

## Group Capt Gilbert Eric Douglas, 1902-1970



Eric Douglas joined the Port Phillip Yacht Club by 1922, the Royal Yacht Club of Victoria in 1940 and the Royal Brighton Yacht Club in 1920 and remained a member there till at least 1949. His most favoured yacht was "the Vendetta" - B Class [no 18 in 1921] (also known as the Ven) which was bought by Eric and his younger brother Gill (Leslie Gilbert) in equal half shares in 1921 - Eric and Gill raced this yacht in regattas from 1922 to 1936 - sailing from the Royal Brighton Yacht Club.

On one of Eric's yachts - 1920's to 1940's had a rich ochre coloured sail.

In 1937 Eric owned a 'Snipe Class' yacht – he sold it in about that year.

Other boats owned by Eric included - "Beetle" (12 foot yacht), "Katinka" (18 foot half decker), "Iris" (yacht), "Roslyn" (yacht), "Hinemoa" (motor boat) - possibly owned; yacht "Kestrel" (c1939 at Point Cook/Laverton) and "the Myth" (Idle Along yacht), snub nose dinghies and other boats built by Eric - eg yachts and speedboats; Canoeist - teenage years, until at least his mid 30's - one canoe being called "Ludine"; Motor and Speed boat enthusiast with "Hartford Atom", "Douglas Bullet", "Douglas Cruiser", "Nautical Nymph" and "Rover" the fishing dinghy.

Moreover in about 1918/1919 Eric and his older brother Cliff and younger brother Gill had their own business in Hampton Street, Brighton simply called 'Douglas Brothers' - they were Motor Mechanics with a Service Station and workshop. Yet they were more than that and were quite innovative, but young, taking a keen interest in motor cars, motor bikes, marine engines and building dinghies and boats, plus model boats. If they sold a pint of oil or fixed a puncture along the way, well and good. Motoring was a new method of travel in Australia with the launch of the Model T Ford in Geelong in 1915 and so it was a new learning curve for all.

Sailing was introduced as a recreational activity to the air cadets at Point Cook through the suggestion of Flight Lieutenant Douglas - [1937 - The Third Brother - The Royal Australian Air Force 1921-39 C D Coulthard-Clark - page 203]. The RAAF 'Point Cook' class raced in regattas in Port Phillip Bay in the late 1930's and Eric was in charge of this class.

Downhill and Cross country skier - Ski Club of Victoria - Mt Buller; Mt Hotham, Mt Feathertop, Mt St Bernard, Mt Buffalo and Mt Donna Buang (as a Sergeant Pilot Eric went skiing with other members of the RAAF at Mt St Bernard); Motor Cyclist [owned eight - three examples are the Rudge Multi (1921), the Abigndon King Dick (1922) and the AJS and sidecar (c1929 to mid 1930's)] - and of course doing such acrobatics as riding doing handstands on the handle - bars; Motor Car enthusiast eg Chrysler - 1928 model bought in May, 1930, Pontiac - bought in the mid 1940's, Jeep -

1946, Chevrolet - 1936 and Toyota c1965; Bass drum player in the RAAF Amberley band; Carpentry and Woodwork - boats and dinghies, paper planes, model aeroplanes - motor and gliders, model yachts, and kites of many types such as triangle and box. Amateur photographer including on the search for Anderson and Hitchcock and in the Antarctic; Parachutist, tug of war champion, jogger, amateur boxer, rifleman, water-skier, fisherman, ocean beach - body and board surfer, swimmer and an early member of life saving in Port Phillip Bay (likely belonged to the Brighton Lifesaving Club); Civil Pilot's Licence - flying member of the Victorian Aero Club - and flying examiner and safety pilot; also took part in aeroplane gliding trials eg Koroit in Western Victoria. He was an avid reader of - boat and plane manuals, histories, biographies, philosophy and philosophical poetry - Omar Khayyam and Khalil Gibran, travelogs, (true) exploration and frontier stories, cowboy stories based on real heroes; while favourite music tastes included Enrico Caruso and Richard Tauber.

Brief Outline of Eric's Flying and RAAF Career –

- Senior Cadets c1916 to c1919 – in the period 1917 to c1919 Eric was a day student at Swinburne Senior Technical College 'on a course of mechanical engineering'. Before that he had spent two years as a day student at Swinburne Junior Technical College 'to Intermediate standard' in 1916.
  - Australian Air Corps in November, 1920 - joined as an Air Mechanic (Aero Fitter and a little later he was also an Aero Rigger). Started work at the Central Flying School, Laverton, Victoria on 12th December, 1920.
  - In 1921 Eric did some correspondence subjects with 'International Correspondence Schools (Colonial) Limited – the Head Office was at Finsbury Square, London with a branch Head Office in Australia at 399-401 George Street, Sydney. Two of the subjects were – Internal Combustion Motors – result 94% (Motor Mechanics course) and Arithmetic Part 3.
  - When the RAAF was formed in 1921 he transferred as an Aero Fitter (AC1). Eric's number was FG252928 at the Central Flying School, Laverton as at June and November, 1921. On 1st April, 1921 it was Eric's intention to 'sign on for 6 years Australian Air Force'.
  - From 7th November, 1921 to 26th February, 1922 (time off for Christmas) Eric attended a training Camp at Liverpool, New South Wales.
  - On 27th February, 1922 commenced working at the Machine Shop at Point Cook - part of the Aero work was on Seaplanes
  - On 18th September, 1922 he was transferred to the No1 Flight (Flying) Training School, Point Cook, to work on 'B Flight Aeros'.
  - In the period from 1920 to when he learnt to fly in 1927, Eric was an Aero Fitter and Rigger, AC1, LAC, Corporal and Sergeant and he gained valuable experience as crew (motor and air mechanic and aero fitter and rigger) on a substantial number of RAAF Cross Country Flights.
  - 'After 6 years in the Workshop and on Flight aero fitting and maintenance duties underwent a Flying Training Course at Point Cook in 1927 and graduated as a Sergeant Pilot'.
  - Overall - in the RAAF 1921 to 1948 - Pilot and Administrator, Motor Mechanic - 'Douglas Brothers'; Air Mechanic, Aero Fitter, Mechanical Engineer, Electrical Engineer, Pilot plus Test pilot and A1 Flying Instructor (A1 for four years) and attained A1 for Gunnery, Aircraft Engineer and Administrator.
- RAAF ranks held by Eric - AC1 in 1921 on formation of the RAAF; LAC in 1922; Corporal in 1925 (passed all subjects); Sergeant in 1926; Sergeant Pilot in 1927; Pilot Officer in July 1929; Flying Officer in February, 1930; Flight Lieutenant in July 1934; Squadron Leader in March 1939; Wing

