

William Simes

William Charles Kenwick



454 Squadron – Flight Mechanic

115144

William Simes

William Charles Kenwick didn't just inspire my name, he inspired the people lucky enough to know him. William means 'strong-willed warrior' and he certainly lived up to his name, persevering throughout life. On Friday the 13th of August 1922, William Charles Kenwick entered the world, ready to leave his mark. Born at the Nurse Copley Private Nursing Home to his parents Herman George Kenwick (a firefighter who also cared for horses and raised greyhounds) and Emma Lucy Barclay (a housekeeper). William 'Bill' Kenwick lived with his family of 5 and was the eldest of 3 children. Young William loved to spend time at Henley Beach with his family, exploring the sand dunes, fishing with friends and by all accounts get himself into mischief. He attended Henley Primary School and Thebarton Technical School, a school where boys learnt to turn and fit steel with machinery.



William Kenwick and his eldest sister Betty

At the age of 14, William left school to work in the family business owned by his Grandparents; A W Kenwick & Sons. This was a prestigious jewellery store, where he worked for 5 years with his Grandfather Arthur Kenwick and his Uncle Morton Kenwick. William liked being a jeweller, although he had dreams of becoming an architect which were changed due to The Great Depression and a lack of funds.



Arthur Kenwick(left), William Kenwick(middle) and Morton Kenwick(right) with the tea set for the royal wedding

William attended the recruitment centre in Adelaide, requesting to be an instrument maker. He attended an interview and medical examination, bringing references with him. Mr W. P. Low a watch and clock expert stated, "I can confidently say his quickness and ability at locating and correcting mechanical troubles have been exceptionally good." He went on to say, "I have the pleasure in recommending him (William Charles Kenwick) to anyone who wants the services of a really persevering and capable young man." recognising William's abilities and perseverance.

19-year-old William had been working in his Grandparent's prestigious workshop, learning his craft. These skills were nurtured by his Grandfather, who took on a mentoring role. William sat an aptitude test with results showing neither pass nor fail, with both crossed out by the examining officer. His aptitude report went on further to state "worth the chance, suitable for enlistment. Ask Trainee Group V (5)," signed examining Officer Burton. Although William had not passed his aptitude test, Officer Burton saw potential in him.

REPORT (For Official Use Only) TRADE TEST for the Grays

Understands conditions of service *Yes*

Notice required *one week*

Description: *medium build
neat appearance
Respectful
suitable*

APTITUDE TESTS CONDUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH A.S. 21839, Considered *(Not Considered) worth the chance suitable for enlistment ask Trainee Group V*

Date *7.7.42* Examining Officer *W. P. Burton*

Medical	Dental
	Fillings Extractions Dentures Treatment
Examining Officer: _____ Date: _____	Examining Officer: _____ Date: _____

Signature *W. P. Burton*
Date *7/17/42* Rank *7/2*

Close up of aptitude test results on William's application for enlistment documents showing "Worth the Chance"

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William attended basic training in Adelaide, camping in simple RAAF tents. From September to November 1943, he attended the RAAF course the No. 252 Engineering School for a Flight Mechanic in Melbourne. It was at this training that William met his lifelong mate, the late Clifford Spiers of Victoria, forming a mateship that would stand the test of time. William scored 70.75/100, passing his Flight Mechanic training. His perseverance was evident, as although he did not pass his aptitude test, Officer Burton's willingness to give William a chance came to fruition.

William then moved to the Port Pirie Bombing and Gunnery School for 12 weeks where he undertook extra training and met, Dorothy Margaret Lewis, whom he married after the war. In September of 1943, William began his voyage with his newly found RAAF mates Con, Clifford, and Mac. Starting at Brisbane they sailed to Fremantle to refuel the SS LURLINE. The next day the troops headed to Mumbai (Bombay) where William changed ships to the ORMONDE, a steel twin screw steamer and travelled to Suez, Egypt. Leaving the boat at the Suez Canal he travelled by road to the transit centre in Almaza for six weeks. William travelled by rail to Marsa-Matruh, located on Egypt's Mediterranean coast, where he collected a truck, taking it to Tobruk where it was left. William then moved to Benghazi, Libya, where he joined the 454 squadron.

