# Air Force Association (South Australia)

## Aviator Profile

## FLGOFF Angas Murray Hughes

## World War 2 Bomb Aimer and POW 467SQN

Angas Murray Hughes was born in Adelaide on 7 October 1923, the son of Walter and Hilda Hughes. Born in 1886 in Hilton, Adelaide, his father enlisted as a Private in the 11th Field Ambulance Australian Army Medical Corps in January 1916. Arriving in France in November 1916, he saw service for approximately four months on the western front before being injured and returning to England. He transferred to the Australian Flying Corps in May 1917 and served a 2 Air Mechanic with No 5 Training Squadron (AFC) based at Shawbury and Minchinhampton in England. Away from Australia for approximately three years, he met an English woman, Hilda, who he married after the war and returned to Australia with in 1919.

*SGT Angas Hughes (left) with his mother in Croyden before departing for overseas in 1943.*

Angas' father and mother settled in a house they built in Croyden, an inner northwestern suburb of Adelaide. Angas, the only child, attended the local Croyden Public School until Grade 7 and then Queens College before proceeding to Muirden College for Business Studies – all during the Great Depression. He was first employed at aged 16 at the Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) Alkali Chemical Plant at Osborne where he worked for two years as a message boy.

He applied for the Air Force on his 18th Birthday on 7 October 1941 an enlisted in the Reserve on 8 January 1942. As a member of the Air Force Reserve, he completed classes in navigation, aircraft recognition and general military training before being called up for duty in June 1942. He was inspired to join the RAAF Duty to join up enamored with Biggles at the time and saw the Air Force as his the one for him. His family were not too happy about his joining.

Angas enlisted in the Royal Australian Air Force on 18 July 1942 at No 5 Recruit Centre, Adelaide, and proceeded to Victor Harbor to complete No 4 Initial Training School where aircrew trainees completed initial training and were screened for pilot, navigator, or wireless operator / air gunner. While most trainees wanted to be pilots, Angas wanted to be a navigator having completed enjoyed his navigation familiarization training in the Air Force Reserve. Angas was selected to be an observer which involved completing navigation, bomb aiming and air gunnery astronavigation training. Angas proceeded to No 2 Air Observers School, Mt Gambier completing initial navigation training from October 1942 to January 1943 gaining 60 hours on Avro Anson aircraft. He attended No 2 Bombing and Gunnery School at Port Pirie from January to March 1943 for his bomb aiming and air gunnery training gaining 30 hours in the air on Fair Battle aircraft. He received his Air Observers Badge on 4 March 1943 at Port Pirie. He then attended No 2 Air Navigation School at Nihll completing the astronavigation component of his training from March to April 1943 obtaining another 30 hours flying Anson aircraft.

*Enlistment photo of Angas Hughes in 1942*

Selected for service in England with heavy bombers, Angas embarked for the United Kingdom at Brisbane on 5 May 1943 travelling across the Pacific via steamship to San Franciso and then via train to Massachusetts from which he travelled by the *Queen Elizabeth* to Scotland. He disembarked in Greenock, Scotland, on 7 July 1943 and travelled south to Brighton England.

From September to October 1943, Angas completed familiarisation training at No4 (Observer) Advanced Flying Unit at RAF West Freugh in southwestern Scotland. The course was designed to familiarize non-British aircrew with European flying conditions. From October 1943 to March 1944, Angas attended No 27 Operational Training Unit at RAF Litchfield in Staffordshire in central England. The unit, primarily used by Australian and other Commonwealth aircrew, was where heavy bomber crews were formed and conducted their conversion onto heavy bomber aircraft flying the Wellington bomber. Angas' crews comprised six Australians including himself with one Englishman as the flight engineer. He then proceeedd to RAF Swinderley converting onto four engine heavy bombers flying the Shorts Stirling with No 1660 Heavy Conversion Unit.

