

## citylibraries

### **HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 15**

## VINCENT (BUSHY) PARKER

Vincent "Bushy" Parker is known as a local war hero. He was a local lad who became a spitfire pilot during the Battle of Britain; was later captured by the Germans and attained renown for his role in British escape attempts from Colditz Prison. Thuringowa City Council has recognised his significance by naming a park at Rollingstone after him.

By 1919 the North Coast Line extended north from Townsville to Ingham. Purono rail siding was situated just south of the Rollingstone. Vincent Parker's adoptive parents had migrated to Australia in 1928 when Vincent was 10 years old. In 1929, his mother, Edith, gained the position of station mistress at Purono siding.



Her husband, who was already working on the north coast railway as a fettler, transferred south to be with his family. Vincent attended Bohlevale State School.



After leaving school Vincent Parker went to work for Kodak in the Flinders Street.



At eighteen he travelled to New Zealand where he spent time learning to be a professional magician.

When he returned to Australia he and a friend decided to travel to England and join the RAF but Parker had to work his passage to England as a steward.







# citylibraries



Bushy Parker's outdoor childhood, horse riding, swimming and acrobatics meant he was very agile and physically fit by the time he joined the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1939.

Bushy Parker flew in the Battle of Britain but his spitfire was shot down over Europe in 1940. After numerous unsuccessful escape attempts from other prisoner-ofwar camps he was imprisoned in Colditz.

His skill at slight of hand and quick reflexes may have resulted in his job at Colditz which was to pick the locks of the storeroom that held the Red Cross packages. This was the source of much of the materials used to build a glider as a means of escape. Parker remained imprisoned in Colditz until the end of the war.

After the war end Parker continued in the RAF but was killed when his plane



crashed on an operational flight in the north of England in 1946.

#### Acknowledgments:

- Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, *Thirtythree miles to Rollingstone, A short history of Rollingstone and Balgal,* Thuringowa City Council, Thuringowa, 2003.
- Jack Champ & Colin Burgess, *The* Diggers of Colditz, Taylor-Type Publications (Australia) Pty Ltd., 1985.
- Colin Burgess manuscript 'Bush' Parker, January 2000.
- Thuringowa Heritage Services Photographic Collection.
- RSL