Commander in June, 1940; posted to Amberley June 1942 - No 3 Aircraft Depot and in Oct 1947 was the Station Commander on formation of Station Headquarters, acting Group Captain in 1942 and temporary Group Captain in December 1943. Honorary Group Captain in 1956 and in 1958 this was amended 'Temporary Group Captain G. E. Douglas (39) is granted the rank of Group Captain, 1st July, 1948, with seniority as from 1st December, 1943.' [Page 2556, column 2 of the Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No.43. of 07-Aug-1958]. In his RAAF career Eric was also assigned the number 126.

On 9th June, 1925 at St Kilda, Melbourne there was a reception for around the world Italian flyers – Pilot Francesco de Pinedo and Mechanic Ernesto Campanelli who had flown from Rome to Melbourne (with stops at other cities) in their seaplane a Savoia-Marchetti S16 called "Gennariello". (Eric Douglas is likely depicted in a formal photograph at that reception). The plane was serviced at RAAF Point Cook - Eric Douglas was one of the air mechanics who worked on the plane under the leadership of Squadron Leader Wackett together with the involvement of Ernesto Campanelli who was apparently a car mechanic. An image of RAAF boat 2 and three images of the Savoia in an album confirm this involvement by Eric working on "Gennariello" which appears to have had a full engine replacement. The Italian Aeronauts then left from near Point Cook for their return journey to Rome via Tokyo and it was a successful return and welcome homecoming for them.

1922 - The Third Brother - The Royal Australian Air Force 1921-39 C D Coulthard-Clark - page 252 - 253

"When Flying Officer Loris Balderson took the plane (AVRO 504K) up at Mascot on 22 November 1922, he took with him AC1 Eric Douglas as front-seat passenger. The Aircraft had reached an altitude of about 1500 feet when Douglas signalled that there was a problem with the throttle control, and Balderston decided to land to have this fault rectified...Witnesses to the crash provided a ...colourful description of the event, recalling that Douglas foresaw the impending collision and stood up in his seat moments before the Avro demolished six panels of fence: 'the engine was thrust back into the front cockpit; the plane momentarily rose - the pilot had switched on his engine - and then subsided in an integrated mass of wreckage, none of it more than two feet above the ground. A truly comprehensive crash.' Douglas's quick reaction had saved his life (and the life of the pilot), although he (Eric) suffered severe cuts to the forehead from broken wires and the crash had propelled him forward so that he now sat astride the crankshaft, unconscious and bleeding. Stumbling from the wreckage, the pilot noticed his companion's plight and reached into his pockets to produce a small camera, prying away rescuers rushing to Douglas's assistance 'until I take this ruddy picture'. Given the trouble that he went to, it was a shame that Balderston's own unsteady state resulted in the spoiling of these photographs" (Note Eric was a passenger on this flight)

1928 - The Third Brother - The Royal Australian Air Force 1921-39 C D Coulthard-Clark - page 268

Air Commodore 'Paddy' Heffernan recalls: "From what I heard later, I learnt that it was most unpopular (Warrigal 1), being under-powered and overweight. It also had most peculiar spinning habits. On one occasion it was being flown by Squadron Leader Charles Eaton with Sergeant Eric Douglas as passenger and was deliberately placed in a spin. After several turns Eaton attempted recovery, but nothing happened. As the aircraft was still in an uncontrolled spin at 2000 feet, he called on Douglas to abandon ship. Douglas undid his belt and stood up and his action apparently varied the air flow over the tail surfaces and the spin stopped at 1000 feet. As the spin had stopped, Douglas did not jump, but two frightened pilots got out of the aircraft after landing" (Note Eric was a passenger on this flight)

Eric learnt to fly on the AVRO Trainer 504k - this type was the famous World War 1 British 2-seater trainer powered with either an 80 H.P. Le Rhone or 110 H.P. Clerget Rotary Engine which used castor oil as an engine lubricant.

RAAF A Pilot's Course 1927, A1 Flying Instructor 1928.

"A" Pilot's Course at Point Cooke (Cook) - Flying Training School – Commenced 18th May, 1927 - Avro, DH9, DH9A, DH50, DH Moth, SE5A, Fairy Seaplane, Gipsy Moth Seaplane, Spartan, Wapiti & Warrigal. On this course flying skills included - take offs and landings, approaches, gliding turns, spins, steep turns, stalling and regaining engine, figure of 8 turns, climbing turns, right hand circuit and land, gentle turns with engine cut off, side-slipping, aerobatics, cloud flying, formation flying, instruction, solo (1st solo 12/9/1927), gunnery, camera gun target, bombing, dummy parachute dropping, rigging test and engine test.

Eric topped his A course in marks for flying and came third in theory.

By June, 1928 Eric's flying now included inspecting landing grounds, dual instruction, back seat approaches and landings, forced landings, engine cut out, back seat flying, instruction flying, level flying, photography (as observer), Air Pilotage test (as observer), cross country landings, taxiing, travel flights, blind flying, night flying, instrument flying, test flights, to scene of crash and return, windspeed and direction, air observation, high altitude bombing, live bombing, and use of signalling lamp, air pageants and fly pasts.

As an A1 Flying Instructor from June, 1928 planes flown included -

- Anson, Avro 504K, Cirrus Moth, DH9, DH9A, Demon, Gipsy Moth & Wapiti.

- Other –

DA Moth

- Planes flown both as an Officer and Test Pilot –

Anson, Avro Trainer, Battle, Beaufort, Beechcraft, Boeing B-17, Bulldog, CAC Trainer, Dakota C47, DH9A, DH Moth, DH Moth Minor, DH Moth Seaplane, Demon, Empire Flying Boat, Gipsy Moth, Hudson, Lodestar, Liberator, Lancaster (Lancaster), Seagull, Magister, Tiger Moth, Oxford, Wapiti, Wirraway & Vengeance (Vengeance) .