***Angas Hughes with his 467SQN crew formed at 27OTU. Angas is standing in back row 2nd from right. (hughes family)***

On 8 June 1944, after almost two years of training, Angas arrived at No 467 Squadron (RAAF) based at RAF Waddington near Lincoln to finally commence operational duties as an observer/bomb aimer. Formed in November 1942 at RAF Scampton, Lincolnshire, 467 SQN as an Article XV squadron under the Empire Air Training Scheme (EATS) equipped with Avro Lancaster heavy bombers. Although a RAAF Squadron, it comprised many Commonwealth aircrew throughout the war and when first formed, comprised over 90% RAF aircrew. On 24 November, the new squadron relocated to RAF Bottesford, Leicestershire, before again relocating a year later to its permanent base at RAF Waddington in Lincolnshire.

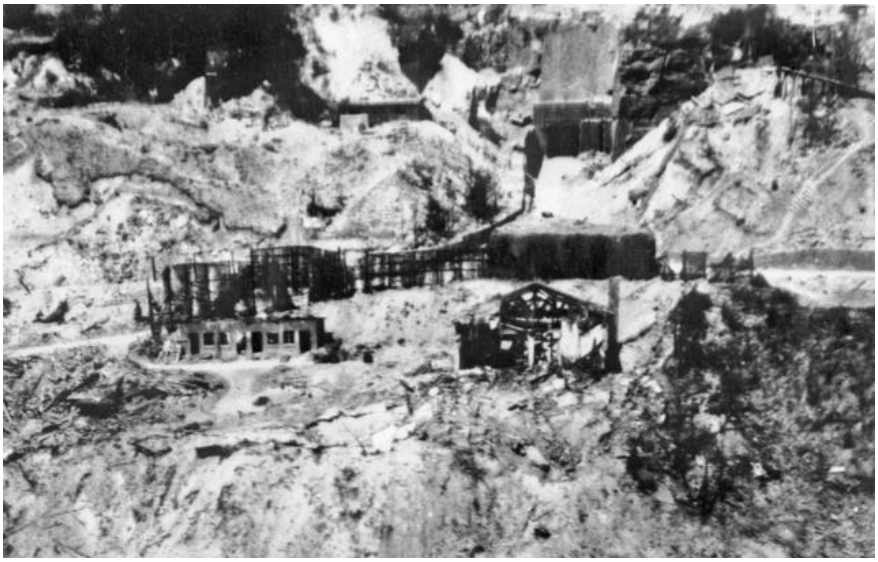
It was one of three dedicated RAAF Lancaster squadrons in World War 2 alongside 460SQ and 463SQN. The squadron served with distinction throughout the war participating in Bomber Commands offensive against Germany. It saw action in the Battle of the Ruhr, Battle of Berlin, the Normandy landings, and strikes against V1 and V2 targets. Flying its last bombing mission in April 1945, 467 SQN was then used for the transportation of liberated Allied POWs to the UK. It was earmarked to form part of the new Tiger Force to operate against Japan and the squadron actually commenced conversion training onto B-24 Liberators for that purpose until the war in the Pacific ended and the Squadron was disbanded on 30 September 1945.

Several 467 SQN Lancaster aircraft survived the war with the most notable, S for Sugar, flying 137 missions, the second highest of any Commonwealth bomber, and now preserved and proudly on display at the Royal Air Force Museum, RAF Hendon. 467 Squadron flew a total of 3,833 sorties during the war but suffered heavily losing 118 aircraft and a total of 760 aircrew of which 284 were Australian.

Arriving at 467SQN on 8 June, only two days after the Normandy landings, Angas was thrown straight into a very hectic time for 467SQN which was actively involved in the Normandy invasion. Four days after arriving, Angas flew his first mission on the famous 467SQN Lancaster R5868 S for Sugar, a strike mission targeting marshalling yards at Poitiers in central western France. The mission was a success cutting the rail lines between Paris and Bordeaux in seven places.

