



## Flight Lieutenant J.I. COLEMAN MBE

[1910 – 1995]



### Flight Lieutenant Coleman was the Secretary of the Club from 1977 to 1978

John Iream Coleman was born in Bristol, England in August 1910. The eldest son of John Iream and Clara (née Pearse) Coleman. His father was a Shipping Clerk who had served in the First World War. John was the eldest of four children with two sisters and a brother. He was educated at Merchant Venturers' College, Bristol.

Before he joined the RAF, he was a junior executive with a firm of engineers in James Street, Piccadilly. He decided he couldn't wait any longer to join up after Buckingham Palace was bombed.

He joined the RAF in August 1940 but had to wait until November that year to be called up for basic training in Blackpool. He served in the Burma campaign from 1942 to 1945.

- July 1941 Promoted from Corporal to Pilot Officer, he boarded a troop ship as Equipment Officer headed for the Middle East, but after a long trip they eventually ended up in India.

*We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes. The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.*

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- 1942-1945 Flying Officer served in India and then Burma as Flight Lieutenant (Acting)
- March 1946 Demobilised as Flight Lieutenant

He was awarded an MBE in the 1946 New Year's Honours (UK) for his part in connection to the Akyab landings in early 1945.

He was offered a job in South Africa as manager of a typewriter company called Harris & Jones, and he emigrated with his first wife and young son. John was appointed a Captain in the South African Union Defence Force Reserves in July 1950 and resigned in 1958.

John was divorced in 1950 and in 1951 he married South African-born Magdalene (née Hayhurst) in Durban, South Africa. He was working as a sales manager, and they later moved from Durban to Johannesburg before emigrating to Australia in 1967.

They had five children, all born in South Africa:

- Pearse [b.1952] joined the RAN in 1969-74, became a professional musician and then a shopping centre executive manager.
- Joshua [b.1954] joined Army Reserve in 1971, promoted Corporal then discharged in January 1973. Joined the RAAF in January 1973 and has completed 50 years of service.
- Luke [b.1955] joined the RAN in 1974-75, became a professional musician and then a venue executive manager.
- Elinor (Lin) [b.1956] became a nurse/midwife, manager and later an IT professional.
- Phillip [b.1961] became a successful IT consultant, musician, and author.

In May 1967, the family emigrated to Perth on the *Northern Star*. John worked as a sales manager and the family lived in Wembley, and later in Woodlands. In 1972 John secured a role as the manager of the Orroral Valley Tracking Station outside Canberra. The family moved first to Red Hill and later to Woden. For a few years John managed the Croatian Club in Canberra before accepting the appointment to the United Service Club in Brisbane. John, Magdalene, and Phillip lived at Mitchelton.

John became a member of the Club on his appointment in 1977. While Secretary he presented the Club with a painting of a Spitfire fighter which still hangs on the Club walls. The staff of the United Service Club presented John with a leather briefcase, which he kept all his documents in until he died.

On resigning from the Club in 1978 he managed the Royal Motor Yacht Club on Pittwater in Sydney and then retired to Telopea, in Western Sydney. Eventually he moved with his wife Magdalene to their son Joshua's farm near Lismore.

John wrote his memoirs and called it "To There and Back" recounting his experiences during the War. It has been digitally recorded for the family as a private historical document.

Flight Lieutenant John Coleman died on 6 August 1995 and is buried at Lismore.

**During his tenure, Flight Lieutenant Coleman served President May.**



**“Spitfire”**



Assault Wing Akyab 1945  
Flt Lt John Coleman (with the cap)



Sources included:

- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents
- *The Gift* Phil Coleman Balboa Press 2017
- NAA
- UK Archives
- Contribution from Phillip Coleman and Elinor Taylor – Flight Lieutenant Coleman’s son and daughter 2022