

# EX-PILOT: "I FLEW MYSTERY AIRCRAFT"

## War riddle solved

By JACK CANNON

An Adelaide man today solved the mystery behind the wreck of a wartime Brewster Buffalo fighter plane found this week deep in the jungle of Malaya.

An RAF ground party located the wreck after it had been reported to them by natives from a village, about 100 miles north of Singapore.

The RAF men reported to the Air Ministry in London that the plane was "in a remarkably good state of preservation" after lying in the jungle for 20 years.

Air Ministry records showed the aircraft, bearing the identification letter "G" for George and serial number W 8202, had belonged to No. 453 Squadron RAAF.

But no record existed of what had happened to the plane after it went to Singapore in 1941.

### He knew . . .

In an attempt to solve this mystery I searched through the Official RAAF War History from 1939-42 and found that a pilot, Sgt. Granton Harrison, had been flying in the area at the time.

I phoned him in Adelaide to ask if he had ever heard of the Buffalo crashing.

Mr Harrison, a shoe manufacturer, knew all about it — HE WAS FLYING THE PLANE WHEN IT CRASHED.

He told me this story. "I was flying on a strike against the Japanese from Sembawang Airfield, Singapore, in January 1942, when the enemy was ad-

vancing towards Singapore.

"We were cruising in formation when suddenly another Buffalo screamed just over my cockpit and knocked the airscrew off my plane.

### Not hurt

"We were down low over the jungle and I had no time to bail out.

"I flattened the aircraft on tree tops for about 250 yards before plunging down through the trees.

"By some miracle I was not injured.

"It took me eight days to walk back through the jungle before I was found by an AIF patrol near Mersing.

Mr Harrison, who finished the war as a Flight Lieutenant flying Kittyhawks, was too modest to give all the details of his escape through the jungle.

But he did admit that he could hear Japanese guns not far behind him.

### Crocodiles

The story of his trek is told in the RAAF history:

"On the second night of his trek, Harrison found himself in a mangrove swamp.

"The only place he could find to sleep was a hut at the end of a long Malayan fish-trap.

"During the night the tide rose and he was forced to climb on to the roof where he clung while three crocodiles cruised around him in the moonlight.

"Next day he stayed until the crocodiles, seemingly tired of waiting, disappeared and then he struggled towards the coast near Mersing."

Mr Harrison, 45, who is

29.11.62  
HERALD

## Pilot of mystery Buffalo



Mr Granton Harrison, the Adelaide man who has solved the mystery behind the wreck of a wartime Brewster Buffalo fighter plane found this week deep in the jungle of Malaya.

The Official RAAF War History from 1939-42 showed that a pilot, Sgt. Granton Harrison, had been flying in the area at the time.

And shoe manufacturer, Mr Harrison, said when telephoned that he was flying the plane when it crashed.