*Iconic image of 467SQN Lancaster S for Sugar in which Angas Hughes conducted his first 467SQN operational mission (AWM)*

His seventh mission flown in early July was a strike mission targeting V-weapon storage sites in caves at St Leu-d'Esserent thirty miles north of Paris with pathfinder aircraft including one from 617SQN (RAF). Leading the 467 SQN contribution was WGCDR Brill, the Commanding Officer, who fought three separate night fighter attacks during the mission. Angas flew his eighth mission against the same target several days later and while the target was successfully, hit, 29 of the total force of 208 Lancasters were lost on the mission largely to night fighters – representing 14% of the force.



*Bomb craters, debris and blasted trees litter the approach to a tunnel entrance at the flying bomb depot at St Leu D'Esserent, France, after attacks by 467 SQN aircraft including that of Angas Hughs on the 7 July and 5 August 1944. (AWM)*

On the 19 July, Angas flew his ninth mission in a force of 103 Lancasters including 9 from 467SQN targeting a flying bomb storage site at Thiverny again just north of Paris. Having departed RAF Waddington just after 7pm, the 467SQN bombers arrived at the target around 9.30pm. Ground haze and communications problems with the master bomber and late marking by the pathfinder aircraft over the target forced the 467SQN bomb aimers to drop their bombs between 14,000 and 18,000 feet largely via visual identification. Despite moderate to intense heavy flak, their mission concluded without any operational losses and post mission analysis suggested a successful outcome.

The day later on 20 July, Angas flew his 10th mission participating in a major strike against Kiel naval port comprising 629 aircraft including 9 from 467SQN. Taking off after 11pm, the aircraft arrived over the target around 1.30am dropping their bombs between 16,000 feet and 19,5000 feet. Flak was encountered but proved to be not costly. Post mission reporting indicated the raid was the town's most destructive of the war resulting in heavy damage to the port, shipyards, cutting off water for three days and gas for three weeks.

***467 SQN Lancasters sit in the snow on the flightline at RAF Waddington. (Hughes family)***

Angas's 12th mission on 25 July proved to be particularly air raising and one where some luck allowed him to survive. His crew was one of 14 467 SQN crews allocated to a mission comprising 94 Lancasters targeting an airfield and signals depot at Saint Cyr in central France west of Paris. Armed with one 4,000lb cookie bomb, one 1,000 lb bomb and 16 500lb bombs, the aircraft arrived over the airfield in the daylight evening operating between 8,000 and 11,0000 feet and encountered significant flak. Their aircraft was struck knocking out its hydraulics system impacting aircraft control and the oxygen system to crew positions. The loss of hydraulics prevented them from opening the bombs doors and the crew had some discussion as to whether they should still jettison the bombs hoping they would break through the bomb doors or simply return to base with the full bomb load. They elected to return to base noting that their navigator had a serious leg injury and the limited aircraft capacity. Nursing the aircraft back to base, the aircraft was the last to land but with no hydraulics, they could not control the flaps and the aircraft landed at greater speed and ran out of runway eventually stopping with a collapsed undercarriage and wing tip touching the ground. They were fortunate that the rough landing did cause the detonation of its full load of munitions. Angas later recorded in his logbook "*Shot up by flak. Navigator injured. Hydraulics useless. Pranged on runway on landing.*"

On 5 August, Angas flew his 16th mission and thus effectively halfway through his tour of duty – he had been at the squadron for only two months but yet was now an experienced bomber navigator. The mission involved striking the now familiar flying bomb sites around St-Leu-d'Esserent in central France.

Two days later, Angas flew his 17th mission in a force of over 1,000 aircraft targeting five enemy forces positions defending against the Allied ground forces in the Normandy area. Due to substantial smoke in the area caused by the ongoing air attack, the master bomber called off the attack before all aircraft were able to drop their munitions.

