

Flight Lieutenant Ian Goodwin Swan Purssey DFC



*FLTLT 'Bill' Purssey,
Pictured in front of his Meteor aircraft in Korea.*

Overview

Flight Lieutenant Ian Goodwin Swan Purssey DFC served with the RAAF during World War Two. In the Mediterranean Theatre he served in the Western Desert and Italy, flying Curtis P40 (Kittyhawk) fighters and P51 (Mustang) fighters.

He later served in the Korean War flying Meteor jet fighters and ground attack fighter/bombers.

He had completed 131 missions when he was shot down during a rocket attack on a ground target near Chinnampo on 22 April 1952. FLTLT Purssey headed for the water but his Meteor was on fire and a wing broke off. He was seen to eject but had no time to open his parachute before hitting the water. He was listed as missing, presumed killed.

Service Number:	O11561
Rank:	Flight Lieutenant
Unit:	77 Squadron RAAF
Conflict:	Korea
Date of death:	22 April 1952
Place of death:	Korea
Cemetery or memorial details:	United Nations Memorial Cemetery Korea, Busan, South Korea Flight Lieutenant Purssey's body was never recovered and he is therefore regarded as missing, presumed killed in action.

Pre War Years

Ian Goodwin Swan Purssey, always known as “Bill”, was born in Sydney on 24 March 1923. He was the eldest son of Roy and Ellen Purssey. Bill’s father had served in the AIF in the Great War on the Western Front, and the 2nd AIF in the Middle East in World War Two.

After his family moved to Clayfield in Brisbane, he attended Church of England Grammar School (*Churchie*) in Brisbane, and was later employed as a bank officer before enlisting in the RAAF.

World War Two Service

Bill enlisted in the RAAF in 1942, and underwent training at:

- Elementary Flying Training School (8 EFTS), at Narrandera (NSW), flying Tiger Moths;
- Service Flying Training School (14 SFTS) Aylmer (Ontario) under the Empire Air training Scheme (EATS) in Canada, flying Harvards;
- Advanced flying unit (17 AFTU) at Wrexham (Wales), flying Miles Masters.

Bill’s final training before going into action in Italy was at Operational Training Unit (73 OTU) in Egypt, flying Kittyhawks.

FLTLT Purssey (425749) was a wartime veteran of No 450 Squadron RAAF (*The Desert Harassers*). He flew 102 operational sorties against enemy targets which were often heavily defended. His second operational tour in Italy was with No 3 Squadron RAAF where he flew another 46 sorties until the Axis powers surrendered.



Cutella, Italy 1944 with P40 Kittyhawks



Crete 1944 with P40 Kittyhawk (left). His Mustang at Fano Italy February 1944 after crash landing on beach with ack-ack damage (right)



Cervia, Italy c1945. Informal portrait of Flying Officer (FO) IGS (Bill) Purssey of Brisbane, Qld, a pilot of No 3 (Mustang) Squadron RAAF in northern Italy.

Post World War Two

Bill was discharged in 1946, but re-enlisted in the Citizen Air Force No 23 City of Brisbane (F) Squadron in 1949.

Korean War

In 1951 he was granted a permanent commission and in December he was posted to 77 Squadronⁱ RAAF in Korea.

After he had completed 30 combat missions he was awarded the American Air Medal.

He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1952 after completing 110 operational missions.

FLTLT Purssey was flying a Meteor fighter (serial number A77-189), serving with 77 Squadron RAAF in Korea when he was shot down during a ground attack mission at Chinnampo Korea on 22 April 1952. The *Courier Mail* reported that the news reached his mother on the eve of Anzac Day.

His mother Ellen Purssey was presented with his DFC by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth at a special investiture at Parliament House in Brisbane in March 1954, during the Royal Tour.

The citation of the Distinguished Flying Cross reads:

Flight-Lieutenant Purssey has flown with distinction on operations in support of the United Nations Forces in Korea. He has flown on one hundred and ten operational missions in Meteor aircraft and as a leader of the Squadron on ground attack strikes against heavily defended targets in North Korea, he has always pressed home his attacks to a low level with vigour and determination.

This Officer's courage and devotion to duty during his current tour of operations has set a fine example and has been in keeping with the highest traditions of the Royal Australian Air Force.



Kimpo, South Korea. 1952. Flight Lieutenant I.G.S. Purssey of No. 77 Squadron RAAF being congratulated after being invested with the United States Air Medal By Colonel H. Thyng USAF



Meteor A77-189