{In addition Eric was often the second pilot sometimes with dual controls; and more rarely as a passenger}.

- As a Passenger –

Bristol Tourer, Sopwith GNU, Southampton, Lincoln, DC2 (C-39 Commercial), DC3 (TAA) and DC4 (TAA).

Eric fully taught 44 pupils to fly (which was the British Empire record at that time) including their Service flying training such as navigation, gunnery, bombing and cross country flying. Some of these pupils became Battle of Britain Pilots. He also taught many other RAAF student Pilots some of their flying skills, the details of which are in his Flying Logs (Nos 1 to 6).

1928 Eric successfully completed the course on parachute folding and maintenance.

Early April 1929 - Special Qualifications - Air Pilotage Course (aerial navigation by visible identification of landmarks)

RAAF search (DH9A - A1-20) for Flight Lieut Keith Anderson and Mr Henry Smith (Bobbie) Hitchcock in 1929 (NT - Wave Hill and the Tanami desert - RAAF land search party of Flight Lieut Charles Eaton - leader, Sergeant Pilot Eric Douglas, Mr Moray of Vestey's, Aboriginal trackers - Daylight, Sambo and Jimmy, 1927 Buick car and 26 horses). Eric's skills as a motor mechanic - attended to the Buick, and air mechanic - checked out the flying condition of the "Kookaburra" - all in the Tanami desert.

An Air Force Medal citation was made 'As an airman pilot and a fitter-aero ... displayed devotion to duty and rendered valuable assistance to Flight Lieut Eaton, both in the air search operation and as a member of the ground expedition' - not awarded.

BANZARE (Antarctic) with Sir Douglas Mawson in 1929-31 on the SY Discovery (Gipsy Moth Seaplane VH-ULD) - other responsibilities (fitter/rigger) - running and maintenance of the Moth Seaplane and the SY Discovery's motor boat - in his capacity as an Air and Motor mechanic and onshore semaphore (also knew morse code); Polar Medal and Bar 1934, Douglas Peak and Douglas Bay - Antarctica, named after Eric. [See SCAR maps].

Posted to 'B' Flight (Wapitis) May 1931 to 30th June, 1932

Posted to 'A' Flight (Gipsy Moths) 1st July, 1932

Posted to 'B' Flight on 1st July, 1934

January, 1935 - Gazetted as a Flight Lieutenant - promotion dating back to July, 1934.

With RRS Discovery 2 for RAAF search for Lincoln Ellsworth and Herbert Hollick-Kenyon 1935/36 (Antarctic) (Wapiti A5-37 fitted with floats and Gipsy Moth Seaplane A7-55); Eric was the leader of the RAAF search party - 'Flying operations'.

1934 Secretary Officers' Mess for 2½ years.

1934 - 1938 Lecturer on Aero Engines to flying cadet courses in the Royal Australian Air Force

1937 Officer in Charge Aircraft Repair Section No 1 Aircraft Depot Laverton and Test Pilot. (Transferred to the technical side of General duties at his own request after completing 2,200 hours of flying).

In the period from 1928 to 1937 (inclusive) when Eric was an A1 Instructor he was also an Aerobatic Pilot including performing loop the loop, rolling and aircraft towing of another aircraft; and Formation flying - at Air pageants and Air displays eg – at Point Cooke, Laverton and Nhill in Victoria plus at Richmond and Sydney in NSW; and he was involved in Fly pasts eg the Melbourne Cup and for Royalty.

In 1928 Eric took part in the RAAF Flying formation escort for Bert Hinkler and also the one for Charles Kingsford-Smith in the same year.

In June 1930 Eric took part in the greeting for Amy Johnson at Geelong (flying from Point Cook to Queenscliff in Southhampton Flying Boat A11-2).

1938 Staff Recruiting Officer.

In 1939 Eric successfully undertook a 'Conversion course'.

1938-40 Officer in Charge of Workshops at Point Cook and Test Pilot – testing aeroplanes for Workshop, Depot and Trade.

1940-42 Commanding Officer No 1 Aircraft Depot, Laverton.

1942-45 'CO No 3 Aircraft Depot, RAAF, Amberley, Queensland'

1945-46 A brief period at Laverton and Point Cook, Victoria (Heidelberg - with health problems)

1945-48 'CO No 3 Aircraft Depot, RAAF, Amberley, Queensland' (Station Headquarters formed in October 1947).

1948 – 'Retired from RAAF after serving the last six years with rank of Group Captain and completing 10 years in charge of RAAF Workshops.' Eric personally supervised 'the Test and Ferry Section of No 3 Aircraft Depot...and was instrumental in introducing several improvements in the acceptance flying of service aircraft...'

Group Captain at RAAF Amberley - June 1942 to November 1948 (with seniority from 1943 - gazetted in 1958) - Engineering facilities for the RAAF were expanded after the outbreak of War with Japan, and [No 3 Aircraft Depot] was established - ie Amberley - the then Wing Commander Eric Douglas was appointed as Commanding Officer. Eric's prime duty was the formation of No 3 Aircraft Depot, Amberley and its build up of Workshops and Ancillary sections to a self contained unit of 1600 RAAF personnel. Amberley ancillary locations (in 1946 and 1947) included Archerfield, Charleville, Kingaroy, Strathpine, Lowood, Oakey, Strathpine, Toogoolawah and Coominya (these last two were Relief Landing Fields for Lowood during WW2) and Goolman (Relief Landing Ground for Amberley during WW2); and when the Americans vacated also Victoria Park, Spring Hill. (Oakey [6AD] was of interest to Eric at least from 1943 and Lowood at least from 1944). At Amberley also were the 82 Bomber Wing and AD HQ - all these topics were included in Eric's duties. Also control of all Flight fields in Queensland was another important duty.

There was also a close tie between RAAF Amberley and what was known then as the WAAF (WAAF - appears to be initially known in Australia as the Women's Auxiliary Air Force - 1946; but was later known as WAAAF ie Women's Australian Auxiliary Air Force). In 1943 there were WAAF fabric workers at RAAF Amberley - one of their jobs was to 'fold parachutes' and there was an certainly a skill and need to fold them correctly for lives were at stake. In March 1946 the WAAF's held Fifth Anniversary Celebrations at Amberley, Sandgate and Toowoomba in Queensland by means of dinners accompanied by dancing - over 100 persons attended the celebrations at Amberley.