On 11 August, Hughes' aircraft, one of 18 467SQN Lancasters in a total force of 175 Lancasters and Mosquitos, were tasked to strike railway marshalling yards at Givors just south of Lyons in southeast central France. Again taking off after 10pm, the Aircraft dropped their loads of ten 1,000 lb, four 500 lb bombs over the target around 1am at 6,000 to 9,000 feet causing significant damage to the target.

Having a brief five-day respite from operations, Angas's next mission was on 15 August where his aircraft was one of 15 467SQN Lancasters detailed to strike Kiel again. The strike, delivered in the early hours of the next morning, proved quite successful, causing extensive damage to the city and sinking five ships and damaging eight more in the harbour.

On the 19 August, Hughes was in one of 13 467SQN Lancasters tasked to strike La Pallice in western France. Heavy cloud cover restricted confirming of the target areas and the aircraft encountered heavy flak. Caught in a flak barrage, Hughes dumped their ten 1,000 lb and four 500 lb bombs and egressed the target area as soon as possible.

On 25 August, more than 900 aircraft were tasked to strike three targets at Russelsheim and Darmstaldt in southern Germany and Brest in France. 467 SQN contributed 17 Lancasters including Angas's crew now on their 22nd sortie. Tasked with striking the German targets, the 467SQN aircraft experienced significant comms issues including jamming and this compounded with the loss of several of the mission leads led to lack of concentration of force over the target area and inability to confirm targets. After orbiting the target area three times unable to identify the target, Hughes and his crew recovered to England with their munition not delivered and returned to store.

Enjoying a nine-day break from flying, Hughes and his crew was one of 15 467SQN Crews to participate in a formation comprising 60 Lancaster and 7 Mosquitos targeting in an evening daylight strike on a coastal battery causing ongoing concern near Brest on 5 September.

Between those days when Hughes crew was tasked to conduct operational missions, they would routinely complete flight tests or conduct training. For example, on 8 September his crew participated in a three-hour H2S bombing and formation training. H2S was an airborne ground scanning radar system developed for the Royal Air Force's Bomber Command during World War II to identify targets on the ground for night and all-weather bombing. It allowed attacks outside the range of the various existing radio navigation aids like Gee or Oboe, which were limited to operating about 350 kilometers (220 mi) range from base stations. H2S was also widely used as a general navigation system, allowing landmarks to be identified at long range. As navigator/bomber aimer, such training was particularly important for Hughes.

Other routine training was also conducted. For example, the day later, Hughes and his crew conducted a two-hour bomber / fighter affiliation training sortie and on 10 September, they conducted a 30-minute flight test.

On 10 and 11 September, Angas and his crew participated in two major strikes against German ground forces in the Le Havre area on the northern French coast on the English Channel. The two missions were critical to the Allied capture of the port – called Operation Astonia. The mission on the 10 August involved more than 1,000 aircraft including 21 467SQN Lancasters in a late afternoon strike. The aircraft operating between 10,000 feet and 13,000 feet delivered their 11 1,000-lb and four 500-lb bombs. The follow-on attack at dawn the next day involved a smaller 218 aircraft with nine 467SQN aircraft. The mission parameters were the same as the previous day's strike with the force encountering little opposition.

Although causing significant civilian in addition to enemy casualties, the air attacks were a major success greatly impacting ground defence and enabling the allied ground forces to capture the German garrison on the 12 September.

***The coastal area around Le Havre showing extensive to German ground positions following the air attacks on 10 and 11 August that Angas Hughes participated in. (AWM)***

The nine 467SQN crews including that of Angas were again tasked to complete a second strike on the 11 September this time targeting Darmstadt south of Frankfurt in the evening. The force of over 200 Lancasters dropped their bombs around midnight under clear skies. Although targeting factories and railyards, postwar, it was learned the strike caused a firestorm in the city causing the loss of 12,000 people and 70,000 people homeless highlighting the true potential and tragic devastation of aerial bombing on civilian populations. Angas reported the mission encountered flak, searchlights and enemy fighters reflected in the loss of 12 of the 200 Lancasters on the mission.

