

= Dave Shannon =

David John (Dave) Shannon , DSO & Bar , DFC & Bar (27 May 1922 ? 8 April 1993) was an Australian bomber pilot of World War II , best known for his part in the " Dambusters " raid on the night of 16 / 17 May 1943 . Born in South Australia , he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1941 and learned to fly under the Empire Air Training Scheme . After further training in the United Kingdom he was posted to No. 106 Squadron RAF , operating Avro Lancaster heavy bombers , and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) in January 1943 . In March he was selected by No. 106 Squadron 's commanding officer , Wing Commander Guy Gibson , to join the newly formed No. 617 Squadron for Operation Chastise , the attack on the dams of the Ruhr valley . Awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) following the raid , Shannon continued to fly with No. 617 Squadron until October 1944 , during which time he earned bars to his DSO and DFC . He was then assigned to transport duties , first with No. 511 Squadron and then , in March 1945 , with No. 246 Squadron . Ranked squadron leader , Shannon was demobilised after the war and remained in England , becoming an executive with Shell . He died in South London in 1993 , aged seventy .

= = Early life = =

Shannon was born on 27 May 1922 at Unley Park , South Australia . His father , Howard Huntley Shannon , served as a South Australian state parliamentarian from 1933 to 1968 . Shannon was working for an insurance company when he joined the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Reserve in Adelaide on 5 July 1940 , aged eighteen . On 4 January 1941 he transferred to the RAAF as an air cadet under the Empire Air Training Scheme . He received his instruction in Western Australia at No. 5 Initial Training School in Pearce , No. 9 Elementary Flying Training School in Cunderdin , and No. 4 Service Flying Training School in Geraldton . Following graduation as a pilot officer in September , he was posted to the United Kingdom .

= = Active service = =

Promoted to flying officer in March 1942 , Shannon underwent conversion to Armstrong Whitworth Whitley bombers at No. 19 Operational Training Unit in Kinloss , Scotland . He was then posted to No. 106 Squadron RAF , operating Avro Lancasters , and flew the first of his thirty @-@ six sorties with the unit in June . He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross on 12 January 1943 for " attacks on industrial targets in enemy territory " . In March he was selected by No. 106 Squadron 's former commanding officer , Wing Commander Guy Gibson , to join the newly formed No. 617 Squadron for Operation Chastise , the " Dambusters " raid on the dams of the Ruhr valley . Shannon was one of four Australian pilots in the squadron ? the others being " Micky " Martin , Robert Barlow , and Les Knight ? and , at twenty , the youngest captain from among all the crews . He cultivated a moustache in an attempt to add maturity to his baby face .

On the night of Operation Chastise , 16 / 17 May 1943 , Shannon was among a group of Lancasters led by Gibson in assaults on the Möhne and Eder Dams . After five of the aircraft had dropped their bouncing bombs on the Möhne , Shannon was preparing to make his attack on the dam when it gave way , so he carried on to the Eder with Gibson and three other Lancasters , captained by " Dinghy " Young , Henry Maudsley , and Les Knight . Detailed for the first bombing run at the Eder , Shannon took several attempts to familiarise himself with the area and line up his aircraft , so in the meantime Gibson ordered Maudsley to make his attack . Shannon went in next , delivering his bomb on target . Knight then dropped his bomb , and the dam broke . Shannon landed back at RAF Scampton feeling " terribly elated " . His bomb was believed to have caused a crack in the dam 's wall , while Knight 's completed the breach . Speaking later of the severe losses suffered by the squadron ? eight out of nineteen planes ? Shannon contended , " I suppose we had become hardened to loss ? we could shrug it off . We had to , otherwise we could never have flown again . " He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his part in the mission , one of a number of

decorations awarded to the aircrew of No. 617 Squadron for the dams raid and promulgated in the London Gazette under the citation :

On the night of 16th May , 1943 , a force of Lancaster bombers was detailed to attack the Moehne , Eder and Sorpe dams in Germany . The operation was one of great difficulty and hazard , demanding a high degree of skill and courage and close co @-@ operation between the crews of the aircraft engaged . Nevertheless , a telling blow was struck at the enemy by the successful breaching of the Mohne and Eder dams . This outstanding success reflects the greatest credit on the efforts of the following personnel who participated in the operation in various capacities as members of aircraft crew .

Soon afterward Shannon married a WAAF , Section Officer Ann Fowler , whom he met at Scampton before the raid . He remained with No. 617 Squadron while its role as a special @-@ duties unit operating against high @-@ value targets was expanded , participating in attacks on canals and V @-@ weapon sites with 12 @,@ 000 lb (5 @,@ 400 kg) Tallboy bombs . Shannon was promoted to flight lieutenant on 23 September 1943 and awarded a bar to his DFC on 12 November for a " low level attack in adverse weather against heavy opposition " . He again participated in raids against V @-@ weapon sites in January 1944 . The following month , No. 617 Squadron undertook its first sortie under the leadership of Wing Commander Leonard Cheshire . At this point the unit began flying low @-@ level target @-@ marking missions using de Havilland Mosquito light bombers in addition to Lancasters . Shannon converted to the Mosquito and started flying it operationally in April . He returned to the Lancaster on 5 June to drop " Window " as a part of the Allies ' diversions ahead of the D @-@ Day landings the following day , prior to again flying Mosquitos against V @-@ weapon sites and in support of the Normandy invasion forces . Though " outwardly nerveless " , according to military historian Patrick Bishop , Shannon was not immune to dread feelings . As they prepared to depart on one of their night missions , Cheshire commented on the beautiful sunset , to which Shannon replied , " I don 't give a fuck about that , I want to see the sunrise " . Having been raised to acting squadron leader , he was awarded a bar to his DSO on 26 September 1944 for " courage of high order on numerous sorties " . The full citation in the London Gazette read :

Since the award of a bar to the Distinguished Flying Cross , Squadron Leader Shannon has completed many sorties which he has executed with outstanding resolution and success . He has at all times displayed courage and fortitude of a high order and his appreciation of the responsibilities entrusted to him have set a fine example to all .

In October 1944 , after a total of sixty @-@ nine sorties , Shannon was taken off bomber operations and transferred to transport duties , initially with No. 511 Squadron , which flew long @-@ range missions with Avro Yorks . His promotion to squadron leader became substantive on 1 January 1945 . Three months later he was assigned to No. 246 Squadron , which operated Yorks and Consolidated Liberators .

= = Later life = =

Shannon was discharged from the RAAF as a squadron leader on 15 December 1945 . He remained in England and became an executive with Shell and later Cunard . Shannon no longer flew after the war , but did like to drive fast cars . He also served as chairman of the No. 617 Squadron Association , helping to raise funds for the Dambusters memorial at Woodhall Spa near RAF Scampton . On 8 April 1993 , shortly before a planned fiftieth anniversary reunion of surviving Dambusters , he died at his home in Sydenham , South London , aged seventy . He was survived by his second wife Eyke and his daughter by Ann . On 17 May 2008 , the sixty @-@ fifth anniversary of the Dambusters raid , a memorial to Shannon and two other South Australians who took part in the mission , bomb aimers Fred Spafford and Bob Hay , was unveiled in Adelaide in the presence of the airmen 's families . In July 2009 Shannon 's daughter Nikki made his medals , uniform , and logbook available to the Australian War Memorial in Canberra , for long @-@ term display .