Besides, Amberley was the terminal of the Trans Pacific air route and an erection and overhaul base for the American Air Force for a considerable period. [RAAF history - National Archives of Australia].

By 1942 there were up to 1,000 American service personnel stationed at Amberley and by 1943 the numbers totalled approximately 2,300 - scaled back to about 500 after the War. [Australia at War website]

Amberley as at 30/9/1946 -

Strength of 3AD - 240 Airmen and 40 Officers; 82 Wing 95 Airmen and 60 Officers and ADHQ - 11 Airmen and 3 Officers. Of these persons - 30 Absent on duty, 10 Detached, 5 in Hospital and 10 on Recreation leave.

Plus 53 Labourers, 9 Accounts Clerks, 3 Store Clerks, 3 Headquarters Clerks, 2 Female Typists at Headquarters, 1 Female Typist at Stores, 6 Storemen, 2 Watchmen and 1 Watchman at Strathpine and 3 Temporary Labourers at Charleville. 1 Watchman required for Charleville and 1 Civilian required for Canteen. (Eric's notes)

Amberley Aircraft Storage as at 30/9/1946 -

• Mosquito - 3AD - 32; Lowood - 24 and Kingaroy - 7. Of these 43 were Category B Storage and 20 were Category E Storage.

Total Storages Category B • Dakota 5, Mosquito 43, Mustang 9, Liberator 7 and Spitfire 6.

Total Storages Category C • Liberator 33 and Dakota 5.

Total Storages Category E • Anson 10, Beaufighter 2, Beaufort 4, Ventura 1, Mosquito 20, Mustang 53, Wirraway 1, Boomerang 1, Vengeance 41, Mitchell 33, Spitfire 43 and Liberator 23.

Total Storages Category D • Beechcraft 1.

• Other - 3 AD Armament is at Kingaroy. (Eric's notes)

Civilian Employees at 3AD as at 31/3/1947 -

• 4 Typists D HQ, 3 Clerks 8 Squadron, 3 Clerks D HQ, 9 Clerks Accounts Section, 2 Telephonists - Main switch, 12 Storemen 8 Squadron, 1 Assistant Storeman 8 Squadron, 6 Transport, 39 Labourers, 19 General hands, 12 Stewards, 8 Cooks Assistants, 4 Watchmen at Archerfield, 2 Watchmen at Amberley, 1 Caretaker at Lowood, 1 Caretaker at Charleville, Nil at Kingaroy and 7 Labourers at Archerfield. (Eric's notes)

Other activities at Amberley which involved Eric included food distribution in Queensland by RAAF aeroplanes; RAAF Amberley planes searching for lost aeroplanes, yachts, fishing boats and launches; dealing with the consequences and investigations of RAAF Air crashes at and in the vicinity of Amberley; Mock wars off the coast of New South Wales - Bomber input from Amberley; RAAF charitable (fund-raising) marches through Brisbane, high level RAAF and other meetings. RAAF entertainment - Theatre (live) - including visits by Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Gracie Fields, Gary Cooper, the Glen Millar band, the Mills Brothers, Will Mahoney, Evie Hayes and Rita Hayworth; and movies - examples - Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy and the Marx Brothers; the Officers' Mess, Sergeants' Mess and the Airmen's Mess (included parties, dances, Christmas dinners and even Weddings); Sporting - including cricket, tennis, table tennis, baseball (American), football - rugby and gridiron. There were also boxing and gymnastics and all the basic facilities that were necessary for all these sports.

Besides, there were RAAF ceremonies, marches, parades, and inspections with and by dignitaries eg Chief of the Air Staff, HRH the Duke of Gloucester, General Douglas MacArthur, General George C Kenney, Lord Bernard Montgomery, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Defence, the Governor of Queensland, the Premier and Lord Mayor of Brisbane; RAAF Pageants and Air displays - open to the Public. Part of the small Courier Mail Committee judging sponsored flying scholarships. Flying School; Logistics involved with the training Air Training Corps Cadets; Welcoming home

via Amberley to Australian ex-prisoners of War. Welcome to Gracie Fields as an entertainer and singer at Amberley and in 1946 a welcome to Miss Australia to Amberley. Housing visiting personnel from other nations beside America eg Royal Navy visitors from British Aircraft carriers. In 1948 responsible for organizing the patrol of all Queensland aerodromes - Eric was the Senior RAAF Officer stationed in Queensland.

On a more personal level meeting with, and providing financial and moral support for local organizations in Brisbane, Ipswich, Boonah and Amberley such as Railway workshops, the Australian Citizen Forces, local schools, pre school children, rugby and cricket teams, the Red Cross, churches - including Debutante Balls; and the boy scouts; plus local families and individuals especially those associated with RAAF Amberley.

RAAF (and other) Aircraft at Amberley during the period 1942 to 1948 included – The Anson, Beaufighter, Beaufort, Beechcraft, Boomerang, Dakota C47, Gipsy Major, Liberator, Lincoln Bomber (including Aries II in 1947), Lodestar, Mitchell, Mosquito, Moth Minor, Mustang, Oxford, Scout Fighter, Spitfire, Tiger Moth, Vampire, Vengeance, Ventura and Wirraway (Eric's notes). Other aircraft in the skies over Amberley in that same period included – the Airacobra (Aerocobra), Black Widow, Boston, Catalina, Commando, Corsair, Dauntless, Flying Fortress, Hellcat, Hudson, Kingcobra, Kittyhawk, Lancer, Lancaster, Lancastrian, Lightning, Lincoln Bomber, Maurader, Mustang, Percival Gull, Rapide, Skymaster, Superfortress, Taylor Craft, Vampire, York, Waco Glider and Wapiti. A family member who was an older child at the time, lists the following aeroplanes types as being some that he remembers at Amberley - Airacobra, Anson, Beaufighter, Beaufort, Boomerang, Black Widow, Boston, Buffalo, Catalina, Commando, Corsair, Dakota, Dauntless, Flying Fortress, Hudson, Kingcobra, Kittyhawk, Lancaster (G for George and and Queenie VI), Lancastrian, Liberator, Lightning, Lincoln (short and long nose), Maurader, Mitchell, Mosquito, Mustang, Oxford, Percival Gull, Rapide, Skymaster, Superfortress, Spitfire, Tiger Moth, Thunderbolt, Vultee Vengeance, Ventura, Wapiti, Waco Glider, Wirraway, York and Vampire (public demonstration flight).