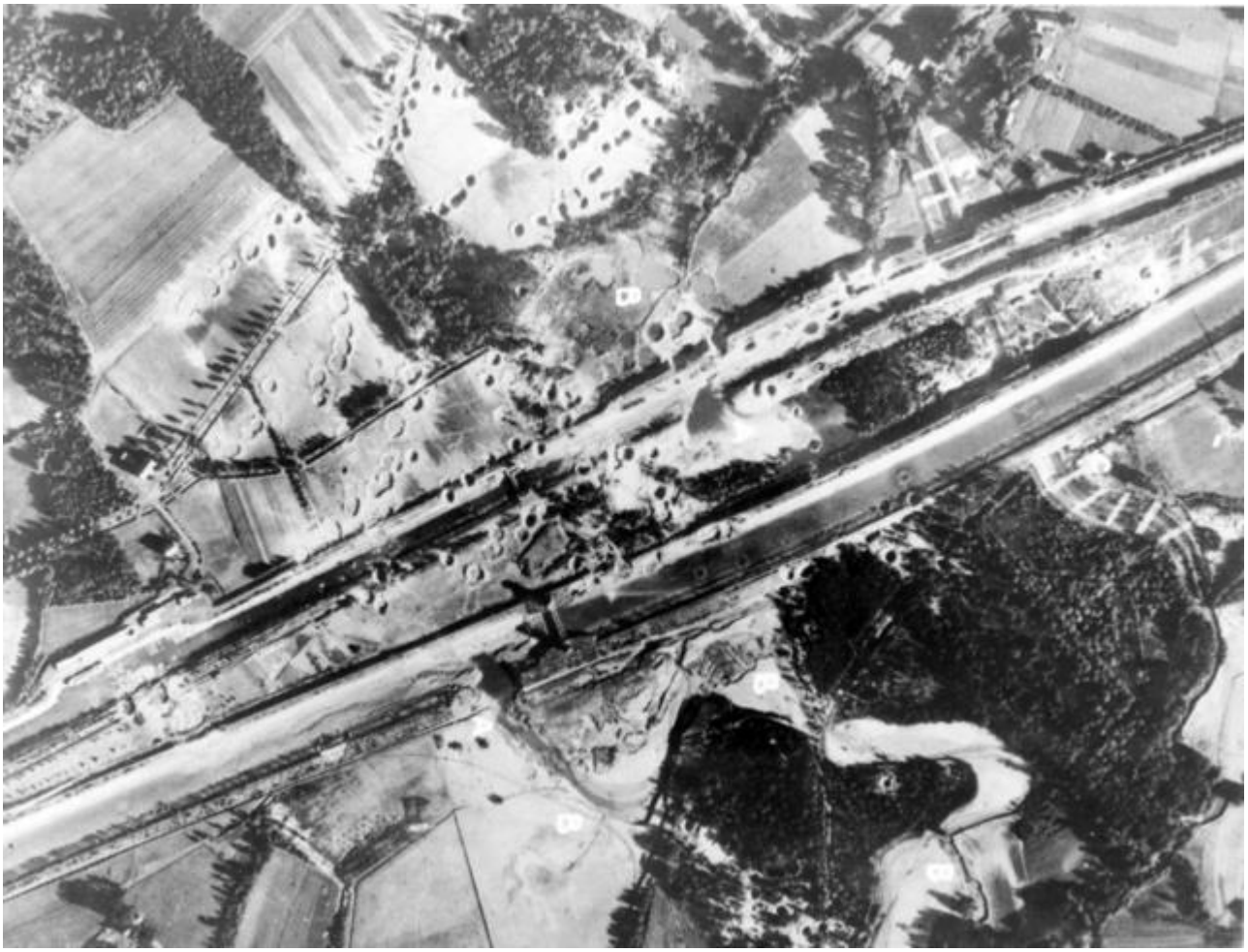
***Image showing significant devastation at Darmstadt following the air attacks on 17 September that Angas and his crew participated in. (AWM)***

