

Gordon James JOHNSTON & Ruth Weller JOHNSTON, nee LONG & Agnes May JOHNSTON, nee DOWNING & Patricia JOHNSTON, nee THOMAS

Biography as published in 1995

Gordon James Johnston born 22/8/1903 at Leonora, W.A. the 4th child of Elizabeth & Matthew Johnston.

Parents : Elizabeth Ann Johnston (nee McLEAN) & Matthew Johnston

Grandparents : Margaret McLean (nee Tannahill) & Hugh (the younger) McLean

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

Occupation: Truck driver.

Residences : these are shown in his history

He married three times.

Marriage: the first, at Esperance, W.A. to **Ruth Weller Long** (b. 6/8/1905 at Melboume), daughter of Thomas & Mary (nee Weller) Long. Ruth was the mother of Gordon's two sons.

Marriage: the second, to **Agnes May Downing** which lasted only briefly and they divorced in the early 1950s.

Marriage: the third to **Patricia Thomas** which lasted until her death 15 years later.

Death:

Ruth Johnston on 7/9/1933 aged 28 years - following childbirth, at Perth. Interred at Karrakatta Cemetery.

Patricia Johnston on 3/4/1975.

11/5/1986 of Gordon James Johnston aged 82 years at Perth. Interred at the Karrakatta Cemetery.

History: written by his younger son Russell and slightly rearranged to save repetition.

Gordon started work in the 1920s as a Pastry Cook, living at Cowle Street. North Perth. He then moved with his family to Scadden (a farming district just north of Esperance) where they grew wheat, this was in 1931. He met and married Ruth Weller Long that year. They had two sons, Malcolm bom at Esperance & Russell (Russ) born at Subiaco, Perth.

About 1936 Gordon started employment with Bell Brothers, Guildford as a truck driver carting wheat (this was during the Depression years). When the 1939-1945 war broke out he was manpowered with Bell brothers, by which time he was a licenced Excavator Driver building airstrips in north Western Australia. He was there when the Broome raid took place and a Japanese Zero bombed the airstrip on which he was working. About this time at Pot Shot Airport, Exmouth Gulf, Gordon pulled Bluey Truscott in his Spitfire from the ocean. This Spitfire is now in the Canberra War Memorial.

EPITAPH

Squadron Leader Truscott was killed instantly at 1735 hours, 28th March 1943. Position, 22° 11' S., 114° 09' E. He was flying Kittyhawk A29/150.

Before any member of 76 Squadron could reach the scene whale-boats and divers from U.S.S. Chi/ds and U.S.S. Whipperwill were attempting to locate the wreckage. They continued dragging operations with a desperate urgency until midnight, under impossible conditions, long after all hope for the life of Keith Truscott had been abandoned. At last 76 Squadron had to ask the Americans to stop.

At first light, 29th March, the search was resumed, and at 1000 hours the aircraft was located in thirty-six feet of water, lying on its back, with mainplanes folded and the cockpit on the sea-bed.

At 1630 hours the aircraft was raised, and finally lowered onto a barge. The body was recovered from the cockpit with some injuries, but virtually unmarked.

In the evening, after the barge pulled alongside the jetty, Bluey was carried ashore by the officers of his squadron. His mother, far away, knew he was dead before she was told.

At 0930 hours, 31st March, the flag-draped casket containing his embalmed body, followed by officers of No. 76 Squadron and of the U.S. Navy, was drawn to the air-strip and passed between his boys, whose emotions no words of mine dare express. He was brought to the Avro Anson and soon that aircraft drew away slowly and took off to the final salute from the ground and the air. His pilots flew above him in the formation of a cross and escorted him to Perth, towards the Cathedral, to the limits of their fuel.

Thus passed Bluey Truscott, aged twenty-six, brave as few were and loved as few were.

Today he rests in the War Cemetery near Perth, Western Australia, and his first Spitfire stands quietly through the passing years in the Australian War Memorial at Canberra.

God Bless Bluey.

Post war Bell Brothers sent Gordon to Collie, a coal mining town in south Western Australia where he worked on the Walls End open cut mine (the first open cut at Collie) and the Black Diamond open cut. He then worked on many open cut mines in North Western Australia, mining for Manganese, Iron Ore and even Yellow Cake.

He married again in 1949 but only briefly.

In late 1950 Bell Brothers made Gordon Manager in the Geraldton & Meekatharra district where he met Patricia Thomas whom he married in 1960. She died in 1975.

When employment with Bell Brothers terminated Gordon was employed by his son Malcolm at his clothing factory in Perth as maintenance man and carrier until his retirement in the early 1980s. After spending some time in a hospital for the aged he passed away aged 82 years on 11/5/1986.

CHILDREN:

1. Malcolm Weller Johnston b. 13/1/1932 at Esperance, W.A. Occupation: Tailor & clothing factory owner, Perth. Marriage: to Stephanie Myrtle Muir at Maylands, W.A. Stephanie was b. 17/11/1934 at Perth. daughter of William & Fredericka (nee Shepherd) Muir. Residence: Lesmurdie, W.A. Three children – 1957, 1960 & 1966 – all born in Perth.
2. Russell (Russ) Gordon Johnston b. 28/5/1933, Subiaco, Perth. Married: Lola Joy Darnell. [See biographies 5223](#)

• SOURCE : This biography is an extract from "The History of Donald & Christina McLean and Their Descendants" which was published in 1995 – page 561 & 563.
• 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.