Eric Douglas - Flying Log No 6 - Amberley - June 23, 1942 to end 1943 -

June 23, 1942 – C47 Pilot Capt Taylor & Eric Douglas – observation around Amberley

August 4, 1942 - Vengeance A27- 6 Pilot Capt Kelly & Eric Douglas – test flight

August 4, 1942 – Tiger Moth A17- Pilot Eric Douglas & F/Lt Mac Gill - observation around Amberley

August 5, 1942 - Vengeance A27-6 Pilot Eric Douglas & one A/C – general practice

August 21, 1942 – Tiger Moth AA-19 Pilot Eric Douglas & one A/C - general practice

August 24, 1942 - Tiger Moth AA-19 Pilot Eric Douglas & S/L Nicholson – observation local

Sept 10, 1942 – Tiger Moth N 6906 Pilot Eric Douglas – engine test

Sept 24, 1942 - Tiger Moth A17-426 Pilot Eric Douglas & F/Lt Appleby - observation local

Oct 12, 1942 – Tiger Moth A17-355 Pilot Eric Douglas & Mr Patts – Amberley – Maryborough – Bundaberg

Oct 13, 1942 – Tiger Moth A17-355 Pilot Eric Douglas & Mr Patts – Bundaberg – Maryborough – Gympie – Amberley



Oct 24, 1942 – Beechcraft A 39 Pilot F/Lt Wood & Eric Douglas – general flying

Nov 11, 1942 - Moth Minor A21-25 Pilot Eric Douglas & P/O Sleeman – general flying and machine test

Nov 13, 1942 - Moth Minor A21-25 Pilot Eric Douglas & P/O Sleeman – Inst to P/O Sleeman

April 1943 – Lodestar - Pilot Eric Douglas – Archerfield – Townsville

April 1943 – Lodestar - Pilot Eric Douglas – Townsville – Archerfield

July 1943 – DC2- C39 – Eric Douglas Passenger – Mascot to Essendon

July 1943 – DC2- C39 – Eric Douglas Passenger – Essendon to Archerfield

Sep 1943 – DC2- C39 – Eric Douglas Passenger – Archerfield to Mascot

Sep 1943 – DC2- C39 - Eric Douglas Passenger – Essendon to Mascot

Oct 27, 1943 – Anson EF 922 – Pilot Eric Douglas – Crew F/O Hilford & W/C Nicholson – Amberley to Evans Head

Oct 27, 1943 – Anson EF 922 – Pilot Eric Douglas – Crew F/O Hilford,  
W/C Nicholson & F/Lt Isaacson – Evans Head to Amberley

Oct 28, 1943 – Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas & F/O Moss – Local m/c and engine test

Oct 29, 1943 – Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas & Sgt Wittaker – To Goolman and return

Oct 29, 1943 – Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas & Sgt Allen – Local test

Oct 30, 1943 - Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas & W/C Adler – To Oakey [6AD] from Amberley

Oct 30, 1943 - Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas – solo – From Oakey [6AD] to Amberley

Nov 30, 1943 – Gipsy Moth A7-44 – Pilot Eric Douglas – solo – To Coominya (11RSU - ie Repair and Salvage Unit), solo - From Coominya

Dec 8, 1943 – Oxford – Pilot W/C Adler & Eric Douglas – To Oakey, From Oakey

Plane Speaking (RAAF Amberley) December, 1942 -

A Christmas Message to all Personnel of No 3 Aircraft Depot "Providemus" is the motto of an Aircraft Depot, meaning 'We shall Provide.' This is the reason for our existence, this is our aim. This Aircraft Depot is in its infancy, but is advancing rapidly both in output and personnel. We are fast gaining a reputation for efficiency and co-operation, which must be proudly upheld. The majority of personnel of this Depot have entered the Service since war began. Their reason for doing so is the desire to serve their country by helping to win this war. This will be achieved only by placing the Service before

self. And the Service demands unremitting toil by all. Whatever our job may be, it is most important that we be of good cheer and endeavour, at all times, to carry it out to the best of our ability. For some months, we have worked adjacent to our American comrades who are playing an equivalent part. Their co-operation and good fellowship are greatly appreciated. Trusting that all personnel of this Depot will stick to our motto until we have successfully finished this job. Season's Greetings to all. Signed G E Douglas, Group Captain, Commanding No 3 Aircraft Depot, Amberley.

In 1944 – Inventor - Airwash Spray mask (Patented on 4th November, 1946) - for painting and industrial usages. Another idea that Eric had was for a 'boltless undercarriage' but did not pursue it as far as a Patent as he felt that it was a RAAF prerogative.

