

Bertram Vivien (Viv) ASHBY & Betty (Jean) ASHBY, nee KERR

Biography as published in 1995

Bertram Vivien (Viv) Ashby b. 12/6/1925. Childhood nickname "Trimmeffi

Parents : Maria Mabel (Mary) ASHBY (nee McLEAN) & James Edward ASHBY

Grandparents : Maria Elizabeth McLean (nee Kruger) & Charles Soward McLean

G-Grandparents : Anna Soward McLean (nee Janeway) & Archibald McLean

G-G-Grandparents : Christina McLean (nee McPhee) & Donald McLean

Occupation: Dairy farmer of Allendale, S.A. 7th child of Mary and James Ashby of Kongorong. S.A.

Married Betty (Jean) Kerr (b. 24/2/1925).

Viv. entered the air force in September 1943. He turned 18 in the June and joined up straight away, but wasn't called until September. Although Viv entered the war towards the end he clocked up more flying hours than many who had been in since its beginning. His brothers ragged him that he was the only one who slept in a bed and between sheets during the war. He first went to Victor Harbor for 3 months training. His ambition was to be a pilot but he failed the eye test so became a very successful navigator.

Viv. went to Ballarat and trained on wireless, which was when they changed it from wireless air gun to signals. He remained on wireless through the 1944 winter in Ballarat. The coldest place imaginable. Everything outside was frozen stiff on the line. He went from there to Rathmines (Newcastle) and that was training on Catalan Flying Boats. They operated in Darwin for a while mining Surabaya.

They were sent to the Philippines and from there mined Hong Kong Harbour so the Japanese could not get out. They really mined the Harbour, not only their plane but many other Aussie planes. During this time they had the greatest scare of their lives. They flew in at two thousand feet and the mountains were seven thousand feet. There were lane ways to get out as long as you didn't go off course On one of their flights one of their mines wouldn't drop. They usually dropped electrically but this one didn't, they made a second run and the second pilot had to pull the emergency stick, he pulled it but nothing happened so they made a third run. The second pilot said, "I'm going to drop it this time". He put his feet on the aircraft and got hold of the lever. He released the mine all right but went forward and hit the control column and the plane dived.

There was one hell of a roar as the skipper pulled the throttle and gave it all engines full bore. Viv. was on radar. The blokes out on the blister called. "You just put the lights out in Hong Kong " All the lights were on as they were silent coming in and at two hundred feet the radar couldn't pick them up because they were too low so no-one knew they were in the harbour. But when the roar was heard, blink, the lights went out. Viv's plane got out OK but it was terrifying - at two hundred feet it doesn't take long for a plane to go down.

The most uncomfortable time Viv. ever had was dropping bombs over Borneo. The plane was up 8,000 feet and yet every time they dropped a bomb the blast of it would lift the plane up. The worst part for Viv was the cold. in Dan/vin the men were running around in shorts and shirt if indeed they had a shirt. They would fly out at 2,000 ft and go up to 8,000 ft in preparation to drop the bomb. It was like going into a frost it was so cold.

At the end of the war Viv's unit had a lot of beef runs and caning people home. This was no circus as half to three quarters of their passengers got sick, the planes were not made to carry passengers and they were thrown around everywhere The worst thing was cleaning the plane afterwards. Viv. came home in November.

Most of his flying was done over sea and so he never experienced hitting air pockets as you do flying over land. Flying from Melbourne to Mt Gambler on the way home was more terrifying for Viv. than the many hours flown in the war.

When he came home he lived at Doman's and worked home, then he went to Parween working for the government looking after their heifers. Viv. and Jean married after his return and they went home to work the family farm and lived with the folks for five years before buying a place in Allendale in 1953.

The property was bare when they bought it but after supering the first year the next year it was covered with clover. Their farm is over the famous sinkhole "THE SHAFT" which has claimed many lives. Jean ensures that all divers sign her visitors book and although there is no charge the divers must be experienced and registered.

Children:-

1. Graham Robert Ashby b. 15/1/1957. Occupation: Chartered Accountant. Residence: North Adelaide, SA Married: Alison Lesley Spicer (b. 10/12/1954). Her occupation: Accountancy placement, Adelaide.
2. Trevor Neil Ashby b. 21/2/1951. Occupation: Dairy farmer of Allendale, S.A. Married: Anne Ogilvie (b. 20/11/1951). Children - Brendan (b. 25/7/1978) & Kerry (b. 29/7/1981).

- SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 442
- COLONIALISTS : Christina and Donald McLean and their ten children migrated from Argyllshire to South Australia in 1837. This was in the earliest years of the colony. The McLeans initially settled near Adelaide where they grew the first wheat crop in SA. Then in about 1840 they pioneered the Strathalbyn area. There are now well over 20,000 descendants spread across Australia and elsewhere.
- CHANGES : Please contact us with additions, corrections or suggestions about any part of this family tree.
- CONTACT : Visit our website www.christinaanddonaldmclean.com or Strathalbyn Museum phone 08 8536 2656 to discover more about your family – and about privacy and copyright.