The conditions in Benghazi 1944, were intolerable. William faced living and working under the hot desert sun and sandstorms that would appear within minutes and last for what seemed a lifetime. The sandstorms made William's flight mechanic work near impossible and for pilots a near death experience. Sand would not only sting and get into your eyes, mouths, and ears, it got into every opening of the aircraft. William's perseverance, attention to detail and precision ensured his planes were cleaned, so they could continue flying. Cleaning the engines, guns, flaps, and undercarriages was an important task despite it being painstaking work. This was just the tip of the iceberg as the crew also faced the likes of scorpions, camel spiders, and dehydration. Working in these conditions showed William's dedication to ensure his colleagues were safe and could complete their duties.

The 454 first operated as a maritime patrol squadron, spending time working over the Mediterranean. If it wasn't for their close mateship and bonds the squadron may not have been as successful. Its main targets were enemy submarines and merchant shipping. It was also used for long-range reconnaissance and occasionally employed in strikes. During this period, William and the 454 Squadron operated from the airfield Berka III, until the 25 of July



Map with pin-points of William's movements



William Kenwick & Clifford Spiers
Falconara – 1944



William Kenwick (Bottom Left) and his crew
in front of a Baltimore Plane

William Simes

1944. The 454 Squadron conducted day searches in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1942 – 44; formation strikes in the Aegean Sea against the Gothic line.

As a flight mechanic, William worked on Baltimore planes which were twin engine bombers. William ensured that the 454 squadrons planes were working correctly by repairing broken parts and keeping the planes maintained. A traumatic part of William's maintenance was to ensure that the gun turrets were cleaned by hosing them out. Unfortunately, this cleaning duty could entail decapitated bodies and body parts of his fallen mates, a task that left its mark on William. Despite these difficulties, William's perseverance ensured the Baltimore planes were able to take to the sky.

William and the 454 squadron relocated to Pescara in Italy, July 1944, and engaged in a new role; to provide air support for ground forces in the Italian Campaign, also known as the Liberation of Italy. This campaign consisted of Allied Forces and their fight against the German Armed Forces. The 454 squadron operated from multiple airfields such as Pescara (26 July - 17 August 1944), Falconara (18 August 1944 - 6 December 1944), Cesenatico (7 December 1944 - 15 May 1945), and Villaorba (16 May - 14 August 1945). Falconara's disgusting conditions consisted of heavy glue like mud which impinged the squadrons' ability to service and carry out tasks. Perseverance was shown by the 454 squadron at Falconara in September as the squadron delivered 328 bombs throughout difficult weather. The squadron performed their tasks so well that they earned a reputation for efficiency despite the conditions. In Cesenatico, the 454 squadron again faced difficulties meeting operational demands, with weather consisting of harsh winds, rain and intermittent sleet and fog. William and mates experienced such cold conditions that they invented a makeshift heater using aviation fuel that they syphoned from the Baltimore planes. The contraption worked for a while; however, it was very dangerous, and several tents burnt to the ground. The 454 completed ground support missions, attacked targets, and experimented with radar-controlled bombing techniques. On May 2, 1945, the 454 squadron's war in Italy ended with the surrender of the German forces.

After finishing in Italy, William moved to England where he travelled to Melbourne and then Mallala. On March 26, 1946, William Kenwick was discharged from the RAAF and returned to Adelaide, resuming work at A W Kenwick & Sons. On the May 9, 1947, William married Dorothy Margaret Lewis of Port Pirie, who were later blessed with 3 children, Suzanne, (1948), my grandmother, Helen (1951) and Judy (1954). As a father, William was happy to step outside of the traditional male role whether it was looking after his children or partaking in his hidden talent of knitting baby clothes. Demonstrating a caring and helpful father/husband that William was.



A Baltimore plane - 1943



Falconara camp - 1944



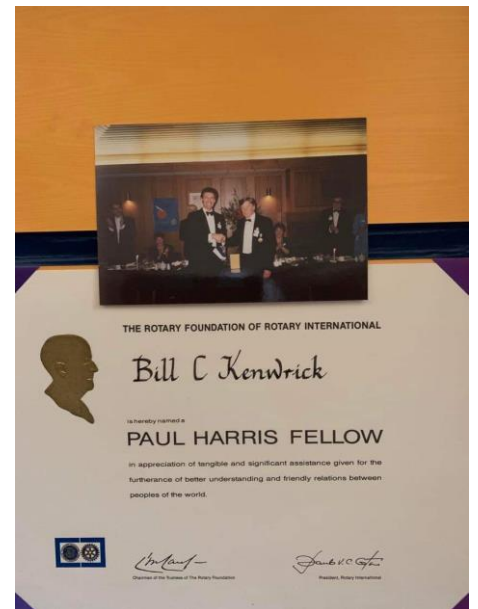
Newly Weds: William and Dorothy Kenwick

William Simes

William was actively involved in the Thebarton Rotary Club for 18 years, from 1980-1998. William was the recipient of the respected 1996 *Paul Harris Fellow Award*, awarded "In appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations between people of the world." William showed mateship by working and helping within the community, forming relationships with members both in Australia and overseas. William was described as a selfless and caring man, dedicated to bettering the lives of others.