Some special Aeroplanes/Visitors at RAAF Amberley –

- General George C Kenney's plane landed at Amberley in August, 1942. (General Kenney - Reports). General Kenney also said that he formed the P38 group (Lightnings) and 'started training out of Amberley Field'.
- There was an Official visit of American Senators to Amberley in September, 1942 (John Oxley Library - State Library of Queensland - web blog from the Library). However 'Trove' newspapers show that 5 US Senators visited Brisbane in September, 1943.
- Flying Ace, Clive 'Killer' Caldwell arrived at RAAF Amberley on 14 September 1942.
- On 25th October, 1942 General Hap Arnold, Major General Street and Colonel Bill Ritchie landed at Amberley Field. They were from the SWPA (South West Pacific Area) - US - War Department. (General Kenney - Reports).
- On 3rd June, 1943 RAF Lancaster Four-Engined Bomber 'Queenie VI' landed at RAAF Amberley. This aeroplane was flown to Australia by RAAF Flight Lieutenant Peter Isaacson and an all RAAF crew. It was taken on RAAF charge as A66-1.
- On 13th September, 1943 Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt landed at Amberley and among those greeting her was Mrs Douglas MacArthur. (Ref Roger Marks QAWW2 - NARA (US National Archives and Records Administration) - SC250309 (7567)).
- 3rd November, 1943 and Mr (Arthur) Calwell addressed the 'Loan Rally' at the Amberley Picture Theatre.
- In 1943 United States Air Force Liberator B24 'Crosby's Curse' was on the tarmac at Amberley.
- It was on 8th February, 1944 that General Kenney 'received a message to meet General MacArthur at Amberley Field in an hour.' (General Kenney - Reports).
- On 7th July, 1944, VIP Consolidated Liberator C-87 arrived at Amberley. This plane had been allotted to Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser, Commander of the British Fleet.
- On 20th August, 1944 the famous aviator Charles Augustus Lindbergh arrived on Aircraft 975 at Amberley (called Amberley Field by the Americans). [Item details held at the National Archives in Brisbane].
- On 7th October, 1944 Bob Dyer entertained at Amberley.
- 8th November, 1944 was the day that 'G for George' arrived at Amberley. This Lancaster Bomber was flown from the UK by RAAF Flight Lieutenant K A Hudson a 22 year old DFC and Bar winner of Rockhampton; and a RAAF crew. The famous plane of 90 operational flights arrived for its final destiny at the Australian War Memorial. The young Captain taxied to a stop after flying out of 'a cloud of dust storm' and was warmly welcomed by

Group Captain Eric Douglas. (G for George is now on permanent display at the AWM in Canberra).

- On 1st June, 1945 Gracie Fields arrived at Amberley Aerodrome - she entertained in the RAAF theatre there.
- \* In July, 1945 No 1 Squadron RAAF Mosquito 'Bondi Blonde' A52-518 was at Amberley. Mosquito A52-500 was also based at Amberley.
- In July, 1945 a 'test and ferry flight' was carried out on Mitchell A47-44 by Flight Lieutenant A Egan from No 3 Depot at Amberley.
- The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester touched down at Amberley on the 8th August, 1945 in the Duke's plane 'Endeavour'. They lunched at the Amberley Mess as guests of the Commanding Officer, Group Captain Eric Douglas after which the Duke carried out an inspection of No 3 AD with Group Captain Douglas as his host.
- Newspaper report of 17th September, 1945 - 45 Army and 3 RAAF liberated POW's "will arrive at Amberley...after an all-night flight from Darwin in two Liberators...A third Liberator will be in the flight convoy carrying 20 wounded soldiers from Borneo..."
- On 31st January, 1946 it was reported that 600 US Airmen making a mass goodwill tour of Australia were due to land at Amberley in 42 planes. The planes were to be 30 B29s (Superforts) and 12 C54s (four motored Douglas bombers of the 'Sky Master' type). At Amberley they were due to stay for 48 hours and after refuelling will go on to Sydney - the B29s to Mascot and the C54s to Schofield. Group Captain Douglas said that 'he did not know when the planes would arrive, but he expected three weeks notice before their landing at Amberley'. He would like to see the men given 'a grand welcome' and had already approached the Premier, Mr Hanlon on the matter. He had reason to believe that suitable arrangements would be made.
- On 30th October, 1946 Group Captain and Mrs Gordon Savage were guests at a cocktail party at Amberley Aerodrome.
- 13th June, 1947 saw the arrival at Amberley of Avro Lincoln B2 Aircraft Serial No Re-364 'Aries II' of the RAF Empire Air Navigation School. From Group Captain E E Vielle of 'Aries II' dated 13th November, 1947 from Whenuapai, Royal New Zealand Air Force to Eric "Dear Douglas, Thank you very much indeed for your hospitality and the way you looked after all of us at Amberley...Many thanks for the assistance we received on the Aircraft..."
- On 26th September, 1947 Group Captain and Mrs Douglas were to receive 80 guests at a cocktail party and were to give the party at the RAAF Officers Mess, Amberley.
- 26th November, 1947 "About 140 guests will attend an at home which the Governor (Sir John Lavarack) and Lady Lavarack will hold at Government House tonight. Members of the Indian Cricket Team will be present. Among the invited guests will be...Group Captain and Mrs Douglas..."
- \* In early December, 1947 it was reported in the papers that No 82 Wing of RAAF Amberley was to be flying Prime Minister Benjamin Chifley to New Zealand. Group Captain Douglas C.O. of Amberley stated that 'the plane was one of three in Australia converted for very important personages and known as VIP Liberators. Another is in Japan while the third is being overhauled. The planes have luxurious accommodation including upholstered chairs, a bed above the command deck and a kitchen fitted with the latest electrical appliances'.
- On 22nd December, 1947 Group Captain Eric Douglas represented the RAAF at the Funeral or Memorial Service of the 'Unknown US Soldier' in Brisbane.
- On 4th March, 1948 a RAF Lincoln bomber landed at Amberley. Group Captain Douglas stated that '...the crew will lecture RAAF air mustering, to keep them informed of the latest developments incorporated in the construction of the Lincoln bomber and it's equipment.'

• 5th April, 1948 "The Pathfinder Vickers Vimy aircraft carrying the insignia of the King's Flight landed at Amberley from Darwin this evening...In command is the Captain of the King's Flight Air Commodore E Fielden...Accompanying him are three RAF Officers and five ground crew..." (Townsville Daily Bulletin - Tuesday 6th April, 1948).

The Cairns Post reported on 14th July, 1947 that Field Marshall Montgomery was due 'to arrive at Eagle Farm...'and that 'he will be met by...and the RAAF Senior Officer (Group Captain Douglas)...' Amongst others Eric was accompanied by his young son Ian Ellsworth Douglas. Then on 15th July, 1947 Group Captain and Mrs E Douglas were among 700 Guests who attended a Civic Reception at the Brisbane City Hall hosted by the Vice Lord Mayor of Brisbane - Alderman Moon. "Group Captain and Mrs Douglas motored down from Amberley. Mrs Douglas wore a tabac brown frock, matching coat ...She added brown felt and daffodil accessories."

Debutants - on 22 June, 1945 it was reported that 17 Debutants were presented to the Catholic Archbishop at a Catholic Ball at St Mary's Hall...At 9 o'clock Archbishop Duhig and the guests arrived. They included...Group Captain and Mrs Douglas... On 5th June, 1947 Group Captain and Mrs E Douglas also attended the Catholic Ball. Besides, on 14th August, 1947 - 12 Debutants were presented to the Governor General (Mr McKell) and Mrs McKell and the State Governor (Sir John Lavarack) and Mrs Lavarack at the Church of England Ball at City Hall (Brisbane). The official party included...Group Captain and Mrs Douglas...