On 17 September Angas participated in a major strike employing over 760 Lancasters including 19 467 SQN aircraft on German force dispositions around the port of Boulogne in northern France. Like Le Havre and Calais, Boulogne was one of the Channel ports named by Adolf Hitler as fortresses intended to be heavily fortified towns manned by troops committed to fight to the end denying the Allies the use of the facilities and committing Allied troops at least to a containment role. The missions were designed to significantly degrade German opposition to the advancing 3rd Canadian Division of the First Canadian Army tasked with the capture of Boulogne in Operation *Wellhit* which was fought from 17 to 22 September when

the German garrison finally surrendered. The heavy aerial bombardment was evidently a success with Canadian forces reporting that within the bombardment area, progress was significantly quicker than elsewhere, due to the impact upon the defenders.

On 23 September, Angas participated in an important strike mission targeting the Dortmund-Ems Canal at a key point near Ladbergen in northwestern Germany. German canals were a key part of the overall German transport system providing the means to transport raw materials and finished products on large barges. The 269-kilometre (167 mi) long Dortmund-Ems Canal was one such major transportation node connecting the inland port of Dortmund with the seaport of Emden. The canal was struck by the No 617 (Dambusters) Squadron in September 1943 in a costly unsuccessful attack.

The attack on 23 September also comprised the famous 617SQN armed with their massive 12,000lb Tallboy bomb which was intended to lift the canal banks followed by other Lancasters including 19 467 SQN aircraft causing further damage. While two 617SQN Tallboys successfully breached the canal, 467SQN bombers were largely unable to identify their designated targets and some aircraft including Angas's returned to base with munitions.



***Dortmund Canal following damage caused by the strikes on the 23 September 1944. (AWM)***

On 26 September 1944, Angas and his crew flying Lancaster LM239 / PO-G were one of 17 crews participating in a 226 strong Lancaster mission targeting Karsruhe in southern Germany. It was a two-phase mission and the 467 SQN aircraft were in the 2nd phase meaning a late takeoff at 100am in the night. Arriving over the target around 4am, the 467SQN aircraft delivered their munitions which created a devastating effect on the city. Upon egressing the target area, Angas suddenly felt the aircraft struck by flak with the outer port engine bursting into flame engulfing the wing at about 18,000 feet. With a stricken aircraft, the pilot ordered the crew to abandon the aircraft.

