

Obituary

Bob Dingle (1920–2016). Bob Dingle (Fig 1), who was involved with the establishment of Australia's continental Antarctic stations in the 1950's, has died in Swansea, Tasmania, aged 95. He was born William Robert John Dingle in 1920 in Cornwall, England and left school in 1936 to join the General Post Office. With the advent of the Second World War he enlisted in the RAFVR and trained as a Wireless Operator. He flew operationally with Nos 78 and 35 Squadrons, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal and was commissioned. On his 39th operation the starboard inner engine of the Halifax bomber in which he was flying inexplicably caught fire. The flames quickly spread and the pilot gave the order to bale out. Unfortunately his pilot and rear gunner stayed on board and died in the crash and the navigators parachute failed to open. Bob landed safely and quickly linked up with the Belgian underground but was captured, a couple of weeks later on 6 January 1944, in a random Gestapo check of identity documents whilst boarding a train to Brussels. He spent the rest of the war as a POW.

Demobbed in 1947, he migrated to Australia two years later. In 1950 he was appointed a trainee Weather Observer with the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology. He wintered at all five Australian Antarctic stations – Heard Island in 1951, Mawson in 1954, Macquarie Island in 1956, Davis in 1957, and Wilkes in 1959 and was awarded the Queen's Polar Medal with two clasps. He was the sole Weather Observer in the party of ten that established Mawson Station and Officer-in-Charge of the five man party that established Davis Station. He subsequently spent two Antarctic winters with the Americans – at Byrd Station in 1962 and the isolated Plateau Station in 1967. In 1968 he was the senior Australian Weather Observer on the US Navy Ship *Eltanin* and over the next three and a half years served on 18 consecutive marine cruises. In between his winters south he served at numerous isolated meteorological stations including Port Hedland, Norfolk



Fig. 1. Bob Dingle using a theodolite near Mawson Station in February 1955. Photograph courtesy of the Australian Antarctic Division.

Island, Willis Island, and at Giles Weather Station in Central Australia (that had been established to satisfy launch activities at the Woomera rocket range). In 1975 he retired to Swansea and spent the next 40 years in quiet retirement in this small town in sharp contrast with his extremely varied and adventurous working life.

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