The Fleet Air Arm (Navy) - Directorate of Aircraft Maintenance and Repair - role of Aircraft Engineer (member RAS; and Dip ME and Dip EE) and Division Head (Civilian) 1949 to 1964. Duties - The immediate control and overseeing of all technical work performed by the technical section of the Aircraft Maintenance and Repair – Directorate of the Fleet Air Arm (DAMR). The technical division consisted of the following – airframe, engine, component repair, materials and inspection; ground equipment and plant, aircraft modifications, drawing office and technical library.

Included was the maintenance of 'helicopter aircraft', a 'working knowledge of jet turbine aircraft and their maintenance requirements' and co-ordinating 'Technical Conferences' and the overseeing of special projects such as the - 'conversion of a Dakota aircraft to a Flying classroom'

Eric had initially joined the Civilian Technical Staff of DAMR, Navy Office in 1949 as 'a Technical Officer on Airframes'.

From the Royal Australian Navy site – Nowra, NSW - Aircraft operated by the Royal Australian Navy – Fleet Air Arm in Eric's time at Navy Office -

Auster J5-G Autocar – communications aircraft

Bell UH-1B/1C Iroquois – search and rescue/training helicopter

Bristol Sycamore HR50/51 – rescue and training helicopter

CAC Aermacchi MB-326H (Macchi) – land based jet trainer

CAC CA-16 Wirraway – fighter/training aircraft

CAC CA-22 Winjeel prototype – basic trainer

De Havilland Sea Vampire Mk T.22 (Vampire 873) – land based pilot trainer

De Havilland Sea Venom F.A.W. Mk 53 – carrier borne fighter bomber

De Havilland Tiger Moth – land based trainer  
Douglas C-47A Dakota – land based navigational trainer and transport aircraft  
Fairey Firefly AS.5/AS.6 – carrier borne fighter, anti-submarine and reconnaissance aircraft  
Fairey Gannet AS1/4 – carrier borne anti-submarine aircraft  
Fairey Gannet T.2/T.5 – carrier borne anti-submarine aircraft  
GAF Jindivik pilotless target aircraft – pilotless target drone  
Hawker Sea Fury Mark 11 – carrier borne fighter bomber  
Millicer Air Tourer - Prototype – trainer aircraft  
Westland Scout AH-1 – survey utility helicopter  
Westland Wessex 31A – carrier borne submarine search and rescue helicopter  
and Westland Wessex Mk31B – carrier borne submarine search and rescue helicopter

Member of the Antarctic Club of 1929 - Australian Section commenced in 1940; Hon Secretary of the Royal Aeronautical Society (Victoria) - incorporated as the Institution of Australian Engineers (Eric Douglas was accepted and recognized as an Aeronautical Engineer by this prestigious body); President of the pre-War (WW2) Air Force Association 'Old Permos' for many years until his death in 1970 (his old RAAF mates would not let him resign). Other memberships included - the Royal Brighton Yacht Club, Royal Yacht Club of Victoria, Ski Club of Victoria (early member), Victorian Aero Club, Aircraft Industries, Adastral Lodge (Werribee), the RAAF Fidelity Club (when at 3 AD Amberley), the Naval and Military Club, the Kelvin Club and the Melbourne Cricket Club. War Medal 1939-45, Australian Services Medal 1939-45 and General Services Badge.

Eligible for Returned from Active Services Badge [RAAF history July 1948 - National Archives of Australia].

Some of the RAAF persons and friends who Eric spoke about with respect over the years included - Al Murdoch - Eric's Best Man; Stu Campbell, Sherg, 'Snow' Lachal, Dal Charlton, Donny Summers, Carroll, Cobby, Gerard, Garrat, Knox-Knight, Lascelle, Leo Ryan, Max Allen, McColl, McNamara, Lavarck, Keenan, Berry, Bates, Berg, Stewart, Draper, Lancaster, McKay, Chapman, Walker, Carr, Chalmers, Mann, Tuttleby, Glen, Hely, Edgerton, Spencer, Mullholland, Graham, Balmer, McCutcheon, Wood, Horne, McKenzie, Ashton-Shorter, Walsh, Fowler, Good, Dillon, Charles Probert, 'Barney' Creswell, 'King' Cole, Charles Eaton, Bladin, Daley, Wally Rae, Ned Allen, Regie Wood, Colin McK Henry, Darcy Power, Littlejohn, Wrigley, Hitchcock (son), Hal Harding, Collopy, Heffernan, Chadwick, Knox, 'Kanga' De la Rue, Dickie Williams, Val Hancock, Curnow, Candy, Jones, Ray Brownell, Cottee, Easterbrook, Walter Nicholson, Jimmy Melrose, Parry, Lukis, Headlam, Lerew, Truscott, Hannah, Ridley, Wackett, Scascheqini, Appleby, Nankerville, Charlie Matheson, Peter Isaacson, Ingulfsen, Seekamp, Waddy, Hampshire, Fred Thomas, Luxton, Lerew, Ham, Kingwell, Beaurepaire and Whalley; also Tavener (RAF) and C P Jones, Major H Ray Millard, Lt Colonel Claude F Gilchrist and Colonel Leo B Reid (last four from the US Army USAAF/USAF).

The 22nd Service Group of the Fifth Air Force (American) arrived in Brisbane and located to 'Camp Ascot' on 6th March 1942 to 15th March, 1942; and on 15th March 1942 they relocated to Archerfield Airfield and then on 6th June 1942 they relocated to Amberley Airfield - the 22nd Service

Group's Commanding Officer was Lt Colonel Claude F Gilchrist or in the recent words (October 2012) of the Deputy Director of American Air Force History at the Pentagon "...the 22nd Service Group assigned to the Fifth Air Force was responsible for the American portion of Amberley Field from 15th June 1942 until the group's disbandment on 9 January 1944. Before that time, it was at Camp Ascot near Brisbane from 6 to 15 March and at Archerfield from 15 March through 14 June 1942. At Amberley the Unit operated a post headquarters and it's mission was to service aircraft received from the US and those returned from forward areas. The group commander was Lt Col Claude F Gilchrist..."