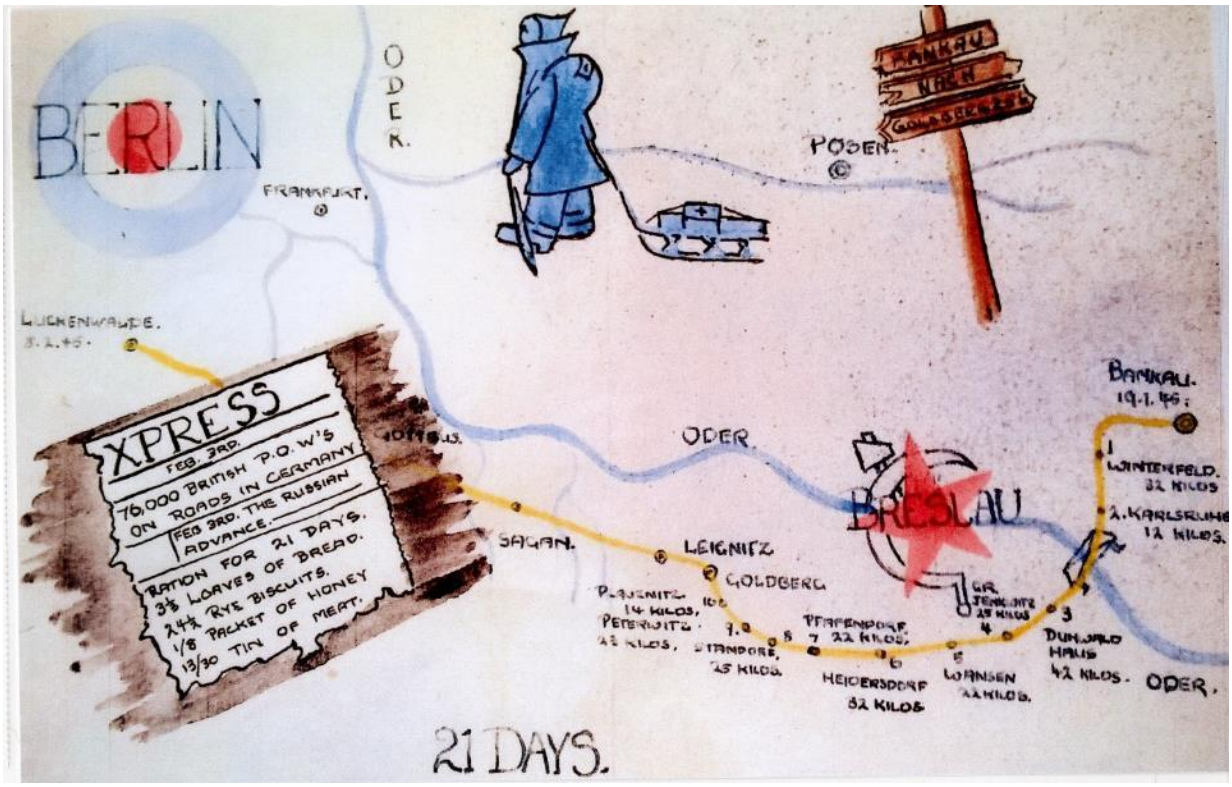
Ironically, it was the crews 32nd mission and to this day, Angas cannot advise why he was still flying after his 30th mission – the standard tour of duty for Bomber Command crews after which they were posted out of the unit for a respite posting.

Six of the crew, including Angas, bailed out of the stricken aircraft. Hitting his head against the fuselage and losing some consciousness, Angas came to floating to the ground in the dark and watched his aircraft crash into the ground bursting into flames about seven miles southeast of the city. It was the first time he had ever used a parachute. Tragically, FSGT Perkins, the mid-upper air gunner failed to bail out of the aircraft and was killed in the crash.

Angas landed in forest along a creek line. He walked along the Rhine crossing creeks and swimming across canals evading capture for three nights before he was captured by a member of the German Home Guard. He was put into a local German jail for almost a month in solitary confinement where he spent his twenty-first birthday before being transferred to an interrogation camp near Frankfurt and eventually to Stalag Luft VIIb at Bankau, Germany, or modern day Bąków, Poland.

Established in June 1944, Stalag Luft VIIB was a Luftwaffe managed Prisoner of War camp initially for RAF airmen and by July held 230 prisoners. They were joined by members of the Glider Pilot Regiment captured at the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944. By 1 January 1945, the camp held 1,578 prisoners. This comprised 1,075 British, 252 Canadian, 134 Australian, 26 New Zealand, 24 French, 15 Polish, 14 South African, 11 Irish and 10 US. Others included Rhodesian, Maltese, Dutch, Belgian and Czech. The International Committee of the Red Cross described the conditions of the camp as "deplorable". Food was simple and increasingly limited with the war coming to a close but Angas did receive Red Cross parcels during his time.