A W Kenwick & Sons was such a successful and trusted business, that in 1947 they made a silver tea set that was presented by the state of South Australia to honour the occasion of Princess Elizabeth's marriage. A W Kenwick & Sons also made the Inter-Dominion Cup, the most coveted trotting trophy in the southern hemisphere, demonstrating mateship and perseverance within the tight knit family.

Cliff Spiers' and William's friendship continued even after the war, where they would often catchup over a barbeque or Christmas, despite living in separate states. Sadly, on 15 September 2007, William Charles Kenwick passed away in Adelaide, South Australia. This 'strong willed warrior's' life was one that should be remembered as spirited, courageous, and caring. I William Simes, hope that I can live up to this honoured name and carve a path in history, as William Charles Kenwick did.



1996 Paul Harris Fellow Award



454 Squadron barbeque 1990



Left to Right: William Kenwick, Grandfather Arthur & Uncle Morton



Uncle Morton & William Kenwick



William's Medals from left to right:
1939/45 Star, Africa Star, Defence Medal,
1939/45 Medal, Australian Service Medal

PART B

I decided to research William Charles Kenwick as he is my great Grandfather and namesake. Gathering information at first was extremely challenging as there was minimal firsthand information written about his wartime experiences on the websites I visited.

It was through the National Archives of Australia (NAA) that I was able to discover documents about William, however, understanding the documents was challenging. The National Archives of Australia gave me 44 documents to decipher and use to piece together William Kenwick's story. I was able to locate a website that was dedicated to the 454 and 459 Squadron history and I contacted the website administrator, Michael Antonios. I conducted a phone conversation with Antonios who was able to find more information and decipher the abbreviations and Williams movements. This resulted in Antonios updating the information that he had for William Kenwick on his website. Not only this but Antonios was also able to add Clifford Spiers to the website, as he did not previously appear as one of the members of the 454 squadron.

Family members also assisted with firsthand stories about William and events during the war. I was able to cross reference information with the book, *Alamein to the Alps*, written by Mark Lax, a serving RAAF Officer. *Alamein to the Alps* was specifically written about the 454 squadron, one of the lesser-known RAAF European units. The book details what the squadron experienced and gave insight into operations of the unit. Using the NAA's documents I could understand where and when William's movements occurred. I also used a diary entry that was found by his eldest daughter, my grandmother Suzanne Simes, to assist with William's firsthand experiences. Using this information and Google Maps I was able to plot his journey from Australia to fighting in the Mediterranean and Europe.

Overall, I have learnt about the struggles and victories of my great Grandfather, William Charles Kenwick. I have learnt where he travelled, what his role entailed and about his personal life and character before, during and after the war.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

I have been involved in many community activities through the local football and basketball clubs in Loxton. I actively manage the scoreboard, boundary umpire and play for the Loxton North Football Club. This involvement has shown an improvement in my self-esteem and wellbeing. I feel that this is a way to give back to my community and support my club. I currently umpire and play for the Loxton Amateur Basketball Association and find this is a great way to not only improve my skills, but it is also a way to meet new people, build confidence and show support to my basketball club.

Extra-Curricular activities I have participated in at Loxton High School include being a Student Representative Council (SRC) member for the past two years, a School Band member, Loxton High School Sports Days, Swimming Carnivals and Interschool School athletics participant. I have also participated in 5 a side soccer, 9 a side football and Interschool Cross Countries. My participation in these extra-curricular events is what I find most fulfilling and, whilst I may not be the best, I still ensure that I give my all to teammates and the wider school community.

I am interested in History, as I feel that it is important to understand past events and to learn from them. History is an interesting subject due to there being so many different topics and events. There are infinite topics to discover and learn about and you can always find something that interests you. An interest of mine is the History of music. I love how music is forever progressing and changing over time. As a trumpet player I would like to learn The Last Post and to be able to perform this for ceremonies such as ANZAC and Remembrance Day.

This assignment has enabled me to learn and gain a greater understanding about my great Grandfather and the hardships he endured. I have been able to dive deep into his past and learn about the awesome things he accomplished. I feel privileged and honoured to document and gain insight into William Charles Kenwick's life.

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William Simes

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