Major H R Millard was with Air Transport Command (American) at Amberley and in October 1943 he is listed as the Chief Executive.

25th December, 1943 - Major Millard and Lt Colonel Gilchrist were at RAAF Amberley as they had Christmas dinner with Eric Douglas and his family.

Information obtained from the RAAF Museum at Point Cook in October, 2012 lists the following involvement at Amberley -

RAAF - 23 Sqn 1942, 85 OBU 1945, 3 Aircraft Depot 1942 -, 3 Central Recovery Depot 1944-46, 10 RSU 1942, 3 Recruit Depot 1942, 6 Recruit Depot 1942 and 3 SFTS 1940-42.

USAAF - 3BG 1942, 35 Air Base G & 2 Material S 1942, 22 Service Group 1942-45 and the US Air Transport Command - 1943-1945 (Pacific Wing Station 3).

United States Army Air Force at Amberley during World War II - from Wikipedia - The airfield became a major American Air Force base during 1942 and 1943. "Known Fifth Air Force units assigned to 'Amberley Field' were -

- 22nd Bombardment Group B-26 Marauder (7 March - 7 April 1942) • 38th Bombardment Group B-25 Mitchell (Headquarters 30 April -10 June 1942)
- 69th Bombardment Squadron (30 April -20 May 1942) • 70th Bombardment Squadron (11 May -15 August 1942) • 475th Fighter Group P-38 Lightning (Headquarters 14 May - 14 August 1943) • 431st Fighter Squadron (1 July - 14 August 1943) • 432nd Fighter Squadron (11 June - 14 August 1943) • 433rd Fighter Squadron (17 June - 14 August 1943). In 1943, with the Allies advancing against the Empire of Japan in the southwest Pacific, American units moved north to forward airfields".

From the - Royal Australian Air Force - RAAF Base Amberley facts site (for students) -

- '...From October (1941) until July 1942 the base was...home to No 3 Service Flying Training School, operating a fleet of 54 Wirraways. • Throughout 1942 there was a considerable American presence at the base, as newly-arrived US Army Air Force bomber and fighter squadrons assembled their aircraft before moving north. • After the formation of No 3 Aircraft Depot (3AD) in March 1942, Amberley was also an important aircraft assembly and engineering base for the RAAF. 3AD remained there until June 1992. • After the end of World War II, Amberley became the base for No 82 Bomber Wing, which then formed the RAAF's main strike element...'

Also seek out Dunn's excellent pages on RAAF Amberley in World War II (web).

Some Inward letters –

- 30th August, 1939 from Colin McK H (Group Captain Colin McK Henry) living in Herts, England "This...course is too hard & too much work...Wally

Kyle and I went to London to meet Watson & Hely... Trouble with this course is never have anything to do with aircraft... I fly a Magister for 1½ hours in 2 weeks, one flip 5 miles from Henlow... There are 10 service Aerodromes within a radius of 15 miles. Am only allowed 20 hours flying in a year... Saw a Blenheim once on Aerodrome otherwise have seen no new stuff at all... For goodness sake take ½ hour off one day & write me a note... Cheers Eric..."

- Note from Wilfrid R Jackson of Amberley - 24/12/1943 "...my appreciation of the happy conditions experienced under your command..."
- Letter from a former Airman residing at the St Laurence Club, Sydney on 2 April, 1944 "... I aver that the spirit of harmony and team-work for which Amberley is known throughout the Service is due solely to the atmosphere, which you yourself have created... a 3AD posting is universally hailed with feelings of pleasurable anticipation... A Great Bloke ..." (name supplied).
- On 14th April 1946 from George R Snaddon of Mosman, NSW - he was an LAC at Amberley "...I find I'm kept much busier (if that is possible) than when at Amberley...I believe W/C Connolly has left for pastures new...I'd be interested to know where he was sent to. Even after having left the RAAF I find myself wondering what the fate of this & that will be (Aircraft I mean)..."
- 2nd July 1946 from L Bowling of Ipswich - Hon Sec of the 'Ipswich and District Motor Cycle Club' "...I would like, on behalf of the Club, to request permission to use...portion of the Airfield. I refer to the part known as the Eastern Taxiway...At no time would the event encroach on any actual landing strip..."
- Dated August 12th, 1946 from J Wild the Hon Sec of the Railway Workshops - Ipswich 'Ipswich Workshops Educational Association' "...our very sincere thanks & appreciation for your most interesting & educational address...Many appreciative remarks have been made by members re your talk & all hope that someday in the future we will meet again...Re your proposed invitation to members...to inspect RAAF Station Amberley may I suggest that Saturday Sept 14th (if it is) be suitable for you...Mr Jackson working on the hearing machine was very pleased to know that Mr Hall would accept your donation of a 'Respirator'..."
- 26th August 1948 from Victor Turnbull of 7 Mile, Rosewood "...I go to the Aerodrome each week, generally on my way to town, the good people there like to get our eggs, cream etc..."
- A letter from the Lowrys of North Rockhampton in December, 1950 "...I have had several inquiries here from some of his (Douglas's) friends who were at Amberley and always ask if he is still in the RAAF, he was held in the highest esteem at Amberley and was very much liked...I often look back at Amberley and think of the many friends I made there and the good station it was..."
- From a fisherman and marine navigator at Victoria Point in April, 1951 "...Dear Captain...life at Victoria Point is moving along very smoothly and we are gradually becoming a name in its history. You would not know the old spitfire box (his home - old aeroplane packing boxes or cases were considered a prime possession at the time)...We now have a bedroom on its back plus a shower room and also a bedroom on the front...the place is admired by every one who sees it, not only inside but outside..." (name supplied).
- A letter from Arthur Middleton residing at Hermanus South Africa in 1960 "...I was at Point Cook as a Rigger in 1926 to 1928. Left there to return to South Africa in 1928....Well Eric lots of water has flowed under the bridge since Point Cook days...Have had several trips back to Aussie, in fact went

back to Sydney in 1946...Did meet a few of the old Point Cook boys in 1946 with ANA at Essendon. Smith & Snowy Cooper & a couple of others...Still have my old discharge signed by Cole..."