He enlisted in the RAAF in January 1941 and following training was appointed as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner embarking from Sydney for the UK in November 1941. On arrival he trained with 16 OTU before joining 207 Squadron (RAF) in May 1942, flying in Avro Lancasters, with a rank of Sergeant. In October of that year, as the only Australian crew member, his aircraft took part in an attack on Le Creusot. En route the aircraft developed engine trouble and was unable to continue the mission and subsequently set a course for base. Nearing the French coast, and at a height of only 40 feet above the English Channel, his aircraft was attacked by three enemy float planes.



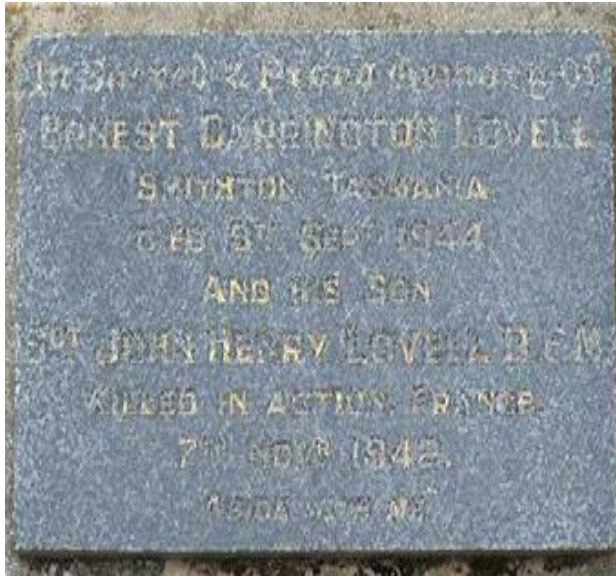
**File photo Avro Lancaster**

During the ensuing combat the crew destroyed two of the enemy aircraft and drove off the third. Throughout the incident the crew displayed great courage and skill eventually landing back safely in England. Subsequently Jack Lovell was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. (DFM)

Tragedy was soon to strike the Lovell family when, on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, Jack's aircraft failed to return from a bombing mission. The aircraft had been shot down over France and Jack's body was interned in the Champignol-Lez-Mondeville Churchyard



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Headstone at Chanpignol-Lez-Mondeville Churchyard and file photo of John Henry (Jack) Lovell

His DFM award was gazetted on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 1942 about two weeks after his death.

**William Thomas (Bill) Lovell** was born in 1916 and enlisted with the RAAF in 1940 serving throughout the conflict until demobilised in 1946 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. Bill embarked Sydney in May 1941 for the UK and after further training joined 455 Squadron RAAF as a navigator. The squadron became famous as part of the "ANZAC Strike Wing", that was formed from Australian and New Zealand squadrons, flying Handley Page Hampdens. The squadron undertook anti-shiping and anti-submarine operations. In 1942 Bill was part of a small detachment that went to Russia conducting operations with the Soviet Union.

In Murmansk, the squadron suffered 25% losses during this detachment, which included one mission that attempted a bombing raid on the German Battleship "Tirpitz" in the fiords of Norway. For his service during this period, he was awarded a *Red Star* emblazoned with a gold hammer and sickle for active service with Soviet forces on the Russian Front.



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The Order of the Red Star ( Russian: Орден Красной Звезды) was a military decoration of the Soviet Union. It was established by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 6 April 1930 but its statute was only defined in decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 5 May 1930.

In 1943 Bill lead a small group of RAAF members to New York for special duties and in August of that year transferred to 7 EFTS at Western Junction as an instructor.

Records are vague as to his instructional duties but indications are they involved meteorology and navigation. His tenure at Western Junction was brief as his service record indicates he returned by air to Melbourne in November 1943.



A HAMPTON BOMBER OF 455 SQUADRON 1943



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Archives show Bill was transferred to the General Reconnaissance School at Bairnsdale Victoria in November 1943 and commenced duties as a navigational instructor in January 1944. He was discharged from the RAAF in June 1946.

Following the war, Bill continued his career in aviation by in an administrative role with Qantas. Records show he spent some time in Singapore with his wife and daughter before taken up the role of Qantas manager at Wellington New Zealand.

William Thomas Lovell died in Brisbane on the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2005.