Faced with the rapidly advancing Russina forces, on 19 January 1945, 68 sick POWs were evacuated to the Ilag VIII/Z camp in Kluczbork, and the remaining 1,565 POWs including Angas Hughes were forced marched 209km westwards to Germany. The conditions on the march were dreadful with basic minimal rations and bitter cold with temperatures dropping to −20 °C. They crossed a bridge over the river Oder at Mikolin on 21 January and reached Goldberg (Złotoryja) on 5 February where they were loaded onto a train for the remained of the journey. On 8 February they reached Stalag III-A located about 50km south of Berlin near Luckenwalde, which already held 40,000 prisoners, comprising mainly soldiers from Britain, Canada, the U.S. and Russia.




*A simple map drawn by Angas Hughes showing the route of his forced march from Stalag Luft VIIb to Germany in early 1945. (Hughes family)*

Angas remained at Stalag 3A for 4 months facing food shortages, overcrowding and unhygienic conditions. The camp was captured by Russian forces in April 1945 after the camp was abandoned by German forces. During the confusion, Angas managed to get into the camps offices and secure his files including photos and documents testifying to his period of internment. However, even after being initially *released* by Russian forces, Angas and thousands of other POWs were again rounded up and interned for a month until finally handed over to allied forces.

***Imagery of the basic conditions at Stalag IIIA in Germany in early 1945. (Hughes Family)***

Angas was finally repatriated to the UK in late May following Victory in Europe and finally to Australia in October 1945. Upon his return to England, he learned he had been commissioned and promoted to Flying Officer in September 1944, which if he had learned prior to being captured, would have entitled him to be placed in an Officers POW camp.

Angas returned to Australia and discharged from the RAAF on 17 December 1945 completing three years of service including 32 missions with a heavy bomber unit and seven months as a POW. He recommenced business studies in accountancy and married a former member of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF). He worked as a registered tax agent establishing his own business and licenced auditor until 1983, when he sold his practice but continued to work several hours a week at his old profession in order to keep his mind active.

Living in the Adelaide area, Angas Hughes was one of South Australia's last Bomber Command veterans. He regularly attended RAAF and Air Force Association (SA) hosted commemorative events at the Air Force Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground, including being a special guest of honour at the annual June Bomber Command Commemorative Service. He regularly connected with young serving veterans and Australian Air Force Cadets where his stories of courage and service inspired current and future generations.

***Angas Hughes (left) with fellow South Australian Bomber Command veterans Don Looker and Ray Merrill DFC at the 2023 Bomber Command Commemorative Service.***

*Angas Hughes laying rosemary on a special commemorative wreath at an Air Force Commemorative Service at the Air Force Memorial, Torrens Parade Ground in 2023.*

In October 2023, Angas Hughes celebrated his 100th birthday at RAAF Edinburgh along with Air Force aviators and members of the Air Force Association. Enjoying morning tea at the Officers Mess, Angas cut a special birthday cake featuring the RAAF Badge and 467SQN Lancaster S for Sugar and was presented with a framed and signed print of the famous Lancaster S for Sugar that he conducted his first ever operational mission in by Assistant SADFO, GPCAPT Greg Weller. WGCDR Duncan Scott, Commanding Officer No 462

Squadron, a bomber Command Squadron, presented Angas with a copy of the 462 SQN Unit History "To See the Dawn Again". Angas was then given a special personal tour of a RAAF PC-21 aircraft at the Aircraft Research and Development Unit. The RAAF Edinburgh aviators enjoyed a truly special day with Angas sharing in his stories of training, Bomber Command and being a POW.

**Photos of Angas Hughes celebrating his 100th birthday at RAAF Edinburgh in October 2023. (Department of Defence Imagery)**

Sadly, Angas Hughes passed away in August 2026. He was South Australia's last bomber Command veteran, its last WW2 Prisoner of War and World War 2 veteran to wear the noted flaming caterpillar badge – that distinguished badge given to aviators who bailed out of an aircraft in flames. Angas Hughes was fittingly accorded a State Funeral at the Torrens parade Ground where South Australia appropriately farewelled and honoured its last Bomber Command veteran.

**Greg Weller**
**History Group**
**SA Aviation Museum**
**August 2026**